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| Safija Hazeri. Tudor Royal Wives. Humanities and Social Sciences. 2022. dumas-03736300

HAL Id: dumas-03736300

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-03736300>

Submitted on 22 Jul 2022

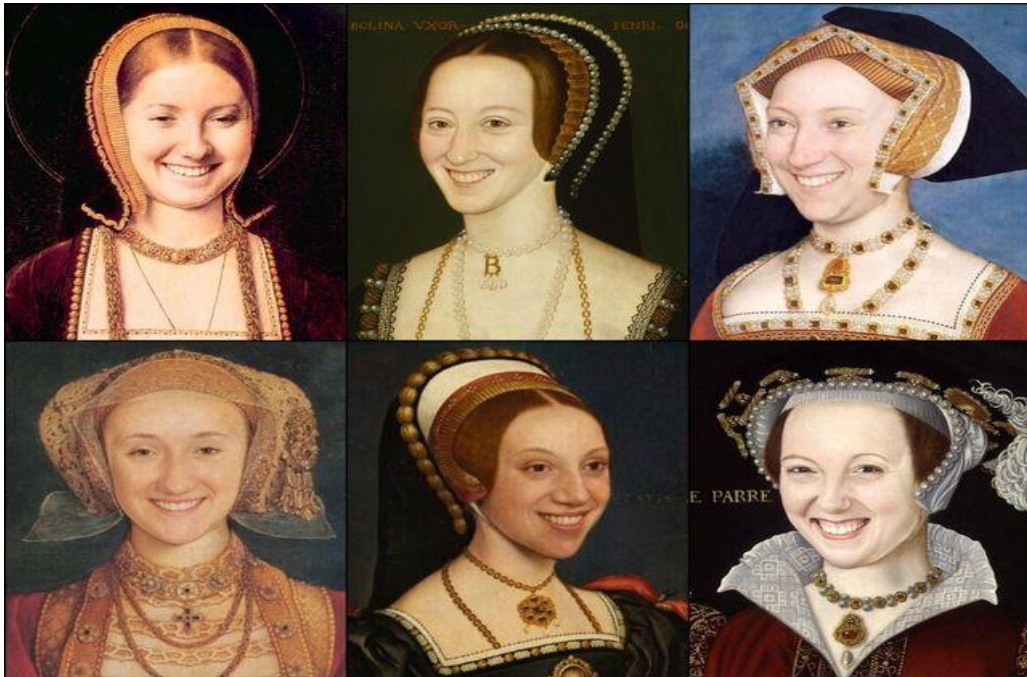
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UFR ALL – Département des Etudes Anglophones

Option Art et Littératures des Pays Anglophones

TUDOR ROYAL WIVES



Présenté par Safija HAZERI

Sous la direction de Christian JEREMIE

Session 2021-2022

TUDOR ROYAL WIVES

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

J'adresse mes remerciements à toutes les personnes qui m'ont aidée et soutenue dans la réalisation de ce mémoire.

En premier lieu, je remercie M. JEREMIE, maître de conférences à l'Université Jean Monnet de Saint-Etienne. En tant que directeur de ce mémoire, il m'a soutenue dans le choix d'un sujet qui me passionne et m'a guidée vers des recherches appropriées. En deuxième lieu, je remercie Mme. DUALE, professeur des universités qui m'a aidée en me donnant les informations nécessaires et conseils méthodologiques pour réaliser ce mémoire.

Enfin, je tiens à remercier mon mari, ma famille, mes amis et mes proches pour leur soutien permanent et leur bienveillance à mon égard. Qu'ils sachent que je suis infiniment reconnaissante et que je ferai toujours de mon mieux pour qu'ils soient fiers de moi. Pour leur présence, leurs perpétuels encouragements et leur soutien dans la réalisation de ce mémoire, je les remercie tous.

TUDOR ROYAL WIVES

RÉSUMÉ

En juin 1509, le nouveau Roi d'Angleterre, Henry VIII épousa la veuve de son frère, Catherine d'Aragon. Des années plus tard, il divorça d'elle car elle ne lui avait pas donné un fils héritier pour le trône. En quête de ce dernier, il eut six femmes. Ce travail s'intéresse tout particulièrement au caractère de ces femmes, dont certaines parmi elles se sont montrées d'une personnalité audacieuse, forte et courageuse, d'un pouvoir caché qu'elles exercèrent en arrière-plan : leur influence sur Henri VIII. Cela le poussa à se séparer de l'Eglise Catholique et à mener l'Angleterre vers la Réforme. D'une manière ou d'une autre ce sont ces femmes qui ont aidé à faire de l'Angleterre une nation Protestante. Ces femmes n'ont pas été suffisamment mises en valeur par les historiens, mais elles demeurent légendaires notamment grâce aux arts et au cinéma.

Mots clés : Divorce – Femmes – Influence – Réforme – Tudor

ABSTRACT

In June 1509, the new King of England married his brother's widow. Years later, he would divorce her because she was not able to give him a legitimate male heir. His attempts to get the longed-for heir would lead him to marry six times. This study focuses on the character of these women, especially those among them who were revealed to have been very bold, strong, and courageous. They had some hidden power, which was the power of influence on Henry VIII, leading him to break up with Rome and lead England to the Reformation. One way or another, these women were the ones who shaped the development of the English Reformation and made England a Protestant Nation. Historians have not given them enough credit for what they did, nor did they pay them the homage they deserve. They do however remain legends as they still are alive through art and the cinema. The Tudor period is remarkable and quite rich in events which still captivate a lot of people.

