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# Jewel of Womanhood: A Feminist Reinterpretation of Queen Katherine Howard

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JEWEL OF WOMANHOOD: A FEMINIST REINTERPRETATION OF  
QUEEN KATHERINE HOWARD

by

Holly K. Kizewski

A THESIS

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JEWEL OF WOMANHOOD: A FEMINIST REINTERPRETATION OF  
QUEEN KATHERINE HOWARD

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In 1540, King Henry VIII married his fifth wife, Katherine Howard. Less than two years later, the young queen was executed on charges of adultery. Katherine Howard has been much maligned by history, often depicted as foolish, vain, and outrageously promiscuous. Her few defenders often attempt to exonerate Katherine by claiming that she was chaste, innocent of the adultery charges brought against her, or a victim of rape. Both detractors and defenders usually reduce Katherine to her sexuality.

However, the surviving primary sources about Katherine reveal a more complex individual. In fact, examination of conduct books for young women of her time often coincide nicely with Katherine's behavior, as described by her contemporaries. Thus, Katherine's sudden fall proved shocking in her own time, and modern historians are still baffled by the woman who likely dared to cuckold a man who had already had one wife executed on adultery charges.

This work examines the life, behavior, and personality of Katherine Howard, arguing that she was a complex woman who should not be reduced to her sexuality. I first examine Katherine's biography based on primary sources. I then discuss the historiography on her life. Next, I turn to the conduct books describing ideal feminine behavior for young Englishwomen in the sixteenth century, and look at how these books can be linked to Katherine. Finally, I provide a feminist reinterpretation of Katherine

Howard, focusing on elements of her life outside of her sexuality to present a generous, compassionate, and likeable woman. Most importantly, I argue that chastity should not be the sole, or even primary, means by which women are judged, and changing the ways we study Katherine can open new ways in which to study all women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Shortly after their marriage, King Henry VIII famously called his young bride, Katherine Howard, his “rose without a thorn.” Less than two years later, Henry was devastated and disillusioned to find that his wife, his “jewel for womanhood,” whom he had believed to be perfect, had entered their marriage with sexual experience and, moreover, had even been accused of adultery while married to him. Katherine’s execution took place shortly after the exposure of her alleged infidelity.

Based on perceptions of her behavior and personality, Katherine has been much maligned in popular memory. However, upon closer examination of the primary sources, Katherine appears to have been, at least outwardly, an almost “ideal” sixteenth-century Englishwoman, and the perfect queen to the aging king. Conduct books and works regarding women published in England between 1529 and 1579, which emphasize the qualities of chastity, obedience, and silence above all other virtues, often coincide nicely with Katherine’s behavior at the time of her marriage, as described by her contemporaries.

To the courtly observer, Katherine obviously appeared chaste. If her behavior had in any way raised alarm, Henry would not have shown interest in her. Indeed, even as Henry started to fall in love with Katherine and annulment proceedings for his marriage to his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, began, no mention is made in the primary documents regarding Katherine’s behavior. Where two of Henry’s previous wives, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour, had incited comment regarding their chastity in the state papers prior to their marriages to Henry, no record exists of Katherine Howard’s behavior raising

eyebrows.<sup>1</sup> Henry's shock when rumors of Katherine's affair before their marriage took place further establishes Katherine's presumed chastity. Henry's initial response to hearing that his wife had been sexually experienced before their marriage was one of utter disbelief. Surely he would not have been so stunned had Katherine shown any promiscuous tendencies earlier.

Additionally, based on the surviving sources, Katherine appeared to have been obedient to the powerful men in her life. In fact, she chose as her motto the phrase, "No other will but his." If the words did truly come from Katherine, the motto illustrates Katherine's recognition that obedience was expected of her. If Henry had suggested the motto for her, it certainly would have made her role as wife and queen clear to her. Henry's delight with his young bride suggests that she obeyed him; based on his treatment of his other wives and his daughters, he would not have tolerated disobedience from Katherine or have been so pleased with her had she been noncompliant. Katherine also proved submissive to her uncle, Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, even after her marriage to Henry, as some of her interventions in state affairs occurred at Norfolk's prompting.

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<sup>1</sup> Imperial Ambassador Eustace Chapuys repeatedly called Anne Boleyn a "concubine" and "the Great Whore." Anne's successor, Jane Seymour, should have proved more likeable to Chapuys for a variety of reasons, including commonalities in religion and sympathy for Catherine of Aragon and Princess Mary. Nevertheless, Chapuys also questioned Jane's chastity, noting that at twenty-five years old and having lived at the English court, he would leave the reader to guess at Jane's suitability for marriage. It is clearly a snide remark upon not only Jane, but the entire English court, as Chapuys obviously doubts Jane's virginity. United Kingdom, Public Records Office, "Chapuys to Antoine Perrenot," 18 May 1536, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 10:1536)*, Entry Number 901, Page 373, Gale: State Papers Online.

Little record exists of Katherine's speech; yet, it seems reasonable to believe that she adhered to the expectations of "silence." When Henry's wives had too much to say for his tastes, the incidents were often recorded. Anne Boleyn became infamous for her sharp tongue. Katherine Parr argued with Henry over religion, and narrowly avoided disaster because of her opinions. Even Henry's beloved Jane Seymour once attempted to intervene in state affairs, and Henry brutally reminded her of her predecessor's fate after she had meddled in state affairs— an ominous reference to Anne Boleyn, whose execution had occurred only months earlier.<sup>2</sup> Katherine's few recorded instances of public speech illustrate qualities admired in women, though, such as generosity and kindness. For example, she interceded on behalf of political prisoners, and requested permission from Henry to provide warm clothing to the elderly imprisoned Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury. Thus, in the limited evidence surviving of Katherine's speech, she still exhibits desirable feminine characteristics.

Therefore, when Katherine's carefully constructed house of cards collapsed, Henry, the English court, and all of Europe were stunned by the revelation that her ideal femininity had been little more than a sham. Having slept with perhaps three men in her life, by the standards of her time, Katherine was far from chaste. She may have been obedient in all matters but one, and that one rule of loyalty to the king was critical. As unfaithfulness in a queen consort could alter the succession and lead to an illegitimate heir, Katherine's alleged affair amounted to high treason.

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<sup>2</sup> "Unknown to the Cardinal Du Bellay," 24 Oct 1536, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 11:1536)*, Entry Number 860, Page 345, Gale: State Papers Online.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, Katherine broke the silence of the entire court and all of Europe on Henry's condition, although she did so without words. Henry's delight in Katherine no doubt had much to do with the fact that his pretty young bride found him desirable. Given her sexual history and the fact that Katherine attracted several men throughout the course of her short life, she likely could have had her choice of the handsome young men at court. In marrying Henry and outwardly showing adoration for him, she convinced the aging king that he remained the most desirable man in Europe. Katherine's betrayal, thus, sent Henry crashing into a harsh reality. He now became forced to admit that he was past his prime and no longer handsome; the best years of his life were past. If Katherine had noticed, the court had noticed as well. By being cuckolded, Henry would become the laughingstock of Europe, as people saw that he was no longer the pinnacle of manhood, but thought that he could satisfy a teenager. While she did not say so in words, Katherine told Henry and the world that the king could not sexually satisfy a woman, and in so doing, devastated his massive ego.

If Katherine Howard was shocking in her own day, she remains so in the twenty-first century. Her actions and behavior remain somewhat inexplicable as modern day scholars attempt to make sense of her foolhardy decision to cuckold a man who had already executed one wife on charges of adultery. The ways in which Katherine has been studied have varied greatly over the centuries, but the driving force behind these investigations and the conclusions drawn is often determined by the author's perception of a "perfect woman," and how well Katherine fits into that mold.

If Katherine had ultimately upheld the standards of femininity to which she seemed to adhere, she would likely be lauded as a great queen. If she had provided Henry with a son and maintained her chastity, or at least not been caught, she would probably be appreciated as an ideal queen consort. Conversely, if she had outwardly and obviously failed throughout her life to behave like a respectable sixteenth century woman, she would have been lost to history, as Henry would never have married her.

The reality was far more complicated, though. As a result, historians have been left wondering what could have possessed Katherine to attempt to fool the king. The dominant theory does not flatter Katherine. Most historians judge her by the same standards of behavior expected of an early modern Englishwoman, and, perhaps unwittingly, assume that because she broke the cardinal rule of chastity, she must have failed completely in adhering to expectations of femininity. Therefore, Katherine has often been depicted as stupid, promiscuous, foolish, greedy, and vain. Other historians take a far different approach, and assume that Katherine did in fact adhere to the accepted standards of femininity of her time. These scholars argue that she was innocent of the charges of adultery brought against her, and some even argue that she was raped and sexually assaulted by the men with whom she had been romantically involved. Regardless of the scholar's view in this dichotomy, they work within the same paradigm. Almost all of Katherine's biographers reduce their studies of her to her sexuality. Some scholars choose this reductive methodology to condemn her. Others attempt to exonerate Katherine by focusing on her sexuality and arguing for her innocence. Neither view allows for the complications which Katherine's case presents.

In this thesis, I argue that Queen Katherine Howard was a more complex individual than she has been portrayed to date. Rather than look primarily at her sexual history, I focus on other elements of Katherine's life and personality to present a multifaceted woman. I begin by outlining Katherine's biography based on primary sources. Next, I look at the current historiography on Katherine and the ways in which she has been represented by other scholars. I then move on to discussing the conduct books of early modern England, which illuminate the standards of femininity to which an "ideal" woman was expected to adhere and the ways in which those books can be linked to Katherine. Finally, I analyze Katherine Howard's life and personality through a feminist lens.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Katherine's Biography

Katherine Howard's date and place of birth remain unknown. She was born sometime between 1518 and 1524; many historians estimate her date of birth to be around 1522. Katherine was one of the youngest of ten children, and her mother, Jocasta, died when Katherine was very young.<sup>3</sup> Her father, Edmund, was a member of the prestigious and noble Howard family. Katherine's uncle, Thomas Howard, was the Duke of Norfolk, one of the first peers of the realm. Despite his noble lineage, though, Katherine's father was very poor, and he never attained King Henry's favor the way others in his family had. Edmund had served as comptroller at Calais, but rather than being recognized for his service to the crown, he lived constantly in debt. His pleas for assistance from the king, made using Thomas Cromwell as intercessor, proved in vain.<sup>4</sup> The few surviving primary sources regarding Edmund show a sickly and almost effeminate man, physically abused by his wife (Katherine's stepmother) and frequently complaining about his circumstances. His willingness to share with others the fact that his wife "hath sore beaten" him and that kidney stones caused him to urinate in his bed may at least in part explain his unpopularity and lack of success in this masculine society.<sup>5</sup>

While still a child, Katherine was sent to live with her wealthy step-grandmother,

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<sup>3</sup> Jocasta has also been called "Joyce" in various documents, and historians use both names interchangeably.

<sup>4</sup> "R.O. Lord Edmund Howard to Cromwell," 8 Feb 1532, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 5: 1531-1532)*, Entry Number 786, Page 373, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>5</sup> "R. O. Lord Edmund Howard to Lady Lisle," 1535, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 8: 1535)*, Entry Number 797, Page 299, Gale: State Papers Online.

Agnes Tilney, dowager Duchess of Norfolk, for her education. The extent of Katherine's education is unknown. Most historians assume that Katherine received a very poor education, but it does seem that she was able to read and write, making her as well-educated as many upper-class Tudor women, and certainly better educated than the majority of women living in England at her time. The household lodged several young women, and the duchess provided little supervision for them, despite the presence of several young men on the premises. Many nights after the duchess had gone to bed, one of the girls would steal her key to the dormitory and open the door to the young men of the household.

When Katherine was still quite young—probably her early teens—she became romantically involved with her music tutor, Henry Manox. The relationship was likely not fully consummated, but Manox later admitted that he had seen the “secret parts” of Katherine’s body.<sup>6</sup> Mary Lassells, another girl in the household, eventually approached Manox and warned him about getting too close to Katherine, arguing that Katherine’s family would never approve of him as a potential spouse. Manox told Mary that he had no interest in marrying Katherine, and that his intentions were far less honorable than marriage. When Mary reported his words back to Katherine, Katherine was outraged, and her relationship with Manox soon ended.

Shortly afterward, Katherine fell in love with Francis Dereham, one of the duchess’ gentleman ushers. Dereham became one of the young men who frequented the dormitory

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<sup>6</sup> “R. O. The Council to Paget, Ambassador in France,” 12 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1334, Page 615, Gale: State Papers Online.

at night, and the lovers consummated their affair. Later, Katherine, Dereham, and witnesses would give conflicting accounts of how long the relationship lasted, but Katherine admitted to sleeping with him many times. Although Katherine later denied it, it seems that she and Dereham considered themselves married at the time of their relationship. Because the earliest date in which Katherine lived with the duchess is unknown, the length of the affair cannot be definitively determined; it appears to have lasted at least several months, though.

Katherine left the Duchess' household in 1540, when her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, secured a position for her in the entourage of the soon-to-be queen, Anne of Cleves. The marriage to Anne occurred for political reasons, but despite his difficult marital history, Henry remained a romantic at heart and hoped to love his new bride. Before he agreed to the marriage, he had commissioned a portrait of her, and he found himself attracted to the portrait before even meeting the sitter. When Anne arrived in England, though, Henry VIII was not as impressed with her appearance as he had been with her portrait. However, he quickly found himself attracted to Katherine, approximately thirty years his junior. Disgusted by Anne and unable or unwilling to consummate the marriage, Henry had his latest union annulled just six months after the wedding.

By July of 1540, the rumor that Henry would marry Katherine Howard had spread throughout England. On July 21, French ambassador Marillac wrote to Francis I of the rumor that the king "will marry a lady of great beauty, daughter of Norfolk's deceased

brother,” and that the marriage may have already taken place.<sup>7</sup> Henry quietly married Katherine on July 28, 1540. On August 15, England’s churches publicly prayed for their new queen.<sup>8</sup>

It seems that initially the marriage between King Henry and Queen Katherine was happy. By 1540, Henry had already had four wives, was suffering from severe and chronic pain due to a leg ulcer that would not heal, and the once active king had begun to gain a significant amount of weight. Shortly after the wedding, though, Montmorency noted that the King “was never in better health.”<sup>9</sup> By many accounts, Henry lavished affection and jewels on his new queen. According to Marillac and Imperial Ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, some people believed that he would divorce Katherine and return to Anne of Cleves when Katherine did not quickly become pregnant, and even that Anne of Cleves herself was pregnant, but these persistent rumors were completely unfounded. The suspicions that Henry would take back Anne may have been the result of the friendly relationship he maintained with her, as he called her his sister and welcomed her at court. Both Marillac and Chapuys mentioned the rumors but dismissed them completely. Marillac wrote that “the report that this King would repudiate the new Queen and take

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<sup>7</sup> “Marillac to Francis I,” 21 July 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 901, Page 446, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>8</sup> “Marillac to Montmorency,” 15 Aug 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 976, Page 490, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>9</sup> “Montmorency to Marillac,” 24 Aug 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1001, Page 497, Gale: State Papers Online.

back the other is false. The cause of the bruit was that the said lady, who was thought to be enceinte...”<sup>10</sup>

No confirmed contemporary image of Katherine exists. Throughout her reign, she had been described as petite and pretty, with auburn hair. Two portraits of women wearing dress from the reign of Henry VIII have commonly been called Katherine Howard, although the women in the portraits bear little resemblance to one another. One of the paintings often described as depicting Katherine Howard shows a woman in a black mourning dress. The picture therefore seems quite unlikely to actually be Katherine. Portraits at this time were expensive and rarely painted except for the upper nobility. As Katherine lived in poverty and relative obscurity and unimportance before her marriage to Henry, she would almost certainly not have had her portrait painted. Any image that may exist of her would have been painted after her marriage. Having not lost anyone close to her after her marriage to Henry, she would have had no reason to wear mourning apparel at that time. Antonia Fraser has suggested that the painting depicts Elizabeth Seymour, sister to Jane Seymour. This attribution makes more sense, as the sitter does resemble Jane, and, as Fraser notes, Elizabeth Seymour was a young widow, so the black attire would have been appropriate for her.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> “Marillac to Montmorency,” 11 Oct 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 142, Page 67, Gale: State Papers Online. “Chapuys to Charles V,” 2 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 421, Page 211, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>11</sup> Antonia Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1992), 315.

The other painting commonly called “Katherine Howard,” though, seems a much more likely fit, as David Starkey convincingly argues.<sup>12</sup> The image, painted by Hans Holbein, depicts a young woman with auburn hair and a slight, almost quizzical smile. Most notably, she wears jewelry matching descriptions of the royal jewels, which Henry gave to Katherine upon their marriage.<sup>13</sup> Based on the time period of the sitter’s dress and the jewels she wears, we can be certain that she is one of Henry’s wives. All of his other wives have at least one confirmed portrait in existence, and none of them resembles the woman in this image. As such, it seems reasonable to infer that the painting does indeed depict Katherine Howard.