Key Words: Divorce – Influence – Reformation – Tudor – Women

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INTRODUCTION

The Tudor Dynasty is one of the most fascinating and famous in the English history. When the country was divided and committed in civil wars, Henry VII ended “The Wars of The Roses” and thanks to his marriage with the Elizabeth of York, he succeeded in uniting the country again. The Tudors’ reputation has always been a matter of interest but also their actions. They governed England during a period of extremely important changes, when Western Europe moved from the medieval to the early modern period. This dynasty is remembered for two of England’s most famous monarchs: Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I. Henry VIII ruled during the time of revolutionary political and social changes, he was also surrounded by some of the most intriguing personalities. In one way or another, the Tudor era belongs to its women. No period of English history has produced so many eminent, fascinating and interesting women, and in no other period did they so powerfully influence the course of political events. Henry’s marital affairs brought marriage into focus for the first time in history. This matter was a private domain for the earlier kings and queens. With Henry VIII, such details became a matter of public interest. During his fifty years of reign, Henry’s marital adventures brought six women to the centre of attention. Some of them were very powerful, others very influential, some of them survived and others went under. In a quest for a legitimate male heir, the king took drastic measures on the matter of divorce by trying to change the law which led to the break with the Catholic church. This period is remarkable and quite rich in events which still captivates a lot of people.

Therefore, in this research paper we will give a general definition of the key word of this study: “Power”. There are many definitions to the word power. According to the Longman Dictionary, power is “control”, the ability or right to control people or events. The other definition is “government”, the position of having control of a country or government. It also refers to “influence”, the ability to influence people or give them strong feelings. Thus, Tudor Royal Wives were both influential and powerful. There are other definitions such as: “right/authority”, the right or authority to do something. Furthermore, power can stand for “ability”; a natural or special ability to do something as well as “strength”, the physical strength or effect of something, and finally “strong country”, meaning a country that is important and can influence

events, or that has a lot of military strength. All these definitions belong to the Tudor royal wives thus Henry VIII's wives. England is famous for its powerful women throughout the centuries. Especially during the Tudor Dynasty, their power was very prominent, thus this study will focus on the power of Tudor Royal Wives and their influence throughout the Tudor Dynasty. How have the power of the royal wives and their influence on the King shaped the development of the English Reformation? Their power brings to the foreground the major role that they played in the history of England.

This research paper will be divided into three main parts. The first part will deal with the historical background of King Henry VIII's early life, personality, marriages, divorces and executions of some of his wives. The second part will demonstrate the influential power of the royal wives on the King and show how some women had progressed in the circle of power but were not able to manage it, hence lost their lives, such as Ann Boleyn and Catherine Howard. Others, like Catherine Parr, Henry's last queen, did know how to manage power and thus helped bring tranquillity to an ailing king. Catherine of Aragon, however, was a powerful woman in her resilience and stubbornness against the annulment of her marriage to King Henry, even though she was not successful in making him renounce to his marriage with Ann Boleyn. Finally, the last part will be devoted to the captivating iconography and cinematography dedicated to the king and the royal wives, which appeal to a contemporary public. Documents from this final part will be chosen to make a pedagogical unit, in the framework of secondary school English teaching, and more precisely for a year-eleven class within the notion « L'art de vivre ensemble/ Le passé dans le présent ».

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.1. King Henry VIII's Early Life and Personality

Prince Henry Tudor was born on June 28, 1491, at Greenwich Palace, the second son and third surviving child of king Henry VII and Elizabeth of York, along with his sisters Margaret and Mary. His father is famous for rescuing England from “the disorder of civil war and set her upon the way of prosperity”.¹ Indeed, after spending fourteen years in exile hunted across France and Brittany by Henry IV then by Richard, in 1485, he seized the crown from Richard III at the battle of Bosworth. This brought an end to the Wars of the Roses, a three-hundred-year civil war. After numerous battles, he managed to bring stability back to England and made a great fortune for the country and realm. Henry Tudor, as a child, was given titles and positions. However, as the spare rather than the heir, he did not go through the same pressure as his older brother Arthur who was destined to be king. Rather, he was destined to be an archbishop of Canterbury as Paolo Sarpi states: “[...] not being borne the king’s eldest son had been destined by his father to be archbishop of Canterbury, and therefore in his youth was made to study”.²

Raised along with his sisters mainly by his loving mother, Prince Henry Tudor received an education fit for a prince. At an early age, he learnt to write at the hands of his mother. He was mainly taught grammar, poetry, rhetoric, ethics, and history. He received a strong education in the Catholic faith, too. Later, his education continued with the poet-laureate John Skelton, who had been appointed in 1496 until 1502. He probably was the first tutor who taught Henry and said “his learning [was] primordial”³ for his future royal life. He wrote, for the prince *Speculum Principis*, a handbook of princely perfection, full of advice and recommendations such as: “to keep all power in his hands and entrust little to his servants and to choose a wife

¹J. D. Mackie, *The Earlier Tudors 1485-1558*, Oxford University Press, Ely House, London W.I., SIR George CLARK, 1966, p. 189.

²[The historie of the Council of Trent Conteyning eight bookes. In which \(besides the ordinarie actes of the Councill\) are declared many notable occurrences, which happened in Christendome, during the space of fourtie yeeres and more. And, particularly, the practises of the Court of Rome, to hinder the reformation of their errors, and to maintaine their greatnesse. Written in Italian by Pietro Soaue Polano, and faithfully translated into English by Nathanael Brent. \(umich.edu\)](#), seen on 12 June 2022, at 12:15 p.m.