Finally, in addition to these two painted portraits, some historians, including Antonia Fraser, believe that a stained glass window depicting the Queen of Sheba at King’s College Chapel may actually be a portrait of Katherine Howard. Fraser notes that the initials “H” and “K” appear in the tracery, and that, as the work was done by Dierick Vellert, who had been in Constantinople until after Catherine of Aragon’s fall, the “K” cannot be Catherine of Aragon’s initial. Unfortunately, Fraser makes no note of Henry’s sixth wife, Catherine Parr, and whether the “K” may have represented her initial rather than Katherine Howard’s. A stained glass window “of about the same period” as the initials depicts King Solomon, who looks strikingly like Henry VIII. Kneeling at his feet is the Queen of Sheba.<sup>14</sup> If this window was created during Katherine Howard’s short

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<sup>12</sup> David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003), 651.

<sup>13</sup> “The Queen’s Jewels,” Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1389, Page 636, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>14</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 352.

reign, it is likely, then, that the Queen of Sheba, “with her short nose and full lips, sensual and suppliant, presenting gifts to Solomon, preserves, however fleetingly, the likeness of Katherine Howard.”<sup>15</sup>

Although most historians dismiss Katherine’s political role as negligible, she does seem to have been at least somewhat active in state affairs. She exchanged letters with the Archbishop of York, Edward Lee, requesting promotions for some of her chaplains.<sup>16</sup> Multiple grants of homes and land were made to her friends and servants. According to Marillac, Katherine’s request secured a position in Calais for her uncle, William Howard, the Duke of Norfolk’s brother; apparently, the duke had been unsuccessfully attempting to place his brother in this position for a year, but Katherine was able to convince the king.<sup>17</sup> In her most significant political contributions, she interceded on behalf of prisoners, securing several releases and pardons. The Privy Council noted that Sir Thomas Wyatt, imprisoned due to his closeness to Henry’s fallen secretary, Thomas Cromwell, received a pardon “at the great suit of the Queen.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the March list of grants notes that Wyatt, Sir John Wallop, a diplomat representing Henry in France, and

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<sup>15</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 332.

<sup>16</sup> “Abp. Lee to the Queen,” 7 Dec 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 316, Page 139, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>17</sup> “R.O. Marillac to Francis I,” 12 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 449, Page 221, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>18</sup> “R. O. The Privy Council to Lord William Howard,” 26 Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 660, Page 318, Gale: State Papers Online.

John Mason, Wyatt's secretary, were pardoned "at the intercession of Queen Katherine."<sup>19</sup> Katherine's role in these intercessions will be discussed in more detail later.

Unfortunately, even as all appeared well in the royal household, Katherine's past quickly came back to haunt her. Immediately upon hearing of Katherine's rise to power, Joan Bulmer, an old acquaintance from the Duchess's household, contacted her to ask for a position at court—the nearer Katherine, the better. The letter seems friendly enough, with declarations of love for the new queen and desire for her welfare. The message ended on an ominous note, though. Joan remarked that she chose to write due to the "perfect honesty" she had always found in Katherine, and which she has heard from others still remains.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps Joan meant these words sincerely, or as an attempt to flatter the new queen. However, the terms "honesty" and "chastity" often proved interchangeable in sixteenth century England, as seen in the conduct books of the time. If she did in fact intend to allude to Katherine's chastity, or rather lack thereof, Katherine should rightly have felt threatened. Joan begs for an answer to her letter, as she trusts that "the quyne of Bretane wyll not forget her secretary."<sup>21</sup> It appears that Joan had served as Katherine's "secretary" in the Duchess's household, helping Katherine to send letters to Dereham. Joan knew about Katherine's past, and it seems that she would not hesitate to

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<sup>19</sup> "Grants in March 1541," Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 678, Page 325, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>20</sup> "Jone Bulmer to Katharine Howard," 12 July 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 875, Page 438, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>21</sup> "Jone Bulmer to Katharine Howard," 12 July 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 875, Page 438, Gale: State Papers Online.

share what she knew. Katherine obligingly gave Joan a position at court. Her former lover, Francis Dereham, also asked for a position and Katherine placed him as a gentleman usher at court. On August 29, 1540, the Privy Council notes that a man has been imprisoned for “words about the Queen.”<sup>22</sup> No comment is made about what has been said, and whether the words relate to rumors of Katherine’s past.

Moreover, while Katherine’s marriage to Henry appears to have been mostly happy, it was not quite perfect—Henry still hoped for another son. His first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had been crowned queen the day of Henry’s own coronation, and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, had received a splendid coronation. After his first two wives, though, Henry delayed having his new queens crowned. Although the fact never was stated explicitly, most people believed that Henry would only grant his queen (whomever she may be at the time) a coronation if she were able to provide him a son.<sup>23</sup> By April 1541, Marillac wrote that the queen was “thought to be with child,” and that Henry believed it to be true and planned to have Katherine crowned at Whitsuntide. The gentlemen of the court immediately began practicing for the tournaments and jousts that would take place upon the birth of the royal child.<sup>24</sup> Whether Katherine herself ever believed she was

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<sup>22</sup> “The Privy Council,” *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1016, Page 501, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>23</sup> Henry’s third wife, Jane Seymour, likely would have received her triumphant coronation for providing Henry with his long awaited son, the future Edward VI. Sadly, she died of puerperal fever nine days after Edward’s birth. Jane’s tragic end was not at all uncommon in the early modern period; a great many women died of puerperal fever, or “childbed fever.” The result of Jane’s untimely death was that England had not had a crowned queen since Anne Boleyn.

<sup>24</sup> “R. O. Marillac to Montmorency,” 10 April 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 712, Page 339, Gale: State Papers Online.

pregnant is unknown. Perhaps she did in fact become pregnant and suffered an early miscarriage. In any case, Katherine did not give birth, and no other mention survives in the State Papers of her pregnancy or its exposure to be false or terminated.

Shortly thereafter, Katherine appears to have begun to doubt her position in Henry's favor, perhaps due to the pregnancy disappointment. Chapuys reports that the queen had been "rather sad," and when Henry asked for the reason, she attributed her sadness to the rumor that Henry wanted to take back Anne of Cleves. He assured her that she was "wrong to think such things," and that even if he were free to remarry, he would not take back Anne.<sup>25</sup> While Henry's exact words to Katherine remain unknown, his attempt to reassure her seems questionable, and probably did little to ease her mind. At least in Chapuys' account, Henry, rather than assuring Katherine of his love for her, tried to convince her of his disinterest in Anne.

Two months later, a somewhat bizarre event occurred, leading one to again question Henry's devotion to Katherine. According to Chapuys, an "unpremeditated fray" had recently occurred, and eight young men had killed an older man in the incident.<sup>26</sup> Amongst the people executed for the murder was Katherine's cousin, Thomas Fiennes, the ninth Lord Dacres. Sixteenth century England was certainly not known for being a squeamish land; yet, somewhat strangely, Dacres' execution inspired much pity. Chapuys does not provide a reason for the outpouring of public sympathy, but notes that the judges

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<sup>25</sup> "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 26 May 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 864, Page 409, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>26</sup> "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 2 July 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 954, Page 466, Gale: State Papers Online.

had wept when they sentenced him, and had even asked the king to pardon him. Rather than being pardoned, Dacres faced a very public and ignominious execution. Chapuys comments on the strangeness of this event, as another one of the perpetrators did receive a pardon from the king. No record survives of whether Katherine attempted to intervene on her cousin's behalf, as she had done for others throughout her reign. Nevertheless, the execution of her cousin, especially such a humiliating execution, suggests that all may not have been well for the royal marriage.

Katherine went on progress with Henry in 1541. Toward the end of July, “the King and Queen, and all the train, [were] merry.”<sup>27</sup> Rumors of Katherine's coronation began again, and people believed that she would be crowned at York. Once again, nothing came of these rumors, as disaster would soon befall Katherine.

Late in 1541, John Lassells, brother to the aforementioned Mary Lassells (now Mary Hall), mentioned to his sister that, because she had been friends with Katherine in the duchess' household, she should ask for a position in the queen's household. Mary responded flippantly—she had no interest in serving Katherine, who was “light, both in living and conditions.” When John asked Mary what she meant, and told him everything she knew of Katherine's affairs with Manox and Dereham.<sup>28</sup> Lassells, a devout Protestant reformer (who would later be burned at the stake for heresy) seized this opportunity to

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<sup>27</sup> “The Council with the King to the Council in London,” 21 July 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1019, Page 486, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>28</sup> “R. O. The Council to Paget, Ambassador in France,” 12 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1334, Page 615, Gale: State Papers Online.

remove the religiously conservative queen from the throne, and told Archbishop Thomas Cranmer what he had learned from Mary.

Ironically, on the day chosen by Cranmer to reveal Katherine's betrayal to the king, Henry had the churches publicly thank God for the happiness he had found with his latest queen. As Henry left the church that morning, Cranmer slipped him a letter containing the details of Katherine's relationship with Dereham. Henry was incredulous, believing that someone had simply started an ugly but unfounded rumor about his queen, but he still ordered an investigation.

Rather than clearing Katherine's name, the investigation soon uncovered the truth about her past. They examined Henry Manox on November 5, who admitted to having fallen in love with Katherine, and she with him.<sup>29</sup> Manox also admitted to having exposed Katherine's relationship with Dereham to the duchess. Although the questioning likely proved quite frightening for Manox, he was ultimately the only one of Katherine's purported lovers to escape with his life.

Meanwhile, the investigators soon discovered the presence of Francis Dereham in the queen's household. Dereham was questioned about the nature of his relationship with Katherine, and he admitted to having known her carnally, but that they had agreed to marry. According to Dereham, he and Katherine had done nothing wrong. Finally, in his attempt to prove that his affair with the queen had ended before her marriage to Henry,

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<sup>29</sup> "About Katharine Howard," 5 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1320, Page 608, Gale: State Papers Online.

Dereham provided the most damning evidence against Katherine—he told his questioners that Thomas Culpepper had taken his place in Katherine’s affections.

Thomas Culpepper was a distant cousin to Katherine on her mother’s side, a gentleman of the privy chamber, and a close friend to Henry VIII. Even before his relationship with Katherine began, Culpepper had proven himself lecherous. In 1539, he was accused of raping a park-keeper’s wife, and then murdering a villager who tried to accost him. He received a pardon from the king, and did not fall from favor at that time. He was appointed to greet Anne of Cleves when she arrived in England in 1540, and would likely have met Katherine in that year. He travelled with the court on progress in 1541, when the accusations of improper behavior took place.

After Dereham’s betrayal in mentioning the Culpepper affair, the ladies closest to Katherine confessed to everything they knew about Katherine’s relationship with Culpepper, most likely to save themselves from falling with her. They were unable to provide much evidence—one had noticed Katherine looking longingly at Culpepper, another noted that she was not in bed late at night—but it was enough to condemn the lovers. According to these reports, on multiple evenings, Katherine had met privately with Thomas Culpepper, her cousin and a gentleman of the Privy Chamber, using Lady Jane Rochford, George Boleyn’s widow, as a liaison.<sup>30</sup> There is no concrete proof that

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<sup>30</sup> George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, had been accused of adultery and incest with his sister, Queen Anne Boleyn, as well as mocking the king’s virility (or lack thereof). George was executed on May 17, 1536, two days before his sister. The extent of Jane’s involvement in her husband’s demise remains unknown, but popular belief held that she testified against him, and her own eventual downfall eventually came to be seen by many as a sort of poetic justice after she betrayed her husband.

Julia Fox, *Jane Boleyn: The True Story of the Infamous Lady Rochford* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009), 303.

Katherine and Culpepper had a physical affair, but circumstantial evidence suggests that they did. The only surviving letter written by Katherine appears to be a love letter to Culpepper—she writes “It makes my heart die to think I cannot be always in your company,” and signs the letter “Yours as long as life endures.”<sup>31</sup> Whatever the true nature of their relationship, the closeness and secrecy with which they carried it out was certainly suspicious.

Meanwhile, Marillac reported that Henry had begun to enjoy the company of other ladies at Hampton Court, and seemed as happy as Marillac had ever seen him.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, Marillac acknowledged that all did not seem well with Henry, and rumors had begun that he again wished to change his wife. By the 11 of November, Katherine had been confined to her chamber. Marillac noted that strange events were occurring at the English court, but apart from the knowledge that Katherine was involved, nothing could be known for certain.<sup>33</sup> On November 11, the Privy Council wrote to Cranmer that the queen would be moved to Syon House, and that she would not be allowed to have any cloth of estate and she would have only a limited household to serve her.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “R. O. Katharine [Howard] to Culpepper,” 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1134, Page 534, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>32</sup> “Marillac to Francis I,” 11 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1019, Page 486, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>33</sup> “Marillac to Francis I,” 21 July 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1332, Page 613, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>34</sup> “The Privy Council to [Cranmer, and Others],” 11 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1331, Page 613, Gale: State Papers Online.

When she was finally questioned by Thomas Cranmer, Katherine admitted to having a sexual relationship with Dereham before her marriage to the king, although she denied a betrothal. In her panic, Katherine probably did not realize that admitting to a precontract with Dereham may have been a chance at survival; if she were already married to Dereham, her marriage to the king would have been invalid. If she had never truly been married to the king, she legally should have escaped the adultery charges. It would have been only a sliver of hope, though, as Henry probably would have overlooked the technicality and had Katherine executed, as he had done with Anne Boleyn. In any case, for reasons known only to Katherine herself, she continually and adamantly denied a betrothal to Dereham. Both Katherine and Culpepper adamantly denied their relationship, although Culpepper confessed to desiring it.<sup>35</sup>

Culpepper and Dereham were tried for treason on December 1, 1541.<sup>36</sup> They both plead guilty after the charges were read. Both men were executed on December 3; Dereham was hanged, drawn and quartered, while Culpepper's sentence was commuted to beheading due to his noble status.

Katherine was removed to Syon Abbey, where she remained until February of 1542. She never received the opportunity to defend herself in court. The council finally convicted her of treason by an Act of Attainder, and she was taken to the Tower of London on February 11. She was beheaded two days later, along with her accomplice,

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<sup>35</sup> "R. O. Marillac to Francis," Dec 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1426, Page 665, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>36</sup> "R. O. Trial of Thos. Culpeper and Fras. Dereham for Treason," 1 Dec 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1395, Page 645, Gale: State Papers Online.

Jane Rochford. Marillac, who was not an eyewitness, described reports of Katherine's being very pale and weak, and needing assistance to climb the scaffold.<sup>37</sup> It does appear that she maintained her composure, though. She died proclaiming the justice of her execution, the goodness of the king, and her faith in the blood of Christ.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> "R. O. Marillac to Francis," 13 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 100, Page 44, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>38</sup> United Kingdom, Public Records Office, "R.O. Otwell Johnson to his Brother, John Johnson," 15 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 106, Page 45, Gale: State Papers Online.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Katherine in Historical Writings

The relative lack of primary sources about Katherine Howard leaves much open to speculation. Over the centuries, many historians and biographers have attempted to analyze Katherine's life and actions. In this section, I will examine the works written about Katherine in chronological order. In some ways, the historiography reflects the time periods at which the authors are writing. In others, though, the works stand out as unique, and sometimes scholars writing at similar times come to different conclusions based on the sources they use and the ways in which they view women.

The anonymously written primary source, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England. Being A Contemporary Record of Some of the Principle Events of the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI*, more commonly known as the *Spanish Chronicle* has often been treated as a reliable source about the reign of Henry VIII, especially by earlier scholars. The author remains unknown, although editor and translator Martin A. Sharpe Hume has suggested that the chronicler may have been a merchant, trader, interpreter, or mercenary soldier.<sup>39</sup> The author first wrote the book in the sixteenth century; the date composed also remains unknown. Of eleven contemporary copies found of the manuscript, a year was found on one of them, dating the copy to 1556.<sup>40</sup> The time period at which the manuscript was written seems to lend credibility to the book's content. However, the *Spanish Chronicle* is actually riddled with errors, and has been mostly discredited by modern

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<sup>39</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England. Being A Contemporary Record of Some of the Principle Events of the Reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI*, ed. by Martin A. Sharp Hume (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), xix-xx.

<sup>40</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, xv.

historians. Nevertheless, it tells a fascinating, albeit wildly inaccurate, story of Katherine Howard.

The *Spanish Chronicle*'s outline of Katherine's life contains several significant errors. According to the author, Katherine was Henry's fourth wife, and had been a maid to Prince Edward. On one of Henry's frequent visits to Edward, Katherine bowed to him, according to the chronicle, and Henry raised her, saying "Katharine, from now henceforward I wish you never to do that again, but rather that all these ladies and my whole kingdom should bend the knee to you, for I wish to make you Queen."<sup>41</sup> In this account, Katherine and Henry were married the following day. After the marriage, though, the new queen became "extremely haughty."<sup>42</sup> The author describes her as a "mere child," and notes that she quarreled with "Madam Mary" because her ladies paid as much respect to the king's daughter as to the queen herself. In Katherine's frustration at this lack of respect, she had Henry send Mary away from court and (inexplicably) Prince Edward went with Mary.<sup>43</sup>

The *Spanish Chronicle* also offers an interesting interpretation of the affair with Culpepper. In this version of events, no mention is made of Dereham or Manox, and Katherine and Culpepper had loved one another before Katherine met the king. "The devil being strong in her," Katherine attempted to tell two of her ladies of her affection for Culpepper in order to receive their assistance in carrying out the desired affair. When the first lady expressed her loyalty to the king, Katherine refused to tell her anything, and

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<sup>41</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 75.

<sup>42</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 76-77.

<sup>43</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 76.

“thenceforward did not show her the same affection as formerly.”<sup>44</sup> This little story represents an unusual side note in the otherwise concise work; the haughty and somewhat vindictive character drawn by the chronicler is not borne out by the other primary sources about Katherine. According to the chronicler, Katherine then spoke to a lady named Jane; she did tell Jane that she was in love with Culpepper and requested her cooperation in helping Katherine and Culpepper meet privately<sup>45</sup>. Jane was appalled by Katherine’s request, and said ““Madam, you are indeed bound on a bad road, and I would not fail to tell about it for all the riches in the world;” she then reported Katherine’s words to the Duke of Somerset, Prince Edward’s uncle. The duke reported the affair to Henry, who ordered Culpepper arrested. Katherine was taken to the Tower, and was there questioned by Thomas Cromwell and the Dukes of Somerset and Norfolk, who found her “nearly dead.”<sup>46</sup> Whether Katherine’s “nearly dead” appearance was due to grief, fear, or actual illness goes unmentioned. Meanwhile, Culpepper confessed under threat of torture to being in love with the queen and having exchanged letters with her. The chronicle never suggests that the relationship went further than those two letters, but argues that the mutual love of Culpepper and Katherine and the letters exchanged were enough to condemn them. Henry wanted to save Katherine and execute Culpepper, but his council advised him to kill them both.

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<sup>44</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 83.

<sup>45</sup> The chronicle does not provide a surname, but it seems likely that “Jane” represents Jane Rochford in this story, although her role proves quite different in this version than in reality.

<sup>46</sup> At the time of Katherine’s arrest, the future Duke of Somerset was still the Earl of Hertford. Thomas Cromwell was dead, having been executed on the very day of Katherine’s marriage to Henry.

Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 85.

The chronicler quotes Katherine's speech on the scaffold; his version of her speech distinctly contrasts the version provided by a true eyewitness to Katherine's execution, proving its falsity; however, it has often been quoted as Katherine's final words.<sup>47</sup> In the Spanish Chronicle, Katherine addresses the witnesses to her execution by saying:

Brothers, by the journey upon which I am bound I have not wrong the King, but it is true that long before the King took me I loved Culpepper, and I wish to God I had done as he wished me, for at the time the King wanted to take me he [Culpepper] urged me to say that I was pledged to him. If I had done as he advised me I should not die this death, nor would he. I would rather have him for a husband than be mistress of the world, but sin blinded me and greed of grandeur, and since mine is the fault mine also is the suffering, and my great sorrow is that Culpepper should have to die through me."<sup>48</sup>

Turning to the headsman, she said, "Pray hasten with thy office."<sup>49</sup> As the executioner knelt before her and requested her forgiveness, she proclaimed, "I die a Queen, but I would rather die the wife of Culpepper. God have mercy on my soul. Good people, I beg you pray for me."<sup>50</sup> She was beheaded and buried next to Anne Boleyn. The chronicler then notes that Culpepper was executed the following day; another inaccuracy, as Culpepper was executed in December of 1541, whereas Katherine's execution occurred in February. This fascinating and erroneous account of Katherine's life has provided a

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<sup>47</sup> No record exists of Katherine's actual final words. Otwell Johnson, an eyewitness, wrote to his brother following the executions of Katherine Howard and Jane Rochford, and he claimed that the women died bravely, calling their punishment "worthy and just," commending their souls to God, and asking the witnesses to obey the king and praying for King Henry's welfare. This letter will be discussed in further detail later. "Otwell Johnson to his Brother, John Johnson," 15 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 106, Page 45, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>48</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 86.

<sup>49</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 86.

<sup>50</sup> Anonymous, *Chronicle of King Henry VIII of England*, 86.

source for several of Katherine's biographers, adding inaccuracies to many of her biographies.

The anonymously published 1722 book, *The cries of royal blood, being a history of the kings and queens of England, who were most barbarously muder'd by their own subjects*, offers a vastly different approach to Katherine Howard's story. The chapter on Katherine begins with a brief discussion of the fates of Henry's first four queens; the author blames the king for the failures of his marriages and says that "these tokens of his inconstancy and cruelty to his wives were sufficient warnings for any woman to take care of his fickle embrace."<sup>51</sup> The splendor of the court and the love of the king proved strong temptations to Katherine Howard, though, and she married Henry despite his previous marital troubles.<sup>52</sup> The author explains the king's love for Katherine, saying she "had wit and beauty... and a graceful, yet not proud, carriage, which were recommendations enough to make her a king's comfort."<sup>53</sup>

The king, though, "the greatest adulterer in all his dominions," quickly lost interest in each of his wives, and Katherine Howard was no exception.<sup>54</sup> She was arrested on false charges of adultery, accusations made "upon a few innuendos."<sup>55</sup> Although she defended herself well against the charges, Henry had already decided to kill her, and therefore she had no hope of survival. Despite her knowledge that she would shortly die, Katherine

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<sup>51</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood, being a history of the kings and queens of Englad, who were most barbarously murder'd by their own subjects, The whole interspers'd with politieal (sic) remarks, and original letters, The second ed, corrected* (London: printed by W. H. and sold by J. Roberts, 1722), 57.

<sup>52</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 57.

<sup>53</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 57.

<sup>54</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 59.

<sup>55</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 61.

never lost her courage, as she knew herself to be innocent, according to the author. Upon her execution, she climbed the scaffold and “smilingly said to the gentlemen who attended her, that she was then climbing to Heaven, and tho’ her way to it was through a stream of blood, yet her soul was willing to wade through it, to be the sooner with her Saviour...”<sup>56</sup> She prayed on the scaffold for a while, and though she wept bitterly, she never lost her cheerful countenance.<sup>57</sup> Upon Katherine’s death, Henry quickly married Katherine Parr.

Katherine Howard came to be studied in more detail in the secondary literature starting in the nineteenth century. Patrick Fraser Tytler’s 1837 biography of Henry, *Life of King Henry the Eighth* offers a brief history of Katherine’s life.<sup>58</sup> Tytler’s Katherine is beautiful, and Henry quickly becomes enamored of her.<sup>59</sup> However, evidence of her premarital relationship with Dereham and her affair with Culpepper eventually come to light. Tytler claims that that the story is “too painful and revolting to be minutely detailed”<sup>60</sup> but does not say whether Katherine’s infidelity was painful and revolting, or Henry’s action against her.

Tytler focuses heavily on Henry’s promise of mercy to Katherine, made through Cranmer. He discusses her initial denial of the charges and her eventual confession, claiming that she confessed to everything and did admit to a precontract with Dereham. He argues that the king’s promise of mercy and the precontract “although they do not in

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<sup>56</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 61.

<sup>57</sup> Anonymous, *The cries of royal blood*, 62.

<sup>58</sup> Patrick Fraser Tytler, *Life of King Henry the Eighth* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1837).

<sup>59</sup> Tytler, *Life of King Henry the Eighth*, 419.

<sup>60</sup> Tytler, *Life of King Henry the Eighth*, 433.

any degree exculpate the queen, place Cranmer and his sovereign in a situation that requires explanation. The promise of mercy and life, once solemnly given, ought to have been sacredly kept...<sup>61</sup> On Katherine's execution, he claims that, "Familiarized as the people were with blood, it was not without some feelings of national abasement that they beheld another queen ignominiously led to the scaffold."<sup>62</sup> Tytler, while still holding Katherine responsible for her infidelity, appears more concerned with Henry's actions against her.

*Lives of the Queens of England, from the Norman Conquest* by Agnes Strickland, published in twelve volumes from 1840 to 1848, offers biographies of all the queens of England from 1066 onward.<sup>63</sup> While Strickland's account of Katherine's life is technically factual, it is heavily influenced by her Victorian era sense of morality and religious values. She opens her narrative with the claim that, "No female writer can venture to become the apologist of this unhappy queen, yet charity may be permitted to whisper, ere the dark page of her few and evil days is unrolled,

'Full gently scan they brother man,  
Still gentler sister woman.'<sup>64</sup>

Strickland places much of her emphasis on Katherine's family. Of particular importance in her study is the death of Katherine's mother while Katherine was still very young, and the resultant lack of maternal guidance. Her father, according to Strickland, was a great

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<sup>61</sup> Tytler, *Life of King Henry the Eighth*, 435.

<sup>62</sup> Tytler, *Life of King Henry the Eighth*, 435-436.

<sup>63</sup> Agnes Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, vol. 5 (Philadelphia: George Barrie & Sons, 1902).

<sup>64</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 101.

man and a war hero, but his poverty led him to send Katherine to live with her step-grandmother the dowager Duchess of Norfolk. This view is likely inaccurate, as many young girls of noble families were sent to live with relatives who could offer a better education, and situations like the duchess' household were quite common. Strickland claims that the duchess had no care for Katherine and allowed her to be brought up with the common, corrupted girls, most notably Mary Lassells (although she does not provide a reason for blaming Mary for Katherine's corruption), who in turn, corrupted Katherine.

According to Strickland, the duchess did not give Katherine any money, so Dereham bought her gifts which she promised to pay him for at a later date. Dereham's generosity had been one of the qualities that made Katherine fall in love with him. Eventually, though, Dereham was forced to leave for Ireland, and after he left, Katherine realized the error of her ways. Her reflection on her past life came to fill her with horror, and when Dereham returned, she spurned him as the man who had defiled her.<sup>65</sup>

Strickland continues to discuss Katherine's more positive attributes after she met Henry and during their marriage. She mentions that it is unknown how far her relationship with Henry went before the marriage, but Katherine "seems to have behaved with greater propriety than either Anne Boleyn or Jane Seymour under similar circumstances..." and notes that Katherine apparently treated Anne of Cleves respectfully.<sup>66</sup> She also argues, contrary to most historians, that Katherine's court was unostentatious, with "no sort of pomp or regal splendor."<sup>67</sup> She supports this claim with

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<sup>65</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 101.

<sup>66</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 130.

<sup>67</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 131.

evidence of Katherine's spending; for a period of time, her only purchase worthy of note was to her tailor for warm clothing for the imprisoned Margaret Pole.

Strickland also has a very different take on Katherine's relationship with Thomas Culpepper than most historians. She claims that Katherine sealed her own fate when she admitted Dereham into her household,<sup>68</sup> rather than through an affair with Culpepper. Strickland mentions that Culpepper had committed a "frightful crime" and then murdered someone while resisting apprehension, and lost a lot of money in the legal troubles. Culpepper's "frightful crime," however, does not receive further attention or detail from Strickland, who fails to mention that Culpepper had raped a woman before his relationship with Katherine began. She argues that Culpepper had just one long, private conversation, with the queen, which was probably regarding his need for money. She asserts that it is unlikely that Katherine and Culpepper did anything more than talk, citing as evidence the fact that Katherine had allowed the jealous Dereham into her household, which would have been too risky if she had been carrying on an affair with someone else.<sup>69</sup> Strickland also states that Katherine and Dereham did not have a sexual relationship after her marriage to the king. She is almost certainly correct in the belief that Katherine's relationship with Dereham had ended before she became queen, but Strickland's view of the Culpepper affair is likely inaccurate. Katherine's contemporaries had noted that Katherine looked longingly at Culpepper, and the surviving letter she wrote to him strongly suggests that she loved him. Even if the affair was not

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<sup>68</sup>Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 134.

<sup>69</sup>Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 135.

consummated, the couple certainly met more than once, contrary to Strickland's argument.

Strickland goes on to claim that, when evidence of Katherine's premarital relationships was exposed, the council wanted to convict Katherine, but without sufficient evidence of an affair with Dereham, they looked for another excuse to condemn her. They found it in Culpepper, who came under suspicion due to his one private conversation with the queen.<sup>70</sup> Katherine's women testified against her either under torture or threat of torture.<sup>71</sup> Finally, a genuinely contrite Katherine "was led like a sheep to the slaughter, without being permitted to unhook her lips in her own defense..."<sup>72</sup> Overall, Agnes Strickland portrays Katherine as a sinner, but also a victim.

A. F. Pollard's classic 1902 biography of Henry, *Henry VIII*, includes a few pages on Katherine. Pollard's Katherine had been poorly educated, but attractive; he claims that "Nature had been at least as kind to her as to any of Henry's wives."<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, Pollard argues that Katherine was older than most historians suggest, saying that, while her age remains uncertain, "she had almost certainly seen more than the twenty-one years politely put down to her account."<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, he gives no evidence or justification for this claim, so his reasons for doubting Katherine's youth are unclear.

Pollard's description of Katherine gives her very little agency. For example, he depicts her as a pawn to her ambitious family. He notes that one of the "good things" to

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<sup>70</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 146-147.

<sup>71</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 147.

<sup>72</sup> Strickland, *Lives of the Queens of England*, 172.

<sup>73</sup> A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), 398.

<sup>74</sup> Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 398.

come from the divorce of Anne of Cleves was the opportunity to remarry, and “the lady had been already selected by the predominant party, and used as an instrument in procuring the divorce of her predecessor and the fall of Cromwell; for, if her morals were lax, Catherine Howard’s orthodoxy was beyond dispute.”<sup>75</sup> This predominant party, in Pollard’s view, had united for religious reasons and chosen Katherine as their new patroness due to her conservative religious upbringing. He asserts that Katherine “was to play the part in the Catholic reaction that Anne Boleyn had done in the Protestant revolution. Both religious parties were unfortunate in the choice of their lady protagonists.”<sup>76</sup> Due to her lack of education, Pollard claims that Katherine’s character “had been left at the mercy of any chance tempter.”<sup>77</sup> Thus, in Pollard’s account, both Katherine’s character and her role at court were controlled by outside forces. He does discuss the imprisonment and subsequent pardons of Wyatt, Wallop, and Mason, but makes no mention of Katherine’s role in the pardons. In a sharp contrast to most scholars, he says very little about Katherine’s sexual affairs. Finally, immediately before her death, Pollard claims that Henry had given Katherine a chance to defend herself to Parliament, but she had refused the opportunity.<sup>78</sup> Pollard does not cite a source for this assertion, and no note of such an event occurs in the State Papers. Again, though, in the claim that she refused to even defend herself, Pollard’s Katherine remains completely passive.

In his 1926 book, *Her Majesty: The Romance of the Queens of England, 1066-1910*, E. Thornton Cook also offers a series of biographies of the queens of England,

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<sup>75</sup> Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 397.

<sup>76</sup> Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 397.

<sup>77</sup> Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 397-8.

<sup>78</sup> Pollard, *Henry VIII*, 404.

although his biographies are much briefer than Strickland's.<sup>79</sup> His biography of Katherine is only a few pages long, and attempts to objectively focus on the facts, rather than offer his own analysis of the events. Cook provides a more negative view of Katherine's father and family than Strickland's work, and leaves the reader with the impression that Katherine was abandoned to the duchess, where she was "unwanted, neglected and left to servants."<sup>80</sup> She slept in the dormitories with the other girls, and they corrupted her.

According to Cook, Katherine genuinely loved Culpepper. He claims that Culpepper died confessing his love for her, and that she "gloried in his love."<sup>81</sup> After Culpepper's death, she refused to ask the king for mercy for herself because Culpepper had received no mercy.<sup>82</sup> Cook's brief retelling of Katherine's life ends by perpetuating the Spanish chronicler's myth that she faced her execution with the words, "I die a queen, but I would rather have died the wife of Culpepper," which he claims she said as they led her out, "thinking perhaps of the ironic device round her arms, 'None other than his.'"<sup>83</sup>

Francis Hackett's 1929 biography, *Henry the Eighth*, focuses as much on Henry's wives as on the king himself, and he devotes several pages to Katherine Howard. Hackett offers a fairly decent portrayal of Katherine. He provides a sympathetic look at Katherine's personality, saying:

[T]he child had pushed up like a rose in a neglected garden, a glorious young creature of round features, fine coloring, sparkling and bubbling life, endowed with feeling, with quick and capricious judgment, with zest, with abundance, with romping blood. She had never been bridled in mind or body. Like a fresh rivulet

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<sup>79</sup> E. Thornton Cook, *Her Majesty: The Romance of the Queens of England, 1066-1910* (Boston: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1927).

<sup>80</sup> Cook, *Her Majesty*, 172.

<sup>81</sup> Cook, *Her Majesty*, 176.

<sup>82</sup> Cook, *Her Majesty*, 176.

<sup>83</sup> Cook, *Her Majesty*, 176.

that renews its clarity and purity by tumbling over its boulders in the sunlight, this vivacious girl had flung herself into courses of generous experience and darkling depth that might have cost her every touch of quality but instead had quickened and inspirited her, and made her brave.<sup>84</sup>

Based on the primary source descriptions of Katherine, Hackett's depiction of her seems more accurate than several other depictions. While his dramatic prose and use of metaphors are not commonly seen in serious historical works, he notes several of Katherine's personality traits outside of her sexuality, and his notes on her vivacity are especially valuable. While most historians focus on Katherine's sexuality and sex appeal, Hackett correctly identifies her charming personality as the source of Katherine's attractiveness. Additionally, the term "brave" stands out in this description of Katherine, as no other scholars use that term to describe her; Katherine Howard has much more often been called "foolhardy" than "brave." This term denotes a level of respect for Katherine lacking in many other historians and biographers.