³Skelton, *Works*, Dyce, 1843, I, p.129. Seen in Scarisbrick.

for [himself]; prize her always and uniquely”.⁴ According to Scarisbrick, “Skelton’s intentions were admirable but his pedagogy seemed to have been defective”.⁵ As a second child who was intended for ordination, it seems that the education of the prince was not so rigorous, contrary to his brother who received a much stricter one, as he had to be prepared to be the next king. As a student, Henry was not much of a bookworm, but he was academically gifted and impressed all those who met him as a young boy. When the famous Dutch Humanist ERASMUS visited England in 1499 and met him, he described the young prince as follows:

I was staying at lord Mountjoy’s country house when Thomas More came to see me and took me out with him for a walk as far as the next village, where all the king’s children except prince Arthur ... were being educated. When we came into the hall, the attendants not only of the palace but also of Mountjoy’s household were all assembled. In the midst stood prince Henry, then nine years old, and having already something of royalty in his demeanour, in which there was a certain dignity combined with singular courtesy.⁶

On April 2, 1502, the crown prince Arthur died leaving behind his young widow. Now Henry was heir to the throne and prince of Wales in February 1503. Sadly, eleven months later, his mother died in childbirth and the baby died soon after the birth, while Henry’s sister Margaret was dispatched to marry the king of Scotland the same year. He lost so many people so fast that suddenly his life turned upside down, everything had changed. From then on, he had to be educated by his father and his grandmother who had to take very strict measures in order to prepare the prince for the future. Henry VII had lost five of his children as well as his wife, his last son Henry had become extremely precious and disciplining him had become a must. When a Spanish envoy, called Fuensalida, came to England in 1508, they compared the prince’s strict supervision to a young girl’s:

He could not go out except through a private door which led into a park, and then only in the company of specially appointed persons. No one dared approach him and speak to him. He spent his time in a room the only access to which was through the king’s chamber and was so cowed that he never spoke in public except to answer a question from his father.⁷

With his brother’s death, young Henry inherited the title from his brother and his brother’s wife, too. Furthermore, at that time, Spain was the strongest country in Europe and in order not to lose their alliance and the dowry, the King needed to keep the princess and arrange for her a new marriage to the new crown prince. Therefore, on 23 June 1503, a treaty was signed for the marriage of prince Henry who was almost twelve at that time and Catherine who was

⁴J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1997, p. 5.

⁵*Ibid.* p. 5.

⁶James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, London and New York, Longman, 1953, p. 72.

⁷*Correspondencia de Gutierre Gomez de Fuensalida*, etc., Madrid, Duque de Berwick y de Alba, 1907, p. 449.

seventeen. The marriage had to take place on 28 June 1505, by that time more dowry was asked but it took some time for Spain to send it and the ceremony did not happen. Yet, in April 1509, king Henry VII died.

For the new king accession to the throne brought deliverance from a long probably oppressive subjection to a stern father and grandmother, and released him into the bright, cloudless warmth of gaiety, freedom and power. He stood now on the brink of manhood, suddenly clad with the full panoply of kingship. He ascended the throne which his father had made remarkably secure, he inherited a fortune which probably no English king had ever been bequeathed, he came to a kingdom which was the best governed and the most obedient in Christendom.⁸

Somehow, the death of King Henry VII opened the kingdom's doors to the newly crowned young King, Henry VIII. Indeed, only two months later, on 11 June 1509, aged only 17 years old, he married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon. The marriage was celebrated in the Franciscan Church at Greenwich. He was such a handsome young king. J. J. Scarisbrick described him as being:

[...] tall, splendidly built, with glowing auburn hair, combed short and straight in the French fashion and a round pink face so delicately cut that it would become a pretty woman. He was extremely handsome. Nature could not have done more for him. [...] He is much handsomer than any sovereign in Christendom; a great deal handsomer than the king of France, very fair and his whole frame admirably proportioned.⁹

Everybody agreed that Henry was extremely handsome. He was taller than the average Englishman, magnificent to look at, lean and muscular. He had strong features, with piercing blue eyes and small but sensual mouth. Henry once showed his muscular calf to the Venitian ambassador Sebastian Giustianian. The latter's praises are the best illustrations of Henry's appearance. He wrote in 1514: "His majesty is the handsomest potentate I ever set eyes on. [...] Nature could not have done more for him. He is very hair, his whole frame admirably proportioned".¹⁰

Nature had certainly gifted young Henry with such a wonderfully built body and exquisite facial features; but as if to add more perfection to a body already a source of awe to everyone that would set eye on, he was exceptionally athletic thanks to the different sports he practised: "He was a capital horseman who could stay in the saddle for hour after hour and tire out eight or ten horses; he exulted in hawking, wrestling and dancing; he excelled at tennis".¹¹

⁸J. J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 11.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 13.

¹⁰*Ibid.* p. 13.

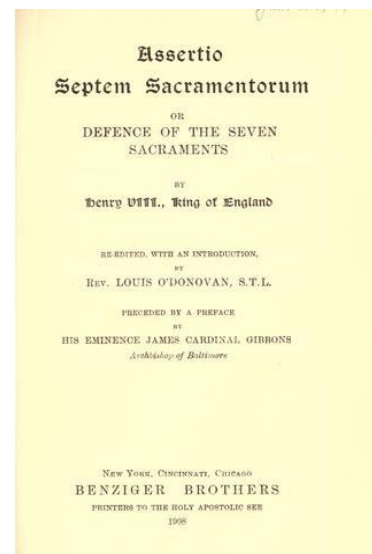
¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 13-14.