Hackett describes Katherine's value to Henry in a way that few other historians have noted. While the primary and secondary sources alike discuss Henry's deep love for Katherine and his infatuation with her, Hackett describes Katherine as an object to be acquired, a toy, to Henry. However, Hackett argues, she was "scarcely the delightful toy that Henry surmised...Katheryn was a juvenile delinquent."<sup>85</sup> He believes that Katherine's affair with Dereham lasted three or four years, and that the pair "were intimate in the huddled and feverish fashion of rather promiscuous, desperately serious,

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<sup>84</sup> Francis Hackett, *Henry the Eighth* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1945), 338-9.

<sup>85</sup> Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, 352.

highly lascivious and intensely passionate youth.”<sup>86</sup> This view of the affair is interesting—it emphasizes the pair’s promiscuity, but the length of time at which Hackett portrays the relationship suggests a deep affection between the couple.

After this brief note on Katherine’s early sexual relationship, Hackett quickly moves on to discuss Katherine’s generosity and sweet temperament. He claims that the “girl herself, pursued around and through the flame, had singed her wings, but she was of sweet and abundant nature, of invigorating temper, and of the impulse unusual among the Howards to give herself rather than to acquire.”<sup>87</sup> He discusses her kindness and generosity to Anne of Cleves and Margaret, Countess of Salisbury, and argues that she hated her husband’s willingness to execute criminals, saying that “it was a habit that revolted Katheryn Howard. With the audacity of her youth, she set herself against her husband’s killings.”<sup>88</sup> This argument also proves unique; in fact, there exists no record of Katherine’s feelings toward executions. The fact that she requested pardons for several accused criminals suggests that Hackett may be correct, but we cannot know Katherine’s ethics regarding capital punishment based on the surviving sources surrounding her.

Toward the end of his narrative, Hackett does make some snide remarks about Katherine’s intelligence. He claims that “Katheryn seemed to think that a love affair was ‘secret’ if it were not deliberately announced at Paul’s Cross,” and he discusses her indiscretion throughout the Culpepper affair.<sup>89</sup> Like Pollard, Hackett notes that Katherine had refused to defend herself to Parliament, but unfortunately, he does not cite sources

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<sup>86</sup> Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, 353.

<sup>87</sup> Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, 354.

<sup>88</sup> Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, 356.

<sup>89</sup> Hackett, *Henry the Eighth*, 361.

for this claim either. He ends his biography of Katherine by perpetuating the myth begun by the *Spanish Chronicle* that Katherine went to her death wishing she had died the wife of Culpepper.

The first full-length biography of Katherine, *Catherine Howard: A Tudor Tragedy*, was published in 1961 by Lacey Baldwin Smith. Smith's biography remains the most popular history of Katherine's life.<sup>90</sup> He argues that Katherine possessed an inconsistent and often contradictory character, calling her "a bundle of contradictory passions and desires. She was pretty and giddy, unscrupulous and passionate, easy to anger but quick to forgive, capable of intense if mercurial emotions..."<sup>91</sup>

As Katherine's first complete biography, Smith's book has much to recommend it. He provides the most complete and probably most accurate history of Katherine's youth up to this time. For example, he dispels the myth of Katherine's neglected upbringing, claiming that, while she may not have been especially well-educated, she was able to read and write and was "certainly not the illiterate and neglected damsel of the history books."<sup>92</sup> Smith also points out some of Katherine's more positive actions as queen, such as her intervention on behalf of a criminal who was about to lose his hand; her intercession secured his reprieve.<sup>93</sup>

While Smith does attempt to present a more well-rounded view of Katherine than some historians by presenting her good and bad qualities, the book is tinged with

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<sup>90</sup> Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Catherine Howard: A Tudor Tragedy* (Gloucestershire: Amberley, 2010).

<sup>91</sup> Smith, *Catherine Howard*, 63.

<sup>92</sup> Smith, *Catherine Howard*, 46.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Catherine Howard*, 91.

negatively biased claims, and at times, even misogyny. He blames her for Culpepper's death, for example, saying that he "was to go to his death as a consequence of Catherine Howard's matrimonial indiscretions."<sup>94</sup> This analysis, of course, fails to take into account the fact that Culpepper was equally responsible for his affair with Katherine. Moreover, it ignores Culpepper's own criminal activity. Smith is well aware that Culpepper was a rapist and a murderer, as it is mentioned later in the book. Yet, he seems to hold Katherine solely responsible for Culpepper's execution.

Carolly Erickson's 1980 biography of Henry VIII, *Great Harry*, is even more shocking in its attitude toward Katherine.<sup>95</sup> The reader who may have been hoping for a more positive view from a female historian will be bitterly disappointed. In fact, rather than focusing solely on Katherine's sexuality, as many historians seem content to do, Erickson even attacks her physical appearance. At the start of Henry's relationship with Katherine, Erickson refers to her as Anne of Cleves' "round little waiting maid."<sup>96</sup> She later discusses Katherine's appearance in more detail: "Unauthenticated portraits said to be of Catherine do not bear out Marillac's judgment that she was 'a lady of great beauty.' Her brow and eyes were fair enough, but (if these portraits are to be trusted at all) she had inherited the large Howard nose, and her chubby cheeks and double chin gave her face a slightly bulbous look."<sup>97</sup> She goes on to suggest that Katherine may have looked like her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, who had a "fishlike face."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>Smith, *Catherine Howard*, 23.

<sup>95</sup>Carolly Erickson, *Great Harry* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1980.)

<sup>96</sup>Erickson, *Great Harry*, 309.

<sup>97</sup>Erickson, *Great Harry*, 321.

<sup>98</sup>Erickson, *Great Harry*, 321.

Erickson also offers a troubling depiction of Katherine's sexuality. For example, she claims that Katherine "more than likely seduced" Thomas Culpepper, and that she "was clearly the aggressor, not the victim..."<sup>99</sup> but she provides no evidence for these assertions.<sup>99</sup> In fact, the primary sources leave little reason to believe that either Katherine Howard or Thomas Culpepper was a "victim" in their relationship.

Alison Weir offers a somewhat more positive, although not entirely accurate, view of Katherine in her 1995 book, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*.<sup>100</sup> She does discuss some of Katherine's more admirable characteristics. She asserts that Katherine had a "pleasing manner and a sunny personality,"<sup>101</sup> and claims that "to all appearances the new Queen suffered her wifely duties with commendable fortitude, displaying at all times a cheerful and loving manner towards her august spouse."<sup>102</sup> She discusses Katherine's intervention on behalf of prisoners and her generosity toward Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury, attributing these actions to kind-heartedness and a willingness to take advantage of her influence to help others.<sup>103</sup> However, Weir does buy into some of the more negative descriptions of Katherine. For example, she states that "it was not long before Katherine Howard revealed herself as a frivolous, empty-headed young girl who cared for little else but dancing and pretty clothes."<sup>104</sup> While this view certainly remains a common one, the primary sources do not necessarily suggest that this was the case. Although Katherine unquestionably acted incautiously at times, her actual level of intelligence is unknown.

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<sup>99</sup> Erickson, *Great Harry*, 327.

<sup>100</sup> Alison Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991).

<sup>101</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 434.

<sup>102</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 432.

<sup>103</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 434.

<sup>104</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 434.

Yet Weir chooses to emphasize Katherine's stupidity, claiming that "she was no Anne Boleyn, being a good deal younger than Anne had been, and far more empty-headed, although she was precocious enough when it came to experience of men."<sup>105</sup> Moreover, she accuses Katherine of a greediness which is also lacking in evidence. Her claim that "Each day, Katherine discovered some new caprice, and her greed earned her the disapproval of many of the older people at court, including the Lady Mary..."<sup>106</sup> is problematic on multiple counts. Evidence shows that Henry lavished gifts on his new bride, but not necessarily any specific greed on Katherine's part. While it may be that she requested the items, we simply do not know. An additional issue with this discussion of Katherine's greed is the mention that people were disapproving of Katherine—Weir does not cite her source for this claim, and evidence for this disapproval seems to be largely lacking. Indeed, there is no suggestion that even the Lady Mary disapproved of Katherine's so-called "greed," and it seems more likely that her initial reservations about her new stepmother, as will be discussed later, had more to do with Katherine's young age than anything else. Overall, while Weir's portrayal of Katherine is better than some, it leaves much to be desired.

Antonia Fraser's 1992 book, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, includes a more complete biography of Katherine. She describes Katherine as a "pretty bubbly little girl" who, if not beautiful, was at least quite attractive and possessing obvious sex appeal.<sup>107</sup> She describes Katherine's vivacity in contrast to Anne of Cleves' shyness and quietness,

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<sup>105</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 416.

<sup>106</sup> Weir, *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*, 433.

<sup>107</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 313, 316.

saying that Katherine had succeeded in charming the king where Anne had failed.<sup>108</sup> Fraser argues that Katherine likely did have feelings for Henry, but she was “a flighty young thing,” and more awed to be in the presence of the king and grateful for his raising her status and doting upon her than sincerely in love with him.<sup>109</sup> Fraser mentions that Katherine could read and write, but she claims that “being literate did not mean that Katherine Howard was in any way at all educated; in this lack she was absolutely typical of the girls of her time.”<sup>110</sup> This claim seems unusual, as to learn to read and especially to write, a Tudor woman would have received a better education than most of her contemporaries. In fact, Katherine entered the duchess’ household in order to receive an education. She may not have been brilliant, but she was certainly at least somewhat educated.

Fraser offers a more positive view of the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk than most, arguing that the duchess was seen as a responsible figure, and several noble families sent their daughters to stay with her.<sup>111</sup> With more than one hundred people in the household, though, Fraser notes that scandals are bound to occur. She claims that “Afterwards, vultures hovering round the carcass of Katherine Howard’s reputation would suggest that Duchess Agnes had kept something closely approaching a high-class brothel, but the true comparison was to a high-class finishing school in which some quietly prospered and

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<sup>108</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 323.

<sup>109</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 333.

<sup>110</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 317.

<sup>111</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 319.

others more daringly looked round to exploit its opportunities (or were in their turn exploited).”<sup>112</sup>

Fraser asserts that, while Katherine later claimed that her affair with Dereham had lasted for three months, she may not have been entirely honest; Dereham had entrusted £100 with Katherine when he went to Ireland, suggesting that their relationship was quite serious.<sup>113</sup> Nevertheless, Fraser claims that if Katherine and Dereham had considered themselves married, Katherine’s “submission to his advances had nothing so terrible about it by the standards of the time.”<sup>114</sup> Her affection for Dereham eventually faded, though, and Fraser says that Katherine had fallen in love with Culpepper by autumn of 1539, a claim made by the *Spanish Chronicle* but not supported by other evidence.<sup>115</sup> Because of Katherine’s past affairs, Fraser argues that Katherine’s family likely had simply taken advantage of Henry’s falling for her, rather than actually pushing her into the relationship.<sup>116</sup> When the king fell ill with his leg ulcer, though, Katherine renewed her relationship with Culpepper, Fraser asserts. In examining the causes for Katherine’s affair with Dereham, she claims:

Taking the Queen’s point of view first, it seems right to seek an explanation in Katherine’s fatal lightness of temperament rather than in some more Machiavellian intention. Katherine Howard’s character was reckless, not devious (except when, like any young person, she tried to hide her conduct from her elders). She was the sort of girl who lost her head easily over a man, a girl who agreed generally with what men suggested. In short she was the reverse of calculating.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 319.

<sup>113</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 320.

<sup>114</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 321.

<sup>115</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 321.

<sup>116</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 321.

<sup>117</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 340.

Regarding the Culpepper affair, Fraser believes that question about whether Katherine and Culpepper actually committed adultery is “purely technical.”<sup>118</sup> She claims that Katherine may have technically been innocent of the charge of adultery, but her late night encounters with Culpepper suggest that if the relationship had not been fully consummated, enough had been done to lend credence to the adultery charges.<sup>119</sup>

In her 1995 book, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived: A Feminist Reinterpretation of the Wives of Henry VIII*, Karen Lindsey offers a very different view of Katherine than many other historians.<sup>120</sup> Lindsey argues that Katherine was “neither whore nor martyr,” and that both “defenders and detractors miss the point.”<sup>121</sup> According to Lindsey, the fact that Katherine’s “image remains so tarnished says more about our failure to accept female sexuality than about Kathryn Howard’s morality.”<sup>122</sup>

However, while she does briefly discuss some of Katherine’s other qualities, such as her pleasant personality and her intercession on behalf of prisoners,<sup>123</sup> Lindsey focuses primarily on her sexuality. She believes that Katherine probably was guilty of the charges brought against her, accurately noting that it is unlikely that Katherine and Culpepper would have risked their lives over innocent private conversations.<sup>124</sup> Lindsey cites the motives for Katherine’s affairs as almost completely sexual. She claims that Katherine was well aware of her superiority over Manox and had no interest in marrying him;

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<sup>118</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 348.

<sup>119</sup> Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 348.

<sup>120</sup> Karen Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived: A Feminist Reinterpretation of the Wives of Henry VIII* (New York: Addison-Wesley, 1995).

<sup>121</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 169.

<sup>122</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 170.

<sup>123</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 165.

<sup>124</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 176.

rather, she wanted to test her sexuality with an experienced and attractive lover.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, she asserts that, at least as far as Katherine was concerned, the affair with Dereham was just a sexual one.<sup>126</sup> The fact that Katherine continually and vehemently denied a betrothal with Dereham, even when it may have saved her life, suggests to Lindsey that Katherine did not truly love Dereham and only played along with the marriage pretense for a while. This view does not take into account the option that Katherine had loved Dereham once but no longer did, or the possibility that she denied a precontract due to a lack of understanding that a betrothal might save her. Finally, regarding Culpepper, Lindsey claims that Katherine “was attracted to him, and she liked sex.”<sup>127</sup> She believes that if Katherine knew about Culpepper’s history as a rapist and murderer, she would not have fallen in love with him. Thus, Lindsey’s analysis of Katherine’s relationships leaves little room for love. Yet, this description does not entirely make sense, considering the evidence from Katherine’s life. If Katherine had been interested only in sex, the Duchess’s household included several men who could satisfy her needs. Yet, her relationship with Dereham seems, according to primary accounts, to have been exclusive. Moreover, while dates and years remain unknown in Katherine’s early life, the Dereham affair lasted for at least several months, and possibly up to two years. Additionally, she may have known about Culpepper’s history, but no evidence exists that she did. While courtiers may have spoken about the crimes, the event occurred before Katherine’s arrival at court.

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<sup>125</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 160-161.

<sup>126</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 162.

<sup>127</sup> Lindsey, *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived*, 169.

David Starkey's 2003 book, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII*, also attempts to view Katherine in a somewhat different light.<sup>128</sup> Starkey makes an effort to point out her good qualities, and believes she may have been innocent of adultery.<sup>129</sup> Starkey initially discusses Katherine's active sex life, but ultimately he says that "there was so little to confess. It was all talk, talk, talk. Nevertheless, as Culpepper admitted, the intention was there. 'He intended', he admitted, 'and meant to do ill with the Queen and that likewise the Queen so minded with him.' It was little, but it proved enough for the law."<sup>130</sup> He describes Katherine as a "model consort,"<sup>131</sup> and discusses her "leadership, resourcefulness and independence."<sup>132</sup> Starkey portrays her as more intelligent than most historians acknowledge. He also makes an effort to de-emphasize the "sinfulness" of her past, claiming that we can move past the Victorian code of morality by which Katherine is judged and "confront sex as a fact, not as a sin."<sup>133</sup>

Despite Starkey's endeavor to portray Katherine positively, his account of her life is plagued by a misogynistic attitude. Even his attempts to compliment her frequently contain a negative or stereotypical attitude toward women. For example, he states: "True, she was a good-time girl. But, like many good-time girls, she was also warm, loving and good-natured. She wanted to have a good time. But she wanted other people to have a good time, too. And she was prepared to make some effort to see that they did."<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> David Starkey, *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII* (London: Harper Perennial, 2003).

<sup>129</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 680.

<sup>130</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 680.

<sup>131</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 653.

<sup>132</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 654.

<sup>133</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 654.

<sup>134</sup> Starkey, *Six Wives*, 654-655.

Essentially, he likens her to a prostitute while praising her good qualities. In a 2003 talk at the Caxton Club, Starkey becomes even more explicit, describing Katherine as a “42<sup>nd</sup> Street girl” in New York City terms—a prostitute.<sup>135</sup> In this speech, he also accuses her of seducing Henry Manox, although he admits that Katherine was only thirteen years old at the time. He neglects to point out that, if Katherine was indeed thirteen years old and in a relationship with an adult man, she could hardly have been the seducer.