In addition, Henry was keen on archery which he excelled at “He could draw the bow with greater strength than any man in England”.¹² He loved this sport so much that he practised it daily, thought it was an essential part of a man's life and even passed a law ordering that an hour on Saturday afternoons was to be reserved for the practise of this sport. Hunting was also another pastime of his, along with gambling, good food and dancing. His passion for sport and his skills in this field equalled the high calibre musician he was. His passion for music was all-consuming. Henry had great musical taste and abilities; he was able to pick out the most difficult melodies.

Above all he was a gifted, enthusiastic musician. He had music wherever he went, on progress, on campaign. [...] The king himself played the lute well; he could manage the organ and was skilled on the virginals. He had a strong, sure voice.¹³

Henry VIII, amid his numerous passions, including music and dance, had indeed led an extravagantly luxurious life as “a youth wholly absorbed in dance and song, courtly love and knight-errantry.”¹⁴

If Henry loved indulging himself in all sorts of earthly pleasures life could afford, he was also somewhat a religious conservative at heart. This was partly because of the strong education he received in the Catholic faith and Church. He was deeply interested in religion and even wrote books regarding this subject. He namely wrote against Luther's attacks in his famous book called *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum or Defence of the Seven Sacraments*. His book impressed the Pope of Rome so much so that he granted him the title of Defender of the Faith in 1521.



In his early reign, Henry had been showered with praises as the mood of his kingdom was light. He seemed to be the perfect king for the kingdom. Even his boastfulness and self-sufficiency did little or none to hinder his perfect image. He had proclaimed himself as “the very perfect, valorous knight.”¹⁵ However, underneath his exceptionally captivating character, his handsomeness and charming physique lurked a great deal of unpredictability, ruthlessness

¹² J. J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 13-14.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 15.

¹⁴ Robert Lacey, *The Life and Times of Henry VIII*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1992, p.25.

¹⁵ J. J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 20.

and cruelty. His temper could abruptly change such a pretty innocent face into an ugly cruel one. “He was a formidable, captivating man who wore regality with splendid conviction. But easily and unpredictably his great charm could turn into anger and shouting.”¹⁶

Thomas More, one of Henry's ministers and advisers, is reported to have said, feeling the King's loving arm around his neck, that the moody king could behead him if his head was worth “a castle in France.”¹⁷ Thomas seemed to have known the nervous, cruel and unpredictable king like nobody else did. He was well aware of the king's total lack of scruples, as a sadly founding trait of his character, as he would go for anything to meet his ambitions and do as he pleased. Thomas More warned Thomas Cromwell against the impossibility to control their master, saying:

Master Cromwell, you are now entered into the service of a most noble man, wise and liberal prince. If you will follow my poor advice, you shall, in your council giving unto His Grace, ever tell him what to do, but never what he is able to do. For if the lion knew his strength, hard were it to rule him.¹⁸

So, people surrounding Henry, especially his ministers and advisers, knew that they had to deal with him with extreme caution because:

Henry VIII's character was fascinating, threatening, and sometimes morbid. His egoism, self-righteousness, and capacity to brood sprang from the fusion of an able but second-rate mind with what looks suspiciously like an inferiority complex.¹⁹

Historians agree that Henry's cruelty and unpredictability would reach their climax because of Catherine of Aragon failed to provide a male heir. However, the evidence proves that when Henry was not pleased with someone, he could easily come up with a charge to have them executed. He was able to change everything in order to get what he wanted. Yet, Henry was popular because of his familiarity with everyday folk, something his father had never had. He saw himself as chosen by God and set apart from the ordinary species of man. He dreamed of war, glory, chivalry, and the ultimate conquest of France. Therefore, “[...] the new king's abundant energy would find perfect release, namely, war”.²⁰ In a sense, if Henry, outwardly, seemed the perfect self-confident and strong king to his subjects, he might have had some

¹⁶ J. J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p.17

¹⁷ William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More*, Knight, Hitchcock, E.E.T.S., 1935, p.21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.54.

¹⁹ John Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.81.

²⁰ J.J. Scarisbrick *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 20.

interior conflicts which he probably tried to resolve through going to the war to be and feel worthy and glorious in his own eyes as well as his people's.

2. King Henry III's Marriages and the Consolidation of the English Crown

1.1. Marriage to Catherine of Aragon

Catherine of Aragon was born on December 16, 1485, in the palace of Alcala de Henares. She was the daughter of the ultimate 15th century powerful couple King Ferdinand II of Aragon and his wife Queen Isabelle of Castile, nicknamed as the “Catholic Kings”.²¹ With such a background, Catherine of Aragon, for Henry VII and his wife Elizabeth, was the perfect wife for their eldest son and heir to the English throne, Prince Arthur of Wales. Their marriage would link England to one of Europe’s greatest powers and strengthen the still new and shaky Tudor dynasty, having been founded only a few years earlier, when King Henry VII had seized the crown from his wife’s uncle Richard III at the battle of Bosworth.