Joanna Denny’s 2005 popular biography, *Katherine Howard: A Tudor Conspiracy*, also attempts to describe Katherine in a more positive light. Denny depicts Katherine as younger than most of her other biographers, arguing that she was only ten years old when seduced by Manox and perhaps seventeen at her execution. As Katherine’s birthdate is unknown, a younger age than most historians suggest would not be impossible, but Denny does not supply a reason for believing Katherine was younger than commonly held. She continually discusses Katherine’s young age in the biography, though, seemingly using her youth as a reason to blame the men with whom she had relationships and exonerate Katherine. Denny also differs from other authors in her description of Katherine’s education, arguing that Katherine would have learned how to cook, bake, brew, prepare medicines, and care for children and the sick.<sup>136</sup> As a member of the nobility, this assessment of Katherine’s education seems unlikely. Although her father was poor, Katherine’s family could still have expected her to make a fairly decent marriage. She probably would not have needed many of the skills Denny attributes to her

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<sup>135</sup> Carole Levin, “Notes from David Starkey’s Talk at the Caxton Club,” November 19, 2003.

<sup>136</sup> Joanna Denny, *Katherine Howard: A Tudor Conspiracy* (London: Portrait, 2005), 52.

education. Additionally, Denny differs from most of Katherine's other historians in her analysis of the motives behind Katherine's adultery—she argues that Katherine was trying to secure her position as queen by becoming pregnant by Culpepper, and Culpepper decided to take the risk of sleeping with the queen to become the prince's secret father and favorite of the queen. Denny claims that Culpepper may have expected Henry to die soon, at which time Culpepper could take his rightful place in Katherine's affections and gain power through her.<sup>137</sup>

While Denny hopes to portray Katherine as a tragic figure and ultimately a victim due to her extreme youth, the work has a few serious flaws. The book makes assumptions about events based upon the norms of the time, rather than drawing conclusions based on primary sources regarding Katherine. In some ways, this method of research is understandable, as Denny can make up for some of the limitations of few sources surrounding Katherine; however, an explanation that some elements of her narrative are conjecture would be invaluable in lending more credibility to her work. Moreover, some of her descriptions of people and events are simply inaccurate; for example, she asserts that Henry had always doubted the validity of his marriage to his dead brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon, and that Catherine had feigned her first pregnancy and lied to Henry and the people about it.<sup>138</sup> More shockingly, she suggests that Henry had his own illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, poisoned.<sup>139</sup> By almost all accounts, these claims are blatantly false, and while they seem unimportant in a study of Katherine Howard, the

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<sup>137</sup> Denny, *Katherine Howard*, 198-199.

<sup>138</sup> Denny, *Katherine Howard*, 39.

<sup>139</sup> Denny, *Katherine Howard*, 78-79.

book is littered with such information, which illustrates Denny's willingness to make claims based on little to no evidence. Finally, the book itself reads more like a novel than a work of nonfiction. Denny occasionally attributes thoughts, emotions, and actions to Katherine and her contemporaries that have no basis in the primary sources.

If some historians' attitudes toward Katherine can be at times disturbing, David Loades' representation of her, as seen in his 2009 book, *The Tudor Queens of England*, is downright shocking.<sup>140</sup> Loades titles his chapter dedicated to Katherine "The Queen as Whore," setting the mood for his entire analysis of her. Indeed, if the title of the chapter was not clear enough, Loades further establishes his position by immediately claiming that Katherine "certainly behaved like a whore both before and after her marriage."<sup>141</sup> He suggests that she alternately slept with both Dereham and Culpepper while on progress with Henry in 1541,<sup>142</sup> a claim which is not at all supported by the primary sources. Public memory of Katherine is already rather negative, but Loades' work stands out even amongst the negative portrayals due to the sheer number and strength of the insults he hurls at her—he calls her a "stupid and oversexed adolescent,"<sup>143</sup> "this adolescent sex-pot,"<sup>144</sup> and "a wanton slut,"<sup>145</sup> amongst other things.

Just three years after publishing *The Tudor Queens of England*, Loades wrote a full biography of Katherine, titled *Catherine Howard: The Adulterous Wife of Henry VIII*.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> David Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England* (New York: MJF Books, 2009).

<sup>141</sup> Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England*, 139.

<sup>142</sup> Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England*, 144.

<sup>143</sup> Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England*, 139.

<sup>144</sup> Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England*, 141.

<sup>145</sup> Loades, *The Tudor Queens of England*, 146.

<sup>146</sup> David Loades, *Catherine Howard: The Adulterous Wife of Henry VIII* (Gloucestershire, Amberley, 2012).

The introduction of this book suggests a definite change in Loades' attitude toward his subject, claiming that, while Katherine is commonly recognized as Henry's adulterous wife, there was more to her than that, and his book attempts to tell the true story of Katherine Howard. Somewhat bizarrely, though, Katherine's appearances in her own biography are somewhat rare. The book discusses Henry VIII and his court in the years 1540 to 1542, but actually provides little detail about Katherine herself.

Another book published in 2012, Retha Warnicke's *Wicked Women of Tudor England*, provides a very different view of Katherine than nearly all of her other biographers and historians have offered.<sup>147</sup> Warnicke's Katherine was innocent, a "victim of sexual predators."<sup>148</sup> She portrays Katherine in a positive light, discussing some of her good deeds as queen, such as her pardons and assistance for Margaret Pole. Warnicke places all of the blame for Katherine's relationships on the men with whom she was romantically involved. According to Warnicke, Culpepper was threatening, manipulating and controlling Katherine.<sup>149</sup>

While Warnicke's provides a positive portrayal of Katherine, her work in some ways still adheres to the "rose without a thorn" expectation. She does argue the opposite of what most historians say about Katherine, but her argument fits into the same paradigm. Warnicke's Katherine actually was an innocent victim, a rose without a thorn.

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<sup>147</sup> Warnicke, Retha M. *Wicked Women of Tudor England*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Warnicke, *Wicked Women of Tudor England*, 46.

<sup>149</sup> Warnicke, *Wicked Women of Tudor England*, 68.

Nevertheless, her attempt to rehabilitate Katherine's image and her ability to look at an old story in a very different light should be respected and admired.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Early Modern English Conduct Books and the “Ideal” Woman

Perhaps the most important element to remember in studying early modern women from a feminist perspective is the fact that these women should not, and truly cannot, be judged by modern Western feminist standards. Leslie Poles Hartley has famously written, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”<sup>150</sup> The lives of early modern Englishwomen were quite different from our own, and the expectations men had of them can be particularly foreign to us. Using current feminist ideology, few if any early modern women would qualify as “feminist.” Nevertheless, these women remain worthy of historical study. Therefore, we must find adequate and fair ways to study them.

Multiple forces convinced most of the populace that women were the inferior sex. While the Protestant Reformation and England’s break with Rome caused religious turmoil that lasted throughout Katherine Howard’s lifetime and beyond, the Christian view of creation that formed the basis for perceived gender differences remained fairly constant amongst all parties. Genesis 2 taught that the first human was male, and that woman was created from his rib to be his helper and companion. When Satan tempted Eve, she in turn helped to tempt Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit. Adam’s role in willingly accepting the fruit from Eve was neglected, and Eve became viewed as the individual who led him astray and the world into sin. These passages, amongst others, were used to justify the belief that women should be subject to men. Philosophy also taught that women were inferior. Aristotle’s view of gender differences remained popular

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<sup>150</sup> Leslie Poles Hartley, *The Go-between* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2002), 17.

in Renaissance thought. Schoolteachers taught Aristotle's concept of women as imperfect and "mutilated" men.

Young women, especially in Protestant households and circles, were taught to believe that their ultimate goals in life were to be suitably married and to successfully raise children. Married women were considered to be property, and they and the personal possessions they brought into the marriage came under the absolute control of their husbands. More boys than girls died in infancy, many men followed a religious occupation in which they could not marry, and a great many young men died in warfare, so available women outnumbered men, creating a "buyer's market" favorable to men.<sup>151</sup> As a result, if a woman wanted to be married, as she was taught was her highest calling in life, she needed to present herself as an agreeable bride, following societal expectations for her behavior.

First and foremost, early modern Englishwomen were expected to be "chaste, silent, and obedient."<sup>152</sup> Conduct books, telling women how to behave, were nearly always written by men. These books, printed in abundance, became quite uniform; one book was much the same as the next, and the texts varied little over the course of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. As Suzanne Hull has explained, "Male authors gave women directions on how to dress (with decorum befitting their rank), how to talk (as little as possible), how to behave toward their husbands (with subservience,

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<sup>151</sup> Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475-1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1982), 122.

<sup>152</sup> Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient*.

obedience), how to walk (with eyes down), what to read (works by and about good and godly persons, not romances), and how to pray (frequently).”<sup>153</sup>

There exists no concrete evidence that suggests that Katherine Howard did not like to read or study. Historians tend to use the minimal amount of extant primary sources to come to definitive conclusions about Katherine’s personality and behavior, but the truth is that much of Katherine’s life remains unknown to us. Katherine did like to dance, and she seems to have been a social butterfly, but those characteristics do not nullify the possibility that she had other interests and activities. The truth is that we simply do not know whether Katherine enjoyed academic pursuits. The historical record does show that she was at least somewhat educated, and if she knew how to write, she would also have known how to read. During her time in the duchess’ household, she may well have read some of the conduct books of her day. Even if she had not read the books directly, she most certainly would have been exposed to their ideals of feminine behavior; after all, the primary goal of education for most Tudor women was teaching proper “womanly” behavior. In this section, I provide a brief overview of each of the books examined in this thesis, and then I discuss the beliefs about and expectations of women outlined in them, divided according to topic.

Perhaps the most important work on women in Katherine’s era was Juan Luis Vives’ *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*.<sup>154</sup> Vives wrote his book in 1523, and it was first published in English in 1529 by translator Richard Hyrde, when Katherine would

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<sup>153</sup> Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient*, 135.

<sup>154</sup> Spelling of quotes of early modern works has been modernized in this work for the sake of accessibility. Titles, however, have been left in their original spelling and grammar for ease of searching for texts.

still have been a young child. While most early modern writings were printed in very limited numbers, it seems clear that Hyrde desired to make the work available to a larger audience; he noted that men should not complain of women's conditions until the women have been educated, and he hoped that his translation of Vives' work into English would help to enlighten Englishwomen.<sup>155</sup> Thus, Katherine may have been exposed to its contents when she was sent to live with the Duchess for her education. The book was published at least eight more times in the sixteenth century, after which it finally lost popularity.<sup>156</sup> Although many have claimed that the English queen at the time, Catherine of Aragon, commissioned the book, no evidence survives proving that she did so.<sup>157</sup> Vives did dedicate his work to Catherine, though, and referenced her as the ideal woman exhibiting the characteristics laid out in the book.<sup>158</sup> The first three English versions of the book each had a slightly different, but very politically significant, dedication, as the title by which Catherine of Aragon was addressed changed; this change occurred due to the annulment of her marriage to Henry VIII and the loss of her official status as queen. Interestingly, by 1541, when Katherine Howard was England's queen, the book was published again, this time with no reference or dedication to the "queen." The printer may have decided to omit the references to the queen due to the fact that a different queen now sat on the throne, or Katherine Howard may have already fallen from favor at the time of the publication; in any case, it seems that the publishers found it politically

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<sup>155</sup> Juan Luis Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, ed. By Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6.

<sup>156</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, xv.

<sup>157</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, xxiii.

<sup>158</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 11.

expedient at this point in time to avoid mention of Henry VIII's queens altogether.<sup>159</sup> *The Instruction of a Christen Woman* exhibited a marked influence on several of the conduct books for women written in the sixteenth century, and authors adopted various elements of his ideas as required by their own stance on women's roles.<sup>160</sup>

Vives touched on many topics regarding women's behavior and education throughout his book. Ironically, Vives claimed in the preface that "the precepts for men be innumerable: women yet may be informed with few words."<sup>161</sup> The reality of the situation in early modern England was rather the opposite; society held fewer expectations of men, and the precepts for women proved "innumerable." Indeed, Vives needed nearly two hundred pages to lay out the rules and expectations. As an early humanist, he favored education for women in ways that many of his contemporaries did not, but he still adhered to strict roles for women within society, and the education he advocated gave women little agency if they followed all of his instructions explicitly. Chastity took the dominant position as the ultimate virtue for women, permeating every chapter of the book. Additionally, "other words as tirelessly reiterated as 'chastity' and 'honesty' are 'demure,' 'grave,' 'sober,' 'sad,' 'shamefast,' 'silent,' 'modest,' and 'measured.'<sup>162</sup>

Sir Thomas Elyot's "The defence of good women" appears to be a refutation of Vives' work, whether intentional or not.<sup>163</sup> Elyot's treatise was written in 1540, the year

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<sup>159</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, lxxxii.

<sup>160</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, xliii.

<sup>161</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 8.

<sup>162</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 1.

<sup>163</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, lxxxii.

Henry VIII married Anne of Cleves and later Katherine Howard. Elyot dedicated the work to “the most noble and most ever virtuous princess Queen Anne,” so clearly he published it before Katherine rose to power.<sup>164</sup> Elyot introduced his work by announcing how much he deplored men who belittle women without cause. Through the device of a Socratic dialogue between two gentlemen, Caninius and Candidus, and Queen Zenobia herself, he set forth Queen Zenobia as an example for women to follow, for she was “a lady of most famous renown for her excellent virtues and most noble courage,” and Elyot hoped her story will provoke women to “embrace virtue more gladly, and to be circumspect in the bringing up of their children.”<sup>165</sup>

The anonymously written “Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women wherin every man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women,” published in 1541, caused quite an uproar, and led to several fierce rebuttals.<sup>166</sup> The title of the book is something of a misnomer, as the author offered no “goodly prayse of the condicyons of women” whatsoever. In fact, the satirical work is riddled with insults toward women. The author wrote the book in response to an unnamed work praising women; he calls this man a “fool” and says that that work had been nothing but flattery.<sup>167</sup> “Schole house” warns men against marriage, and issues several complaints about the behaviors of women. The author reminded readers in the poem’s opening that

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<sup>164</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot, “The defence of good women,” 1540, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Elyot, *The defence of good women*, 2.

<sup>166</sup> “Schole house of women” has often been attributed to Edward Gosynhyll. However, Gosynhyll, whose work will be discussed later in this paper, issued a fierce rebuttal to “Schole house” the following year. The true author of the notorious “Schole house” remains unknown.

<sup>167</sup> Anonymous, “Schole house of women,” 1541, 2.

he had not directed the work at “good” women, so it should not upset them. The “other sort,” who would protest his work, proved the truth of his words.<sup>168</sup> Unfortunately, while we do know that the book was published in 1541, the month of publication has not been recorded. As Katherine Howard’s adultery was exposed late in 1541, it is possible that the author published the work in response to Katherine’s fall. Without knowing the exact publication date, though, we cannot know for certain.

Notably, at least three, and possibly four, works addressed to women were published in 1542, the year of Katherine’s execution. Some of these works responded to “Schole house of women,” making direct references to “Schole house” as a disgusting and false piece of literature. Yet, one must also wonder whether the execution of the English queen the same year may have compelled some authors to write about women and question societal expectations of them. The first English translation of Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim’s 1529 treatise, “A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde” dates to 1542. Christopher Goodwin’s “The Mayden’s Dreame,” and Robert Vaughan’s “A dyalogue defensyve for women, agaynst melycyous detractoures” were both published in 1542. Finally, historians have suggested a publication date of 1542 for Edward Gosynhill’s “The prayse of all women,” although the date remains uncertain. At a time when literature for women remained sparse, the publication of four books addressed to women or focused on women in one year certainly seems unusual. While none of these works explicitly mentions Katherine, the subject

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<sup>168</sup> Anonymous. Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women wherin every man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women. 1541, 2.

matter and very fact that they were published in such rapid succession suggests more than a coincidence in the dates.

Agrippa's "A treatise of the nobilities and excellencye of woman kynde" is an unusual treatise, quite unlike most of the works regarding women of its day. First published in Latin in 1529, Agrippa dedicated his small treatise to Margaret of Austria, suggesting that he wrote the piece at least in part to gain the favor of the Habsburg Netherlands' regent. Regardless of the work's original motive, its first publication in English occurred while the monarch was a king, and moreover, a king without a queen; Katherine had fallen from favor late in 1541, and her execution had occurred early in 1542.

Agrippa's argument, which he supports with both biblical and historical examples, defies the standard beliefs about women of the time. He begins the treatise by immediately establishing woman's equality to man, saying that men and women only differ physically, but their souls, minds, and intellectual capabilities are the same.<sup>169</sup> He continues then to discuss women as not only men's equals, but their superiors, as the "noble and excellent" woman "infinitely doth excel the rude gross kind of men."<sup>170</sup> According to Agrippa, God created the woman last, as a culmination of his work. After the creation of woman, his most perfect of creatures, he could finally rest.<sup>171</sup> While most of his contemporaries viewed Eve as the temptress who led the world into sin, Agrippa claims that God's command to not eat the forbidden fruit was given to Adam rather than

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<sup>169</sup>Henricus Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, translated out of Latine into englysshe by Daudid Clapam, 1542, 1-2.

<sup>170</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 2.

<sup>171</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 6.

Eve, that Eve gave in to Satan's temptation unwittingly, and that Adam should therefore be held accountable; he pointedly says that "man gave us death, not the woman."<sup>172</sup> He devotes a long passage to praising women's beauty, and also describes in detail the woman's superior modesty, loyalty, dignity, mercy, chastity, and honesty. Multiple times throughout the work Agrippa also discusses or makes allusions to motherhood.

Historians have called into question Agrippa's motives, wondering if he wrote the tract in earnest or as a paradox. Of interest to this study, though, is the motivation of the English translator, David Clapam. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Clapam did not include a dedication to his work. As such, it seems he did not write to please or gain the favor of a specific patroness. His only other surviving works are two editions of a translation of another Agrippa piece, a treatise on matrimony, published first in 1540 and again in 1545. He dedicated this work to his "good master," Gregory Cromwell, son of Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal.<sup>173</sup> As Thomas Cromwell's execution took place on the very day Henry VIII married Katherine Howard, it seems extremely unlikely that Clapam translated the matrimonial treatise in honor of the wedding of Katherine and Henry; it must have been published earlier, when Cromwell at least appeared to the public to still hold Henry's favor. Therefore, it may have been printed in honor of Henry's marriage to Anne of Cleves, which also occurred in 1540.

"A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde" contains some passages that seem dangerous to have published after the fall of Katherine Howard.

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<sup>172</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 21.

<sup>173</sup> Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, *The commendation of matrimony, made by Cornelius Agrippa, translated into englysshe by Dauid Clapam*, 1540.

Although Katherine's execution did not occur until February of 1542, Clapam would have known that she fell from favor in November of 1541. Therefore, as the treatise was published in 1542, we can be certain that Katherine's downfall had already transpired. Agrippa's discussion of female chastity fit the standards of the time, and would not be cause for concern. Riskier is his brief mention of the relationships between husbands and wives, in which he claims that wives "never chanced unto a good man one ill. For ill wives never chance, but to ill husbands: unto whom all though the good sometimes chance, yet their husband's vices make them naught."<sup>174</sup> Essentially, only bad men married bad wives, and a bad husband could corrupt a formerly good wife. A bad wife "never chanced" upon a good man. Agrippa himself may have been speaking philosophically, but Clapam translated and published this work almost immediately after his king had been cuckolded.

The treatise also contains a significant discussion of several good and powerful queens throughout history. The mention of queens in and of itself is not unusual—many works included similar historical examples—but the people of England reading this treatise at the time of its publication would certainly have been aware of the lack of a queen consort on the throne, and more importantly, the reason for the absence of a queen. Finally, the treatise claims that the law says, "a woman is of better state and condition than a man: and also in one self kind of offense, the man trespasseth more than the woman. Wherefore the man taken in adultery, loseth his head: but the woman adulterer is put into a monastery."<sup>175</sup> Obviously, the queen recently taken in adultery lost her head. If

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<sup>174</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 1542.

<sup>175</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 46.

Clapham's motives for writing cannot be known, neither can Henry VIII's response to the treatise, but the treatise had been printed by the king's printer, Thomas Berthelet.<sup>176</sup>

Clapham continued to have a successful career, gaining the admiration and favor of Sir William Cecil, secretary of state to Edward VI, and other dignitaries. Thus, it appears that Clapham attracted no negative attention for his translation. Perhaps, as a king, Henry felt that the treatise's contents did not apply to him and therefore did not criticize him.

Edward Gosynhyll's "The prayse of all women" claims to be a rebuttal of the aforementioned "Schole house of women." Gosynhyll uses biblical references and Greek mythology to defend women in his work. Unlike Agrippa, Gosynhyll does not absolve Eve of any wrongdoing in humanity's fall into sin, but he suggests that all women should not be blamed for Eve's transgression, and moreover, that men cannot hold themselves "faultless."<sup>177</sup> Further, he criticizes Adam for not taking responsibility for his own actions, but instead blaming Eve.<sup>178</sup> Gosynhyll also states that throughout the Bible, God favored women as often as men, and gives several examples of women receiving God's favor and approval.<sup>179</sup> While Gosynhyll defends women, his work cannot be described as feminist in the modern, Western sense of the word—his defenses of women include factors like women's lovely appearance, motherhood, and care for the sick, focusing on traditionally "feminine" characteristics.

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<sup>176</sup> D. K. Money, "David Clapham," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* Oxford University Press, 2004, <http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.library.unl.edu/view/article/5430>, accessed 12 June 2014.

<sup>177</sup> Edward Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women, called mulierum pean," 1542?, 7.

<sup>178</sup> Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women," 9.

<sup>179</sup> Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women, 8-17.

Robert Vaughan's 1542 work, "A dyalogue defensyue for women, agaynst malycyous detractoures," provides a more creative dialogue than most. Rather than describing a human interaction, Vaughan depicts a conversation witnessed by the narrator between two birds, a noble falcon and a malicious pye.<sup>180</sup> Interestingly, Vaughan's work is supported by a male patron, a master Arthur Hardberde, whom he claims requested that Vaughan write a work defending women in most likely another retaliation to the by now notorious "Schole house of women." He does mention an unnamed "author," whose work saddened him as women's "good names" were "cast down."<sup>181</sup>

In contrast to the negative depiction of women's creation as man's helper discussed by most of his contemporaries, Vaughan's falcon argues with the pye that God created all things perfect, including women, and that the woman was made "perfect in body, in reason, will, and mind."<sup>182</sup> When the pye argues that women lack bodily perfection, as they are weaker than men, the falcon counters with the claim that if superiority is judged by physical strength, man would be inferior to many of the animals.<sup>183</sup>

The final 1542 work about women, Christopher Goodwin's "The maydens dreame," may have been a more direct response to Katherine Howard's execution, although Goodwin's motivation in writing remains unknown. Rather than address the infamy of "Schole house," though, Goodwin's work takes a different approach. This poem, told

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<sup>180</sup> The Oxford English Dictionary does not contain the term "pye" in reference to a bird. Vaughan was likely referring to a magpie, a bird in the crow family, known for its "noisy chattering call" and for hoarding bright objects. Some view the magpie as an ill omen. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>181</sup> Robert Vaughan, "A dyalogue defensyue for women, agaynst malycyous detractoures," 1542, 3.

<sup>182</sup> Vaughan, "A dyalogue defensyue for women," 4.

<sup>183</sup> Vaughan, "A dyalogue defensyue for women," 4.

from the perspective of a young maiden recounting a dream, describes a dialogue between two women named “Love” and “Shamefastness”. Goodwin opens the piece with a prologue addressed from himself to his readers:

Behold you young Ladies, of high parentage  
 And you young virgins, of each degree  
 Here is a pamphlet, even meet for your age  
 Where as in a mirror; you may learn and see,  
 How vicious love, you should eschew and flee  
 Having always shamefastness, in your maidenly face  
 Then can you never miss, of virtue and grace.

To love I council you, never incline  
 Except only, it be for marriage  
 To the intent, to have thereby line  
 Yet in that case, take heed you not rage  
 For hasty love commonly, right soon will assuage  
 And beware that you love not, before you be wise  
 Lest you repent you, more often than twice.<sup>184</sup>

Goodwin’s “Love” is a beautiful but would-be promiscuous young woman, encouraging the dreaming maiden to love while she is young and beautiful, while “Shamefastness” encourages her to maintain her chastity. “Love” could potentially be seen to represent a young Katherine Howard, and “Shamefastness” provides the guidance that Katherine so desperately needed in her youth. Several clues throughout the poem suggest that “Love” may represent Katherine- she is noted to be of noble lineage, and “Shamefastness” tells her that

If I were a man, believe me for certain  
 To be my love, I would you require  
 For of all other, you be the most sovereign  
 Of beauty, favor, and fresh attire  
 There is none living, but would you desire  
 Your excellent beauty, would a saint move

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<sup>184</sup> Goodwin, “The maydens dreame,” 1542, 1-2.

Right happy is he, that hath a fair love.<sup>185</sup>

Of particular interest here is the word “sovereign.” Perhaps it means nothing, and simply fit the poem as a slant rhyme or half rhyme to “certain,” but it may have a deeper meaning, as “sovereign” could, of course, mean royalty. Goodwin then describes “Love” as:

The one was named “Amours,” a noble dame  
Richly arrayed, and it had been a queen  
As a lady of great renown and fame  
Which we call love, so freshly beseen.<sup>186</sup>

Again, this reference to “queen” seems strange in this context. The word “queen” does not appear with any kind of frequency in other works in the time period between the development of the printing press and 1570, with the exception of dedications to queens and references to specific historical queens. While these terms may have been coincidences, they do call to mind the young queen who had recently been executed for the very “crime” warned against in the poem.

Robert Crowley’s 1549 “Voyce of the Last Trumpet, blowen by the seventh Angel...Lessons to twelve several estats of men, which if thei learne and folowe, al shall be wel, and nothing amis” addresses twelve “estates” of “men.” Eleven of the chapters discuss men of different classes and occupations, including “The Beggars Lesson” and “The Servantes Lesson.” Crowley apparently identified women as the twelfth estate of men, as the final chapter, titled “The Womans Lesson,” discusses guidelines for women to learn and follow. This poem begins with the ominous words:

Whoso thou be of womankind,

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<sup>185</sup> Goodwin, “The maydens dreme,” 3.

<sup>186</sup> Goodwin, “The maydens dreme,” 3.

That lookest for salvation,  
 So thou have ever in thy mind,  
 To walk in thy vocation.<sup>187</sup>

He continues the poem to describe the strict rules that a woman must follow if she hopes for salvation. Crowley's view of an ideal woman coincides perfectly with Hull's description of the "chaste, silent, and obedient" woman.

All of these books comment upon marriage, and lay out the duties for wives. The husband's role in marriage in early modern England was to teach and instruct his wife, and the wife was expected to take instructions from her husband. Some authors provided advice to help women fulfill their roles as goodly wives. For example, Crowley writes:

Now when thou art become a wife,  
 And hast a husband to thy mind  
 See thou provoke him not to strife,  
 Lest haply he do prove unkind.  
 Acknowledge that he is thine head,  
 And hath of thee the governance;  
 And that thou must of him be led,  
 According to God's ordinance.<sup>188</sup>

Essentially, a woman must obey her husband and not provoke him to anger. If a husband does become angry, the wife is responsible for his anger and any unkind behavior resulting from it. Crowley then helpfully adds:

And if thine husband do outrage  
 In anything, what so it be,  
 Admonish him of his last age,  
 With words mild as becometh thee.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Robert Crowley, *The voyce of the laste trumpet blowen bi the seventh angel* (as is mentioned in the eleventh of the apocalipse) callynge al the estates of menne to the right path of their vocation, wherin are contayned xii lessons to twelve several estates of menne, which if they learne and folowe, al shal be well and nothyng amise, 1549, lines 1493-1496.

<sup>188</sup> Crowley, *The voyce of the laste trumpet*," lines 1533-1540.

<sup>189</sup> Crowley, "The voyce of the laste trumpet," lines 1569-1572.

The wife's duty is to placate her husband by speaking gently to him.

Not all early modern works were intended to be helpful, as satire was another common genre. Marriage, specifically wives, became the inspiration for several satirical works. The most notable of these works is the notorious "Schole house of women," which offers several "humorous" passages at women's expense. The author warns men against marrying at all, saying:

Truly some men, there be  
That live always, in great horror  
And say it goeth, by destiny  
To hang or wed, both hath one hour  
And whither it be, I am well sure  
Hanging is better, of the twayne  
Sooner done, and shorter payne<sup>190</sup>

He later reiterates the sentiment:

That whosoever weddeth a wife  
  
Is sure of sorrow all his life.<sup>191</sup>

Edward Gosynhyll provides a more positive view of the wife's role in a marriage. Like several other authors of his time, Gosynhyll emphasizes the creation of Eve as a helper to Adam, but he chooses to view this fact from a different perspective than most of his contemporaries. While Eve's creation as Adam's helper generally has been viewed as proof that women are inferior to men and created only to help them, Gosynhyll sees the woman's role as crucial in supporting the man:

Without the woman's helping hand

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<sup>190</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 6.

<sup>191</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 8.

By himself [he] may not long stand.<sup>192</sup>

While this view still does not quite provide a wife with the agency to stand on her own, Gosynhyll does give the wife a more important role in the marriage than most of his contemporaries would allow.

Robert Vaughan also describes the wife's role as "helper" as more important than many others have depicted. In a passage reminiscent of wedding vows, Vaughan portrays the wife as providing constant care for the husband in "sickness and health," and "poverty and wealth."<sup>193</sup> She maintains the household and cares for the family. While the wifely role described by Vaughan may not seem ideal to many modern readers, his recognition of the woman's importance in the household sets him apart from many of his contemporaries.

Early modern English expectations of women's sexuality were somewhat paradoxical. Chastity was expected of women both before and during marriage, and throughout widowhood. However, women were seen as the more lustful of the sexes. Moreover, a woman's sexuality could be viewed as physically dangerous. According to Suzanne Hull, "There was a theory in Early Modern England that every sex act reduced the life of the man by one day by spilling part of his life-giving 'seed.' A lustful woman, then, could cause the early demise of a man. Thus it was wise to insist on chastity and one sex partner for women, not only to prevent cuckolding but to preserve men's lives."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women," 8.

<sup>193</sup> Vaughan, "A dyalogue defensyue of women," 11.

<sup>194</sup> Suzanne Hull, *Women According to Men, The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996), 196.

The most notable words on chastity for women in early modern Europe come from Juan Luis Vives, whose work was translated many times into many languages, and influenced successive works. He regarded chastity as the “most goodly treasure that a woman can have,” and he brutally condemned women who willingly give up their chastity, saying, “O cursed maid, and not worthy to live, the which willingly spoileth herself of so precious a thing.”<sup>195</sup> Vives argued that all children should be good, but the maid “we would have especially good.”<sup>196</sup> He cared less for young boys’ behavior, but was deeply concerned about “any spot of vice or uncleanness” touching even the youngest of female children.<sup>197</sup> From the time they were weaned, Vives wanted young girls to keep company only with other girls, and advised parents to keep her away from boys. Vives’ work also illustrates the double standards of chastity for men and women. He claimed that if a woman slept with a man whom she expected to eventually marry, the man would be wise to despise her and end the relationship before marriage, as the woman had proven herself a harlot and would likely commit adultery later.<sup>198</sup> Of course, he offers no condemnation of the man who partook in the affair.

Robert Vaughan, writing in the year of Katherine Howard’s execution for adultery, claims that women who lost their virginity before marriage often did so by the temptation of evil men. He describes the various tricks that men could use to tempt women to sleep with them, including loving words, bribery, and expressions of pain at the woman’s rejection. Therefore, the man could be blamed for the woman’s falling into

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<sup>195</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 19, 31.

<sup>196</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 14.

<sup>197</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 14.

<sup>198</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 82.

sin. He also notes that when all of these other tactics fail, men could “by violent oppression, have [women] defiled,” which he calls an “abomination.”<sup>199</sup> This comment makes Vaughan one of few early modern authors to discuss rape, and the fact that the words come from the falcon, or Vaughan’s mouthpiece in the work, illustrate his horror at the thought of a man raping an unwilling woman. Finally, while he does view women who intentionally commit sexual sin as reprehensible, he argues that not all women should be judged by the sins of a few.

The author of “Schole house,” on the other hand, argues that women are the “far more lecherous” sex.<sup>200</sup> His analysis of women’s sexuality, written the year before Katherine Howard’s execution, seems almost prophetic of her situation.

If ye do intend, to use them oft  
 Keep them both at rack, and manger  
 Array them well, and lay them soft  
 Yet shall another man, come alofte  
 Have you once turned, your eye and back  
 Another she will have, to smick and smack.<sup>201</sup>

He later claims that no pain exists greater than a man’s being cuckolded.<sup>202</sup> The work is hypocritical, as men partook in the same activities. The difference, of course, is that men were not expected to maintain their chastity, and were not judged by that standard. Nevertheless, this anonymous author’s work, viewed by many even at his own time as being deeply offensive to women, reveals some important truths. Even in this oppressive society, women did not always maintain their chastity. This short passage discusses

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<sup>199</sup> Vaughan, “A dyalogue defensyue for women,” 12.

<sup>200</sup> Anonymous, “Schole house of women,” 7.

<sup>201</sup> Anonymous, “Schole house of women,” 3.

<sup>202</sup> Anonymous, “Schole house of women,” 7.

women who carry out adulterous relationships. If authors found women's sexuality and promiscuity worth discussing, we can know that there existed instances of women failing to conform to their gender roles.

Conduct books and satires emphasize the importance of silence in women. Early modern men expected women to be silent, and often viewed them as overly talkative, condemning traits such as "scolding," complaining, and gossiping. Vives advocated silence in women, ordering that she should hold her tongue demurely in company.<sup>203</sup> He preferred silence in even very young girls, advising parents to "let the maid learn none uncleanly words, or wanton, or uncomely gesture and moving of the body," illustrating the view of a need for silence in women to maintain bashfulness.<sup>204</sup> Of even greater concern, though, is the ease of which a woman is deceived; Vives fears that a woman deceived into believing false information will spread those inaccuracies to her listeners if she speaks.<sup>205</sup>

Goodwin's "The maiden's dreame" puts into words the sentiments felt by many of his contemporaries. He claims that excessive chatter is the "mother of all vice" in a woman:

To have sober knowledge, I count it not ill  
 Without coveting, to be subtle wise  
 From prattling language, keep your tongue still  
 For that is in a maiden, the mother of all vice  
 Be simple in cheer, in answer take advice  
 Speak but little, unless ye be demanded  
 For in much clatter, many lies are discharged.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 23.