The young couple were betrothed in 1497 and married by proxy in 1499. Catherine eventually arrived in England on October 2, 1501. They then went through a final marriage ceremony in person in St Paul’s Cathedral on November 14 in the same year. However, their marriage was to be short-lived. Indeed, a few months after their wedding ceremony, they both fell sick with an unknown illness. Catherine recovered but Prince Arthur didn’t; he died on April 2nd, 1502.²² It had been decided that Catherine, now a dowager princess of Wales, should be betrothed to her brother-in-law, Henry VIII on June 23, 1503, and a treaty was signed for the marriage, stipulating that:

The marriage should be solemnised as soon as the prince reached his fifteen years, which would be on June 28, 1505, by which time, Catherine’s parents were to have delivered another hundred thousand crowns, in plate and jewels as well as coin, as a marriage portion.²³

Meanwhile, negotiations for a dispensation from Pope Julius II to allow the marriage to take place were still ongoing. This procedure was necessary because, according to the church law, it was illegal to marry one’s sibling-in-law. In fact, what happened during Catherine and Arthur’s wedding night or did not happen is still debated to this day. However, Catherine as well as her fiery duenna, Dona Elvira “insisted that the first marriage had never been

²¹ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isabella-I-queen-of-Spain> Seen on 20 April 2022, at 03:18 p.m.

²² John Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.75-76.

²³ *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish*, Bergenroth, Gayangos and Hume, 1862, p.365. Cited in Scarisbrick, p.8.

consummated.”²⁴ In all cases, at this stage, the marriage could not occur because Henry was still under 15, the minimal age for a proper marriage at the time. Shortly after the signing of the aforementioned treaty, the young couple were solemnly betrothed as soon as the papal dispensation arrived. However, because of the delay in delivery of Catherine’s dowry, the marriage did not take place during Henry VII’s lifetime.

While she waited for her marriage to Henry, Catherine was in an “unhappy confinement” at Durham House and went through psychological and financial discomfort. Indeed, “at one point, King Henry [withheld] the monthly allowance of £100 which he had allocated to her”; To top it all, she “saw, probably, little of Henry”, her English was not good enough at the time, which should have made it difficult for her “to communicate with him when she did”. Such difficult conditions as well as her “rigorous life of prayer, fasting, abstinence and pilgrimage,” impacted her physical health, and she fell ill numerous times.²⁵

Meanwhile, Prince Henry, for an unclear reason up to today, “made a solemn protest before Bishop Fox disowning the marriage contract that he had entered some two years previously and stating that he would never validate or ratify that contract.”²⁶ This change of mind and/or heart may have been in compliance with the prince’s father’s wish or because a better catch seemed possible elsewhere. A year later, in April 1506, he called Catherine “My most dear and well-beloved consort, the princess My wife.”²⁷ Three years later, King Henry VII died, and his son Henry VIII declared that one of his father’s deathbed’s wishes had been for the marriage to proceed. No one knows if the dying King had indeed said so or not. Be that as it may, the long-awaited-for marriage did occur on June 11, 1509, in the Franciscan church at Greenwich; she was twenty-three years old, and he was almost eighteen. Together, they were crowned King and Queen of England in Westminster Abbey on June 24; they were young and beautiful and seemed to have their happily-ever-after life ahead of them. Fray Diego described Catherine as “the most beautiful creature in the world.”²⁸ Henry would kiss and caress his wife in public and would even show his beautiful wife to his guests in order for them to admire her.

The couple’s early marriage life was full of enjoyment. Catherine had all the qualities necessary for a Queen of England. She had adapted to the customs of her new land, had strong

²⁴ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p.8.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 8-9.

²⁶ *Ibid.* p.9.

²⁷ *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*, J S Brewer, 1920, p.285.

²⁸ [Tudor Queens Come to Life with Portraits, Wax Figures and Descriptions of Appearance – Tudors Dynasty](#)
Seen on 01 June 2022, at 04:08. p.m.

principles and high morality which characterised her and her household. She was literate, well read and erudite in the Scriptures, far more than most women at court. Furthermore, she displayed a deep love and respect for her husband and so did he; people thought they were manifestly in love with one another and loyal to one another. The King is believed not to have stayed away from their marriage bed during the early years of their marriage because his wife would joyfully and enthusiastically respond to his youthful vigour. They appeared to be a well-matched couple, with similar intellectual and educational backgrounds.²⁹

The young couple welcomed their first son on New Year's Day, 1511; he was christened Henry. The King, the Queen and the whole of England rejoiced. Happiness was displayed all over the country: "guns, bells and bonfires welcomed the news."³⁰ Alas, just seven weeks later, joy turned into sorrow as young Henry died. Amidst their mourning, Catherine found solace in prayer while Henry had a prospect of war to keep himself occupied. In later events, Catherine has sometimes been depicted as merely a shadowy presence in England, a distant figure who led her husband to begin tearing England apart. In reality, Catherine was a tenacious individual, one who expressed her mind forcefully throughout her adult years, often to the annoyance of the sitting Spanish ambassador at the Tudor court. A pious Catholic like her parents she was heavily influenced early on by her confessor, Diego Fernandez. Despite her forcefulness, she could quite effortlessly perform her role as a queen, presiding over court gatherings next to Henry and dispensing patronage where appropriate to the church and others attached to the court. Moreover, she retained her Spanish identity throughout her lifetime in England. Catherine was also a noted patron of scholars. She was already fluent in Spanish, French and Latin and eventually later on in English. As Queen she acted as a progressive patron of scholars and supported the education of women in England. Henry was quite devoted to her as they had so much in common, they were quite similar by their religious background, educational etc.