<sup>204</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 15.

<sup>205</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 24.

<sup>206</sup> Goodwin, "The maiden's dreame," 7.

Goodwin does not necessarily oppose intelligence in women, although he does nothing to encourage education; he prefers inherent wisdom. However, his approval of wisdom only goes so far as a woman's thoughts—she still should not share her wisdom unless she is asked to speak. Goodwin's opposition to women's speech is his fear that "many lies" will be told.

Crowley also concerns himself with the lies that women may tell when they speak.

He warns women to:

Delight not in vain tattlers,  
That do use false rumors to sow;  
For such as be great babblers  
Will in no case their duty know.

Their coming is always to tell  
Some false lie by some honest man;  
They are worse than the devil of hell,  
If a man would them thoroughly scan.<sup>207</sup>

Unfortunately, Crowley does not provide any insight into or examples of the "false lies" women tell of "honest" men.

"Schole house of women" condemns women's speaking for several reasons. The author complains that women talk too much in general:

Where many geese be, there are many turds  
And where be women, are many words.<sup>208</sup>

Like Crowley, the author of "Schole house" also criticizes women for gossip.<sup>209</sup> He is more interested, though, in women who express their frustration and anger verbally. He

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<sup>207</sup> Crowley, "The voyce of the laste trumpet," lines 1609-1616.

<sup>208</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 9.

<sup>209</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 4.

assumes that the man who angers his wife cannot be at fault, as women will react unreasonably to the most minor of grievances. According to this author, women:

Have tongue at large, voice loud and shrill  
Of words wondrous, passing store  
Stomach stout, with froward will<sup>210</sup>  
And namely, when ye touch the sore  
With one bare word, or little more  
They flush and flame, as hot as fire  
And swell as a toad, for fervent ire.<sup>211</sup>

He continues on a similar note later, commenting on the malice and negativity of women:

Malice is so roteth in their heart  
That seldom a man, may of them here  
One good word, in a whole long year.<sup>212</sup>

Schole house claims that God created the woman without the ability to speak, but the devil put a leaf in her mouth, which became a tongue. The first words she spoke were curses at Adam, and from that moment, she never stopped talking. Eventually, Adam begged the devil to remove Eve's ability to speak, but Satan refused to meddle any further.<sup>213</sup> Gosynhyll mentions this story in his "The prayse of all women," but dismisses it as a "fable" and a "lie."<sup>214</sup>

A third virtue highly prized in early modern Englishwomen was obedience, specifically obedience to men. Katherine Howard proved herself well aware of this

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<sup>210</sup> The term "froward" has become obsolete and no longer used in colloquial language. The Oxford English Dictionary defines use of the term in this time period as "Disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please; refractory, ungovernable; also, in a wider sense, bad, evilly-disposed, 'naughty'. (The opposite of *toward*.)"

<sup>211</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 2.

<sup>212</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 3.

<sup>213</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 9.

<sup>214</sup> Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women," 6.

expectation when she chose her motto as queen, “No other will but his.” Elyot alludes to the obedience of women in a metaphor which he believes to be a defense of women. In response to a claim that women are imperfect, as they are weaker in body and soul to men, he replies “The horse hath much strength, and therefore is apt for journeys and burdens: the sheep is feeble and fearful, and may therefore easily be shorn. And yet each of these in his kind hath his perfections.”<sup>215</sup> Thus, the “good women” in Elyot’s “The defence of good women” find their goodness in obedience. Indeed, a woman’s weakness and frailty are virtues for Elyot, as these characteristics make her more easily led by the stronger man.

Crowley discusses obedience in depth in “The voyce of the laste trumpet.” Once again, he emphasizes the need for women to follow his suggestions in their quest for salvation. One of the requirements women must adhere to in order to be saved is obedience:

For though the first woman did fall,  
And was the chief occasion  
That sin hath pierced through us all,  
Yet shalt thou have salvation.  
Thou shalt be safe, I say, if thou  
Keep thyself in obedience  
To thine husband, as thou didst vow,  
And show to him due reverence.<sup>216</sup>

Crowley ends his poem with similar sentiments about obedience:

But thou that art Sarai’s daughter,  
And lookest for salvation,  
See thou learn thy doctrine at her,  
And walk in thy vocation.  
She was always obedient

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<sup>215</sup> Elyot, “The defence of good women,” 21.

<sup>216</sup> Crowley, “The voyce of the laste trumpet,” lines 1581-1600.

To her husband, and called him lord,  
 As the book of God's testament  
 Doeth in most open wise record.  
 Follow her and thou shalt be sure  
 To have, as she had in the end,  
 The life that shall ever endure:  
 Unto thee which the Lord thee send.<sup>217</sup>

Crowley's use of Sarai as an example for women seems unusual, and even unintentionally ironic. Sarai, who was renamed "Sarah" by God, was the wife of Abram (later Abraham) of the Old Testament. Sarai remains probably most famous for her doubtful laughter at God's word when he announced that she would bear a child in her old age. This momentary indiscretion, mentioned in Genesis 18:12-15, should not be reason to condemn Sarai, but in this particularly religious age, laughing at God's word, if the story had been known to the readers, would likely not have been taken lightly.

Moreover, Sarai's obedience to Abram should call into serious question the wisdom of obeying one's husband in all things. Several of Sarai's actions, performed in obedience to Abram's wishes, run distinctly contrary to early modern values. For example, in Genesis 16:11-20, Abram became fearful upon arriving in a new land that he would be killed out of jealousy of his marriage to the beautiful Sarai, as his murderers would want to marry Sarai themselves. Therefore, he ordered Sarai to claim that she was his sister in order to protect him, and this deception even continued when Pharaoh chose to take her as a lover. The plot only ended when God plagued Pharaoh's house as a result of his unintentional living in sin with Sarai, and Pharaoh thereby discovered the truth. This plot was unwise at best, and horrendously sinful at worst. If Sarai had refused to

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<sup>217</sup> Crowley, "The voyce of the laste trumpet," lines 1641-1652.

obey Abram, she would have abstained from sin. Disobedience would have been the wiser and more righteous choice. Whether Crowley had read the Bible and known of this incident, or had hoped that his readers would not know of it, is unknown. In any case, it provides interesting insight into the value of a woman's obedience to her husband in all matters.

The author of "Schole house" also values obedience, and, consistent with the overall theme of his work, believes that women are incapable of following through with this expectation. He claims that women,

First and foremost, when they be chid  
Will that thing do, they be forbid.<sup>218</sup>

Another of the most important qualities a woman could possess was "shamefastness," or bashfulness. Women were expected to be shy and modest, reluctant to leave the household, and walk with their heads down when forced to be in public, such as attendance at church. According to Vives, "shamefastness and soberness be the inseparable companions of chastity, in so much that she can not be chaste that is not ashamed: for that is as a cover and a veil of her face."<sup>219</sup>

Agrippa praises the "shamefastness" of women who choose to die rather than have a doctor or surgeon examine her "prime parts."<sup>220</sup> He also claims that even dead women maintain their modesty, as a drowned woman will be found lying face down in the water, so as to hide her body from view.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 10.

<sup>219</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 51.

<sup>220</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 15.

<sup>221</sup> Agrippa, *A treatise of the nobilitie and excellencye of woman kynde*, 14-15.

According to Crowley, a woman should avoid dallying and even giving an appearance of happiness while walking in public; of course, she should also keep her walks in public at an absolute minimum.

Avoid idle and wanton talk,  
 Avoid nice looks and dalliance;  
 And when thou dost in the streets walk,  
 See thou show no light countenance.<sup>222</sup>

For Christopher Goodwin, a woman's "shame" helps both the world and God himself love her:

Have shame always, before your eyes  
 When you shall be to love esprysed  
 The world shall love you, in the more goodly wise  
 And you shall not thereby, of God be despised.<sup>223</sup>

In addition to these four most often mentioned virtues of chastity, silence, obedience, and shamefastness, many authors comment upon education for women. Few early modern Englishwomen received any sort of formal education, and most of those who were "educated" were taught the skills deemed desirable for women at that time—proper feminine behavior, devotion to God, and courtly graces, such as dancing and playing the lute. Reading and writing were taught separately. While some women learned how to read at home, many never learned the more difficult skill of writing: "Reading is easier than writing. With enough motivation and a willing tutor it could be learned at home. Writing was a different, more complex skill, historically left to clerics or secretaries; it did not have to be taught in conjunction with reading."<sup>224</sup> Between the

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<sup>222</sup> Crowley, "The voyce of the laste trumpet," lines 1509-1512.

<sup>223</sup> Goodwin, "The maydens dreame," 8.

<sup>224</sup> Hull, *Women According to Men*, 24.

years 1580 and 1640, 90% of women called in court cases in London and 95% in the countryside were unable to sign their own names.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, the rise of humanist education ensure that at least some women, particularly those of the nobility, could receive an education which emphasized literacy. Katherine Howard's experience illustrates something of this transition in education, as she was educated in the courtly graces as well having attained at least a minimal level of literacy.

Before 1570, very few authors wrote any form of literature for women.<sup>226</sup> More than half of all books published for women were "how-to" guides addressing such topics as how to be a good wife, how to educate girls, cook, dress, create fine needlework, etc.<sup>227</sup> Somewhat ironically, several of these conduct books addressed to women discouraged reading, especially the reading of romances or works not of a devotional nature. Even those which approved of women's education in topics such as Latin supported this education as a wife's ability to attract and then be useful to her husband. Education for the sake of intellect very rarely occurred except amongst royalty and the upper nobility educated in the humanist tradition.

Vives, who favored education for women, advocated learning first and foremost and at the earliest possible age, that "which pertaineth unto the ornament of her soul, and the keeping and ordering of a house."<sup>228</sup> Thus, while Vives valued education, his first goal in education for women was teaching them to be good Christians and how to run a household. He remarks that, were he asked what women should study, he would respond:

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<sup>225</sup> Hull, *Chaste, Silent, & Obedient*, 4.

<sup>226</sup> Hull, *Chaste, Silent, & Obedient*, 9.

<sup>227</sup> Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient*, 31.

<sup>228</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 15.

“The study of wisdom: the which doth instruct their manners, and inform their living, and teacheth them the way of good and holy life. As for eloquence I have no great care, nor a woman needeth it not: but she needeth goodness and wisdom. Nor it is no shame for a woman to hold her peace: but it is shame for her and abominable to lack discretion.”<sup>229</sup> He does go on to say that he does not condemn eloquence, but that he prioritizes other virtues; eloquence can come as an afterthought for a holy and chaste woman.

Crowley’s work represents the views many men held on the education of women. He encourages educated women to use their knowledge to read devotionals and to attract a good husband:

Study to please the Lord above,  
Walking in thy calling upright,  
And God will some good man’s heart move  
To set on thee his whole delight.<sup>230</sup>

Goodwin leaves a more subtle hint to his views on education for women. When the maiden awakes from her dream in “The Mayden’s Dreme,” she goes out to find a scribe to record her dream’s message.<sup>231</sup> Although the poem is addressed to nobility, the one class in which at least some women were taught to write, Goodwin does not want his heroine to be able to write down her own experience.

Sir Thomas Elyot has a somewhat more positive view of women’s intelligence and education. He discusses the ability of women to reason, and briefly describes several instances in which women have “invented” “many arts and necessary occupations,” such

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<sup>229</sup> Vives, *The Instruction of a Christen Woman*, 22-23.

<sup>230</sup> Crowley, “The voyce of the laste trumpet,” lines 1529-1532.

<sup>231</sup> Goodwin, “The maydens dreme,” 8.

as Latin letters, liberal arts and poetry, and the use of armor and fortresses. Moreover, he describes female philosophers who were respected by Socrates himself.<sup>232</sup>

Elyot's Zenobia, whom he sets as a model for women, is highly educated. She has put her knowledge to use in bettering herself and living up to the standards of femininity. Her training in moral philosophy has helped her to avoid the mistakes which women otherwise make so easily, and helps her to abstain from doing anything unseemly. Additionally, her education can help her to provide wise counsel to her husband:

I perceived that without prudence and constancy, women might be brought lightly into error and folly, and made therefore unmet for that company, whereunto they were ordained: I mean, to be assistance and comfort to man through their fidelity... I found also, that justice teacheth us women to honor our husbands next after God... And if she measure it to the will of her husband, she doth the more wisely: except it may turn them both to loss or dishonesty. Yet then should she seem rather to give him wise counsel, than to appear disobedient or sturdy.<sup>233</sup>

Elyot does offer one encouraging bit of information for educated women, though. When asked how her knowledge of "letters" proved useful to her after her marriage, Zenobia told the men that while her education helped her to be a good helper to her husband, her knowledge became useful to herself after her husband's death.<sup>234</sup>

Like Elyot, Vaughan and Gosynhyll both mention the female invention of the alphabet. Gosynhyll says:

And in like manner a woman found  
The letters first that we now write  
The A.B.C. as they do stand  
Whereby we use our minds to indict.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Elyot, "The defence of good women," 25-26.

<sup>233</sup> Elyot, "The defence of good women," 29-30.

<sup>234</sup> Elyot, "The defence of good women," 31.

<sup>235</sup> Gosynhyll, "The prayse of all women," 4.

Unlike Elyot, he does not place any conditions on a woman's education, or imply that her knowledge should be used as a means of helping her husband and behaving properly. Rather, he acknowledges the services already done by women in creating the Latin alphabet, and uses this information to support his claim that women are capable of reason and intelligence.

Loyalty and virtue in women also receive recognition in early modern English books.

Elyot praises women's loyalty in his work, and gives several examples of women who refused to move on and love another after their husbands disappeared or died (such as Penelope), and even women who committed suicide when their husbands died.<sup>236</sup>

Somewhat disturbingly, Elyot clearly finds these suicides noble and admirable. Elyot continually remarks upon the virtue of women in his defense of "good" women. When condemning men who insult women, he claims that "all honest men ought to bear to the virtuous and gentle sort of good women" reverence.<sup>237</sup>

Finally, several works address women's physical appearance. Consistent with other teachings for women during this time period, dress was expected to be modest. Many authors condemn the wearing of makeup and the use of hair coloring, as well as extravagant clothing. As an individual's societal class restricted the types of fabrics and colors she could wear, women were also ordered in these books to dress properly for their place in society.

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<sup>236</sup> Elyot, "The defence of good women," 11-14.

<sup>237</sup> Elyot, "The defence of good women," 3.

Crowley lays out several guidelines for women's appearance and apparel, and his words appear to be consistent with the expectations of his time period. He orders women to"

Let thine apparel be honest;  
 Be not decked past thy degree;  
 Neither let thou thine head be dressed  
 Otherwise than beseemeth thee.  
 Let thine hair bear the same color  
 That nature gave it to endure;  
 Lay it not out as doth a whore,  
 That would men's fantasies allure.  
 Paint not thy face in any wise,  
 But make thy manners for to shine,  
 And thou shalt please all such men's eyes,  
 As do to godliness incline.<sup>238</sup>

"Schole house of women" also mentions physical appearance, and of course, offers only a negative depiction of women's vanity:

A fool of late, contrived a book  
 And all in praise, of the feminine  
 Who so taketh labor, it to overlook  
 Shall prove, all is but flattery  
 Peahen he calleth it, it may well be  
 The peacock is proudest of his fair tail  
 And so be all women of their apparel.<sup>239</sup>

In this passage, a man who praises women is a fool and a flatterer; clearly, for this author, women need no more flattery, as they are already vain and proud of their apparel.

Obviously, the rules for women were multitudinous and impossible to carry out, even for a woman who desperately tried to adhere to them. As seen in the books described, society held women to a higher standard of propriety than men. Women were

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<sup>238</sup> Crowley, "The voyce of the laste trumpet," lines 1513-1524.

<sup>239</sup> Anonymous, "Schole house of women," 2.

viewed as men's helpmeets, rather than as autonomous individuals. Chastity was demanded of them both before and during marriage and throughout widowhood. Women were expected to remain silent, and to be obedient to the men in their lives. Early modern English society insisted that women be modest and bashful, dressing appropriately. Education for women was often limited to little more than learning these virtues.

Examination of these books, though, illustrates an interesting paradox. Many authors offered suggestions for women in conduct books. The fact that these men mentioned specific traits in women over and over again suggests a certain doubt in women's ability to carry out these requirements. For example, the ever-present mention of female chastity illustrates a definite uneasiness with women's sexuality. However, as seen in the case of "Schole house of women" and the vehement opposition to it, blatantly claiming that women were incapable of chastity appears to have been a serious breach in etiquette. Perhaps by the time of Katherine Howard's reign and execution, expectations of women were beginning to shift and become less rigid. It may be that men simply wished to defend women's honor against the malicious claims made in "Schole house" even if they believed women capable of the misdeeds noted by the anonymous author. In any case, we see a more positive view of women arising in the year of Katherine's death.