Husband and wife shared many interests – both loved music and dancing, both had intellectual tastes, and both were devoutly pious – and if, after for years on the throne, Henry had grown out of his initial dependence, he was still undoubtedly very fond of Catherine. He received visitors in her apartments, read the latest books with her, planned lavish entertainments, so he said, for her pleasure and had not yet lost the habit of discussing his affairs with her. The Queen seemed, indeed, to have all the virtues of an ideal consort except in one vital department – she could not give her husband a male heir.³¹

²⁹ Francis Hackett, *Henry VIII*, Paris, Payot, 1930, p. 56

³⁰ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 9.

³¹ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, Gloucestershire, Sutton, 2007, p. 32.

Out of their long years of marriage came many other children, six in total. Only one of them survived into adulthood, Mary Tudor. As the marriage years went by, the once young and pretty Catherine had become less appealing in her husband's eyes:

In 1527, Catherine was in her forty-second year. As a girl, she had been pretty, small and well made, with a clear pink and white skin and quantities of russet-coloured hair, [...] Now, her once slender figure was thickened with repeated childbearing, and her lovely hair had darkened into a muddy brown.³²

Also, the years went by, the couple grew apart sharing little with each other, if any:

It was many years now since she had been her husband's confidante, had shared his problems and his growing pains and had been permitted to offer him advice. [...] But although they had grown apart, although other people had shouldered her out of his confidence, for Catherine, Henry would always remain the beautiful young man who had rescued from lonely humiliation – the gay, generous boy who had loved her and made her his queen in that long-ago joyous springtime.³³

Clearly Catherine had always loved and been faithful and loyal to her husband despite the passing years; out of love for him, she even turned a blind eye to his numerous mistresses and was very patient with him and them. For Henry, however, her physical change and her inability to provide him with a son were sufficient reasons to consider annulling the marriage and marrying again.

³² Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. 2007, p.54.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 51.

2. 2. The Impossibility of a Male heir and the divorce

Catherine was now in her early forties, almost passed childbearing age, was losing both the love and interest of her husband. Therefore, Henry had seriously started to doubt her ability to ever give him the male heir that he had always wanted and to avert his dynastic failure. He became more and more impatient as he had many mistresses, he even had his own child, the boy was named Henry FitzRoy meaning ‘son of the king’. Henry had proven that he could father a son, while he never blamed Catherine openly for her failure, it is clear that the absence of legitimate heir stoked resentment as well as anxiety in him. And this will change the face of England forever. Even if she was someone of a great character and good conduct loved by the people of England, for Henry that was not sufficient. “Catherine of Aragon was a woman of upright and dignified character, liked and respected by all. But Henry and England wanted a prince to carry on the succession, and the prince was not forthcoming.”³⁴ Henry was a devout Catholic and evidence suggests that he remained so throughout his life. Thus, he would first cast doubt on the validity of his marriage and try finding evidence in the Bible.

Henry’s famous ‘scruple of conscience’ – his fear that he might, unwittingly of course, have been living in sin all those years – was based on a text in the Book of Leviticus which stated uncompromisingly that ‘if a man shall take his brother’s wife, it is an unclean thing [it is an impurity: he hath uncovered his brother’s nakedness] they shall be childless’. This, the King realized in an apparently blinding flash of revelation, must be the reason for his hitherto inexplicable failure to beget a male heir. The more he thought about it the more convinced he became that the Queen’s inability to bear a living son must surely be a sign of God’s displeasure at their unlawful cohabitation. Why else should the deity, who had always shown such a flattering degree of interest in his doings, deny him male children.³⁵

In other words, why would he not have a son knowing that he was God’s chosen king? Why would God bestow upon him riches and beauties to show his satisfaction with him and at the same time deprive him of a son who could carry out the Tudor Dynasty as another God’s chosen king? Why all this if not because of his unlawful marriage to his late brother’s wife? When Henry miraculously had a mirage of discovery. He personally went to Catherine and announced her about his findings and about the invalidity of their marriage. The argument being pursued was that Catherine had married his brother Arthur, and because of that earlier marriage had been

³⁴ James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, London and New York, Longman, 1953, p. 91.

³⁵ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 50.

consummated, Henry had effectively married his own sister and this was intolerable in religious law.

Meanwhile Henry had run ahead of his chancellor. On 22 June he had confronted Catherine with the news that he and she had been living in sin for eighteen years and that he must separate from her, Catherine burst into tears at this terrible sentence and temporarily unsteadied Henry, but he persisted, even though he was not to separate from her completely for some time to come.³⁶

Therefore, an annulment had to be granted for the marriage. This was hypocritical of Henry in the extreme to suddenly claim that his ‘scruple’ around this issue had suddenly been felt eighteen years after the event. Catherine’s family background complicated the matter for Henry. Because she immediately wrote to her nephew, Charles V, to inform him of the situation. As luck would have it, Charles’ forces in Italy had recently captured the city of Rome. And with Pope Clement VII effectively Charles’ prisoner there, Henry would not receive an annulment to his marriage any time soon. Thus, if the first Biblical text goes along with Henry’s desire, another text says the opposite. Indeed, in the Old Testament in the Book of Deuteronomy states otherwise: “When brethren dwell together, and one of them dieth without children, the wife of the deceased shall not marry to another; but his brother shall take her and raise up seed for his brother.”³⁷

These two seemingly contradicting theological texts would lead to international debate among scholars and theologians upon whether such texts could ever be reconcilable, and above all to what extent this could help resolve the king’s ‘great matter’. This battle would last for years because Catherine was determined to fight for her marriage every bit of the way, with the support of her nephew who was at the time the Holy Roman Emperor and who pressured the Pope against the annulment of his aunt’s marriage. “The last thing the Pope wanted was to have to pronounce judgment, and during the next six years, he made use of every delaying tactic at his disposal to postpone that evil moment.”³⁸

With the possibility of an annulment being quickly granted dashed, Wolsey, a cardinal and statesman who dominated the government of King Henry VIII’s England from 1515 to 1529, now became a central figure in events. To begin with, in July 1527, he was dispatched to France where he envisaged the possibility of setting up a council of cardinals who would run the Roman Catholic Church while Clement was incapacitated in Rome. Such council would be able to grant Henry his divorce. Meanwhile, Henry also dispatched a diplomat knight to Rome to seek a

³⁶ Nicholas, Pocock, *Records of the Reformation, the divorce 1527-1533*, 2vols, Oxford, 1870, p.11.

³⁷ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 163.

³⁸ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 52.

dispensation from Clement to at least allow Henry to marry again if the divorce could not be granted straight away. Indeed, carrying out with the marriage would have meant committing bigamy by having two queens simultaneously, hence exposing the King to papal sanctions.

In England, Henry was beginning to assemble a collection of church scholars and lawyers who could provide him with legal justifications for the annulment. As time went by, the situation altered somehow. In Rome, the Pope was released from captivity in December 1527, but Charles V still controlled the city, and his freedom of action was still curtailed. He eventually consented to send a papal legate in the shape of Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio to England to deliberate on the case with Cardinal Wolsey. Secretly, Campeggio was ordered to delay the situation and to look for an alternative solution to the problem. He and Wolsey organized an audience with Catherine during which she requested Campeggio to hear her confession. She related to him that even if they had been married for several months in late 1501 and early 1502, she and Arthur shared a bed on several occasions. However, the marriage had never been consummated. According to her, she had never been touched by a man prior to her marriage with the King; in other words, “She had come to Henry, as she was presently publicly to remind him, as a very maid without touch of man”.³⁹ Campeggio spent the winter in theological arguments with Henry and Wolsey, trying to persuade Catherine to deny her own position and enter a convent, but as expected from Catherine’s bold and obstinate character, she refused this idea. “Catherine was unshakable in her determination to hold out to the end. By all straight reasoning she was Henry’s wife, and so she would remain”.⁴⁰

Eventually, in May 1529, the court assembled. Catherine quickly appealed her case to be heard in Rome. A month later, she and Henry spoke before the court:

First the judges announced that they had overruled Catherine’s protest; then Henry, seated beneath a canopy of cloth of gold, spoke to the court about his great scruple, his desire only for justice and deliverance from doubt. When he had finished, Catherine suddenly rose to her feet and, moving round the court-room, came to Henry to kneel before him and deliver a long plea to him not to cast her aside, not to dishonour her and her daughter. Only Rome, she said, could settle this matter and hence to Rome she had appealed.⁴¹

³⁹ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p.52.

⁴⁰ James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, op-cit. 1953, p. 115.

⁴¹ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 224-225.

Throughout this period, Henry and Catherine would see less and less of each other, they would rarely dine together, except on major court occasions.

Henry's reasoning and quest for justification for the annulment of the marriage seem to have been based on weak grounds:

The King of England's great matter was based on emotion rather than logic. Behind a smokescreen of legal and theological wrangling, the real battle was being fought over the far bloodier issues of outraged pride, jealousy and a bitter sense of rejection and injustice; of frustrated sexual urges, ambition, envy and greed.⁴²

In fact, had Henry merely wanted to secure the Tudor's dynastical future, he would have allowed his daughter Mary to marry and have Tudor sons of her own, hence grant her father's long-lasting quest. Historians have been wondering about the real reasons behind the King's urgent desire for a divorce after over twenty years of marriage to his wife.

At eleven years old Mary was a healthy, promising little girl who would soon be of child-bearing age herself. Why shouldn't she provide sons to carry on the royal line? The fact that her father would not even consider this common-sense solution to his problem but, on the contrary, was proposing to repudiate the one heir he did possess and whose legitimacy no one else would have questioned, argued to his more cynical subject that it was not the King's tender conscience or his anxiety over the succession which pricked him on so much as his desire for another woman.⁴³

Finally, and after a long and tiring battle, in 1533, Henry did the only thing he could to end the marriage – he rejected the authority of the Pope and declared himself Supreme Head of a new Church of England. His archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, issued the long-awaited decree of annulment. Catherine was no longer Queen of England, but Princess dowager of Wales. Princess Mary was now illegitimate. The king's 'Great Matter', his goal of achieving a divorce from his wife of nearly twenty years, would eventually turn every aspect of the English political, social, and religious life upside down.

⁴² Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p.54.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.55.