It should also be noted, though, that women did not always attempt to follow the instructions given to them by men. The frequent recurrences of similar conduct books suggest the need for repeating the information. One of the women who failed to live up to societal standards was Katherine Howard.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Reinterpreting Katherine Howard

Knowing the rules, guidelines, and expectations for women in Katherine Howard's time, then, we are more easily able to examine her personality and behavior within the context of her time. In spite of the often one-dimensional view of Katherine Howard provided by her historians and biographers, the documents and letters of her contemporaries provide a more complex view of her. Katherine's kindness and graciousness were well-documented by various types of observers in the Calendar of State Papers. For example, Katherine's behavior toward her new husband's previous wife, Anne of Cleves, incited comment upon her graciousness. Both Imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys and French ambassador Charles de Marillac describe the meeting in letters to their respective kings.<sup>240</sup> Katherine graciously received Anne at Court, and according to Chapuys, showed Anne "the utmost kindness" and refused to allow Anne to bow to her. The two women were able to socialize comfortably, and both Chapuys and Marillac comment on the fact that they danced together long after the King had gone to bed. Later, Henry gave Katherine a gift of a ring and two small lapdogs, and Katherine immediately gave them to Anne, with Henry's approval. Overall, a meeting which had the potential to be exceedingly awkward for all parties involved proved a great success.

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<sup>240</sup> United Kingdom, Public Records Office, "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 8 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 436, Page 217, Gale: State Papers Online. "R.O. Marillac to Francis I," 12 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 449, Page 221, Gale: State Papers Online.

Marillac commented upon the Queen's personality later, as well; even after her arrest, he notes her "beauty and sweetness" in a letter to King Francis.<sup>241</sup>

Various instances illustrate Katherine's generosity. Several grants made during her brief reign grant lands and homes to her servants. She also, unwisely, provided positions in her household to some old friends from the Duchess's household (including ex-lover Dereham and the aforementioned Joan Bulmer) when they asked her for a place at court.

Perhaps the area in women's behavior in which Katherine most obviously and outwardly failed was that of "shamefastness," but her failure in this area suited her well. Accounts of her dancing the night away with Anne of Cleves, for example, and the fact that Katherine attracted so much attention from men, suggests that she was probably much more vivacious and personable than Juan Luis Vives and his contemporaries would have preferred her to be. Yet, this very vivacity likely led to her success; the impoverished and unimportant daughter of an unimportant nobleman earned the love of a king through her personality. To contribute Katherine's initial success at court to beauty alone would be erroneous, as Marillac noted that she was "rather graceful than beautiful."<sup>242</sup> Rather, her pleasant and outgoing demeanor likely led her to stand apart from some of the other, more traditionally quiet and bashful women at court.

Katherine seems to have been on good terms with Henry's children. Her relationship with Mary was understandably strained at first, as Mary was several years older than her new stepmother. In a December 1540 letter to the Queen of Hungary, Chapuys notes

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<sup>241</sup> "R.O. Marillac to Francis I," 22 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1366, Page 630, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>242</sup>

Katherine's displeasure with Mary's behavior and lack of respect toward the former and mentions that Katherine threatened to take away two of Mary's maids.<sup>243</sup> However, he claims that Mary had found a way to pacify the new Queen, and believed that her maids would stay. Interestingly, Chapuys, an always faithful ally of Mary's, makes only brief mention of this event, and passes no judgment on Katherine; he also fails to mention how Mary intended to pacify the Queen. Perhaps he thought little of the spat, or maybe he felt that Katherine's actions were justified. Although Katherine was miffed toward Mary in the beginning, the relationship had improved just a month later. Chapuys at this time notes that both Henry and Katherine sent Mary "magnificent" New Year's gifts.<sup>244</sup> Again, he does not mention what they were, but the gifts apparently impressed Chapuys. In May of that year, Mary was granted permission to reside at Court permanently with the approval of the Queen, who was "agreeable" to the new arrangement.<sup>245</sup>

Chapuys also records a visit made by the King and Queen to Prince Edward's household, which he claims was "chiefly at the intercession of the Queen herself."<sup>246</sup> Finally, it appears that Katherine maintained an especially good relationship with her young cousin, seven-year-old Elizabeth, continually giving her small gifts and requesting

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<sup>243</sup> "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 5 Dec 1540, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 314, Page 148, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>244</sup> "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 8 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 436, Page 217, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>245</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 17 May 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 835, Page 400, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>246</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 17 May 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 835, Page 400, Gale: State Papers Online.

that Elizabeth sit in the privileged place opposite her during Katherine's first public dinner.<sup>247</sup> While the cause for Elizabeth's eventual refusal to marry remains a mystery, one of the legends regarding her hesitancy claims that she refused to ever marry after her father had her young stepmother executed.

Until the time that her sexual indiscretions were exposed, Katherine's most frequent and notable appearances in the State Papers occur in the form of intercessions on behalf of prisoners. The most notable of these is Sir Thomas Wyatt, whose close relationship with Henry VIII's fallen minister, Thomas Cromwell, led to his own falling out of the King's favor and arrest.<sup>248</sup> Also in the Tower in March of 1541 were Sir John Wallop and John Mason, both for religious dissension. The Privy Council, in discussing the release of both Wyatt and Wallop, twice mentions the role played by Katherine, noting that "great intercession was made for him [Wallop] and Wyatt" and that they were released "at the great suit of the Queen."<sup>249</sup> The list of Grants for the month of March also briefly mentions the pardons of all three of the men—Wyatt, Wallop, and Mason—"at the intercession of Queen Katherine."<sup>250</sup> Finally, the pardons and Katherine's role were also mentioned by imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys, who goes into greater detail about

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<sup>247</sup> Joanna Denny, *Katherine Howard*, 176-177.

<sup>248</sup> "Chapuys to the Queen of Hungary," 17 Jan 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 461, Page 225, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>249</sup> "R. O. The Privy Council to Lord William Howard," 26 Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 660, Page 318, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>250</sup> "Grants in March 1541," Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 678, Page 325, Gale: State Papers Online.

the events.<sup>251</sup> Notably, the ever cynical Chapuys shows no signs of doubt that the Court's version is true, and seems to believe that the Queen's intercession truly did save the prisoners. Katherine's true role in the release of the prisoners is unknown; most historians accept at face value the claims that Katherine secured their release without questioning whether her actions were her own or part of an elaborate play. Wyatt in particular was especially popular amongst the populace; his release proved a popular move, and his execution would no doubt have led to public discontent. However, it should also be noted that Wyatt never did fully regain the King's favor or trust, suggesting that his release was not Henry's idea, or at least, not his desire.

An action which almost certainly occurred at Katherine's own wishes was her care for Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury. Katherine learned that the elderly Countess, imprisoned in the Tower of London, was cold. With Henry's permission, Katherine had her own dressmakers make warm clothing for the Countess, and paid for the items from her own purse. Although Katherine's pleas for clemency were ignored in the case of Margaret Pole, who was executed in 1541, her simple act of sending warm clothing to a prisoner suggests that Katherine remained aware of the sufferings of others and possessed a certain amount of compassion for the less fortunate.

While Katherine has not often been recognized as a significant figure in history, she seems to have been well-liked by her contemporaries. Much of the surviving information about Katherine was recorded by Chapuys. Chapuys was never a man to mince words,

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<sup>251</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 27 Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 662, Page 319, Gale: State Papers Online.

and remains infamous for his comments about Anne Boleyn, as he refused to ever acknowledge her as Queen and used a variety of creative and less than complimentary names to describe her. He certainly had less reason to personally dislike Katherine than he had for Anne, and as a Catholic ambassador serving a Catholic monarch, Chapuys was pleased with the presence of the religiously conservative Katherine on the throne and the resultant conservative influence of her family and friends. Yet his affinity for Katherine appears to have gone beyond religious similarities. Chapuys would always recognize Katherine as Queen, and continued to refer to her as such even after her fall. Moreover, he gives no evidence of doubting the charges brought against her, but he still does not pass judgment upon her, at least outwardly. In fact, his comments about her after her fall are often surprisingly generous. Chapuys, who so infamously called Anne Boleyn the “Great Whore”, refers delicately to Queen Katherine’s “unchastity” and “misbehavior.”<sup>252</sup> According to Chapuys, the Chancellor gave the opening speech at the commencement of Parliament, and noted principally the Queen’s misdeeds, which “he aggravated and exaggerated.”<sup>253</sup> While we do not know what exactly was said in this speech, Chapuys clearly was not impressed. He was also apparently surprised at a comment made by Katherine’s uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, who claimed that he wished the Queen were burned. Chapuys notes “God knows why” in his description of this event,

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<sup>252</sup> “R. O. Chapuys to Charles V,” 11 Dec 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1441, Page 642, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>253</sup> United Kingdom, Public Records Office, “Chapuys to Charles V,” 29 Jan 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 4, Page 715, Gale: State Papers Online.

showing his own surprise at Norfolk's abandonment of and cruelty toward his niece.<sup>254</sup> Finally, he writes that "it is to be feared that the Queen will soon be sent to the Tower;" his words "it is to be feared" suggest that he finds Katherine's impending death an unfortunate turn of events.<sup>255</sup> Overall, Chapuys paints a sympathetic portrait of Katherine.

Another man who showed sympathy toward Katherine and also possibly liked her personally was Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. Cranmer was in several ways the opposite of Chapuys: he was generally good-natured, but a staunch Protestant who disliked having a conservative Queen on the throne, and he disliked Katherine's relations. Cranmer received news of Katherine's offenses first, and briefly investigated before reporting what he had learned to the King, who had ironically publicly given thanks to God that very day for Katherine, who he called the "jewel of womanhood." Politically, Katherine's fall was nothing but good news for Cranmer. However, he found his task of questioning her to be a difficult one. He reported to Henry VIII that Katherine was frenzied and panicking so much that any man who saw her would pity her.<sup>256</sup> He claims in this letter that he had intended to point out Katherine's demerits, then discuss the justice of the laws, and finally talk about the King's mercy; he notes that his worry for her sanity caused him to begin his discussion with Katherine with word of the King's

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<sup>254</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 19 Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1359, Page 627, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>255</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 29 Jan 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 4, Page 715, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>256</sup> "Cranmer to Henry VIII," Nov 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1325, Page 620, Gale: State Papers Online.

mercy to hopefully help to relax her.<sup>257</sup> When she repeatedly became frenzied, Cranmer left, and ensured that no objects were left in the room with which Katherine could hurt herself. The fact that Cranmer took this extra care toward a political enemy and even wrote of his pity to Henry VIII suggests that he found Katherine a sympathetic, and perhaps likeable person.

Finally, the little that is said of public opinion toward Katherine in the State Papers suggests that the English people liked her or at least were more forgiving of her misdeeds than most modern historians. Early in Katherine's short reign, Chapuys mentions that the people of London had given her a "splendid reception."<sup>258</sup> While this event may seem trivial, it must be noted that not all of Henry's wives had received such warm receptions by the English people—Anne Boleyn had been greeted quite coldly at her own coronation. Katherine had supplanted Henry's previous queen, Anne of Cleves, whom the English had grown fond of, although she had never attained the level of adoration Catherine of Aragon (Anne Boleyn's predecessor) had achieved.<sup>259</sup> Despite Katherine's usurping of her former mistress's position, the people still approved of her, or at least proved willing to give her a chance.

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 27 Mar 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 662, Page 319, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>259</sup> While, according to Antonia Fraser, the English had initially had reservations about the German-born Anne of Cleves as a foreigner, they later "esteemed her as one of the most sweet, gracious, and humane queens they had had," according to Marillac. Marillac may have exaggerated the people's love for Anne, but it seems based on this quote that she had earned their respect and affection. Fraser, *The Wives of Henry VIII*, 310, 326.

After Katherine's disgrace, Marillac notes a general disgust for the Duke of Norfolk, who was at the judgment of Culpepper and Dereham, and laughed as he was questioning them.<sup>260</sup> After the trials, Norfolk went back to his home, which Marillac says "makes the people think ill."<sup>261</sup> If Marillac's analysis is true, the people showed harsher feelings toward Norfolk's abandonment of his niece than toward the Queen herself, as there is no mention of negative public opinion of Katherine after her fall.

In addition, it must be noted that even before Katherine's death, when divorce remained the rumor after the Queen's indiscretions were made known, snide remarks were made about Henry himself regarding the marriage. When Chapuys commented upon the possibility of Henry's taking a new wife, he sarcastically proclaimed "few, if any, ladies now at Court would aspire to such an honour."<sup>262</sup> Henry became something of a joke, not because he had been cuckolded, but rather because he was casting off yet another wife. Again, public animosity toward Katherine herself is largely absent.

Finally, a man named Ottwell Johnson, who was employed by Sir John Gage, Comptroller to the royal household, wrote to his brother shortly after Katherine's execution with nothing but praises for her. He does not doubt that Katherine was guilty, but her amendment of her "ungodly life" causes him to raise her as an example to others. The text of the letter is as follows:

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<sup>260</sup> "R. O. Marillac to Francis," 7 Dec 1541, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 16: 1540-1541)*, Entry Number 1426, Page 665, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>262</sup> "Chapuys to Charles V," 25 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 124, Page 50, Gale: State Papers Online.

And for news from hence, know ye, that, even according to my writing on Sunday last, I see the Queen and the lady Retcheford suffer within the Tower, the day following; whose souls (I doubt not) be with God, for they made the most godly and Christians' end that ever was heard tell of (I think) since the world's creation, uttering their lively faith in the blood of Christ only, with wonderful patience and constancy to the death, and, with goodly words and steadfast countenance, they desired all Christian people to take regard unto their worthy and just punishment with death, for their offences against God heinously from their youth upward, in breaking of all his commandments, and also against the King's royal majesty very dangerously...<sup>263</sup>

Rather than condemning Katherine's actions, he emphasizes her courage and faith. This letter suggests that Katherine was not disliked by the people of England, as at least Johnson found himself able to overlook her faults, although he does not say that he doubts her guilt. Johnson's firm belief that Katherine's and Jane Rochford's souls went to heaven seems almost remarkable in this time, as Katherine especially had committed one of the gravest and most unforgiveable sins a woman could commit in sixteenth-century England. He continues on to say:

Wherefore they, being justly condemned (as they said), by the laws of the realm and Parliament, to die, required the people (I say) to take example at them for amendment of their ungodly lives, and gladly obey the King in all things, for whose preservation they did heartily pray, and willed all people so to do, commending their souls to God and earnestly calling for mercy upon Him, whom I beseech to give us grace with such faith, hope, and charity, at our departing out of this miserable world, to come to the fruition of his Godhead in joy everlasting. Amen.<sup>264</sup>

Also particularly interesting in Johnson's commentary is his note that Katherine and Jane had been justly condemned, "as they said." Perhaps he includes these words simply for

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<sup>263</sup>“Otwell Johnson to his Brother, John Johnson,” 15 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 106, Page 45, Gale: State Papers Online.

<sup>264</sup>“Otwell Johnson to his Brother, John Johnson,” 15 Feb 1542, *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII (Vol. 17: 1542)*, Entry Number 106, Page 45, Gale: State Papers Online.

clarification for his brother, who had not been present at the executions, that Katherine and Jane offered a form of confession and submission in their deaths. Yet, that added parenthetical note, “(as they said),” does raise some interest. Perhaps Johnson believed that the condemnations of Katherine and Jane were unjust, so he felt the need to clarify the comment of justice as words belonging to Katherine and Jane. Finally, his use of Katherine as an example for himself and others seems quite surprising, considering the circumstances. Yet, he does establish Katherine and Jane as positive examples of courage and faith, models to be followed when facing one’s own death, rather than delinquents to be mocked or denigrated for their actions.

## CONCLUSION

As has been noted by nearly all of her biographers, Katherine Howard was not a “rose without a thorn.” Less commonly mentioned, though, is the fact that she did not need to be one. Although no human is perfect, historians and biographers are quick to point out the imperfections of their subjects, especially when the subject is a sexually active female. As a result, Katherine Howard has become little more than a caricature in historical works and in popular memory.

Katherine’s sexuality has been used as a means to judge other aspects of her character, illustrating the continuing discomfort with female sexuality in our society. While many scholars criticize Katherine based on her sexual activity, they also condemn her personality and behavior in other ways. She has been deemed vain, greedy, and stupid, often without merit or based on minimal evidence. In fact, if she had been chaste, Katherine would likely be respected as a great queen consort in providing support and happiness for the aging king. Due to her sexual activity, though, historians and biographers often attempt to find negative elements to her personality and pay little attention to Katherine’s many positive traits.

Katherine Howard lived a too-brief life, and had little chance to leave an indelible mark on history. While she did make several mistakes which proved fatal to herself, she also possessed some truly good qualities. Katherine as a person was more than her mistakes, and it is time that she be recognized for the complex individual that she was. More important than just the rehabilitation of Katherine’s image, though, is the need to recognize women in general as complex beings worthy of respect regardless of sexual

history. Chastity should not be the exclusive, or even primary, means by which we examine a woman's character. The current literature available on Katherine Howard provides strong evidence that women are still judged by these standards. Improving Katherine's image and representation in history and popular memory would open a new way to view and study all women.

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