2.2. Marriage to Lady Anne Boleyn

The woman known to history as Anne Boleyn was born around 1501 in Norfolk. Her father was Sir Thomas Boleyn. Intelligent, well-educated, and fluent in French, he was also a very ambitious man. Her mother was Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Earl of Surrey who would later become the second Duke of Norfolk. Elizabeth Howard was a noble woman who served as Lady in waiting to Catherine of Aragon during the early part of the reign of Henry VIII. Anne Boleyn was educated to a high standard, along with her siblings by members of her household and it was Anne and her brother George who were the two better students, sharing a particular closeness as brother and sister. Anne would have learned the traditional lessons of the time such as reading and writing as well as languages and music, but she would also have been taught the traditionally feminine lessons of needlework, dancing, and singing. “Sir Thomas wanted Mary and Anne to learn to move easily and gracefully in highest circles and to acquire all the social graces [...] and take the Boleyns another step up the social and financial ladder”.⁴⁴

Anne was considered less attractive than her sister Mary; she had black hair and dark eyes, not the picture of beauty at that time.

She does not seem to have been remarkably beautiful, but she had wonderful dark hair in abundance and fine eyes, the legacy of Irish ancestors, together with a firm mouth and a head well set on a long neck that gave her authority and grace.⁴⁵

Despite that, Anne’s great intelligence made her father choose to send her into service as a Lady in waiting at the court of Margaret of Austria, and so she left England for the first time in 1513, entering the household of Margaret in Brussels. After the king of France’s wife died, Louis XII requested of Henry the hand of his sister Mary Tudor, who travelled to France to become Queen. By this time, Anne was fluent in French because she had been sent to France to serve under Mary Tudor. Anne’s sister, Mary, travelled with Mary Tudor to France and Anne travelled from Brussels and joined them. However, when King Louis died only three months after their marriage, most of Mary’s attendants returned to England with her, but Anne and Mary Boleyn decided to stay at the French court in the new Queen Claude’s household for the next seven years. Anne would return to England after nearly nine years abroad at her father’s demand in 1522 after which she became a member of the household of Catherine of Aragon. By the time

⁴⁴ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 41.

⁴⁵ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 148.

she returned to Court, her sister Mary was mistress to Henry VIII, and she was discarded in 1525 with a small pension and brought shame to her family. This treatment may well have warned Anne to hold out for what she wanted when looking for marriage and love. Anne was known as a wilful character; she defied the conventions of the time and arranged a marriage for herself by choosing Henry Percy as a partner. However, the marriage never happened, as the King heard of their plans and instructed Wolsey to put a stop to it. Anne was furious at this decision and held a grudge against Wolsey. When she came to the Tudor court in 1525 as a lady in waiting to Queen Catherine, she must have been a breath of fresh air to the King. She was much admired for her style, wit and charm and, still in her mid-twenties, she was fashionable and attractive, commanding attention at court. Henry, who was longing for a younger, more vivacious wife who might give him a son, fell deeply in love with her. At the beginning of their courtship, Henry frequently begged Anne to become his mistress, which she refused to do, and “the more she resisted, the more, apparently, did Henry prize her”.⁴⁶

Henry’s letters to Anne were full of passionate declarations of love and he publicly showed her his affection. Historically, Anne obtained a reputation of “the other woman”. She was considered a grasping political climber and conspirator who had usurped the place of a legitimate wife and queen, much loved by the English people. However, there is no evidence that she encouraged Henry’s interest, initially. On the contrary, her refusal frustrated the King until he became besotted by his alluring, seemingly unobtainable woman. Her conduct was something new to the handsome King who could have had any woman he wanted. He was even more attracted to her probably because he found her to be very similar to him, which was almost magnetic.

*Il y a quelque chose de masculin chez Anne Boleyn, du moins d’après les normes du temps [...] il est attiré par une femme douée de vigueur intellectuelle et de talents non spécifiquement féminins, de volonté, d’esprit d’indépendance, une femme qui lui ressemble.*⁴⁷

After her abrupt departure from court, Henry constantly wrote to Anne and sent her gifts, and in time, Anne began to respond to Henry and the two began carrying on their relationship quite publicly at court. By 1527, Henry had proposed marriage to Anne, and she had, after much thinking, accepted. Henry, then, decided to seek divorce so he could marry Anne. Here, once more, Henry showed his tendency towards cold abandonment and indifference towards those he had no more use for as well as his willingness to interpret facts to suit himself. The King’s

⁴⁶ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 148.

⁴⁷ Henri Suhamy, *Henri VIII*, Monaco, Editions du Rocher, 1998, p. 166.

ambition for love and an heir would change everything. As the divorce was so complicated and lasted for such a long time, he took some major action.

By the spring of 1532 the King had assumed supreme religious power in his own realm, and the English clergy had been terrorized into surrendering all their ancient, jealously-guarded freedom from secular control. This revolution, for such it was, had been master-minded by Thomas Cromwell, the King's new counsellor and hatchet-man.⁴⁸

Now, the only remaining obstacle was the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, who was an old man and eventually died in August. Henry was becoming more confident and made Anne Marquess of Pembroke. From now on, she had officially become his mistress and insured her future; all she had to do now was bear a son. "By the middle of January 1533, she was able to tell the King that she was pregnant, and on the twenty-fifth of the month she and Henry were married".⁴⁹ Henry wedded Anne in a secret ceremony because the King was not divorced yet. Anne had made her first appearance at court as Queen and had taken up residence in what had been Catherine's apartments. In April, 1533, the new Archbishop, Cranmer, declared Henry's marriage to Catherine invalid. Over seven months after their marriage, Anne gave birth to Princess Elizabeth, the future Elizabeth I of England. The King once married had wanted Anne to be crowned Queen speedily; due to her pregnancy and as the King wanted his expected child to be born to a consecrated mother, plans went ahead for Anne's coronation. Despite the apparent loyalty and favour Henry showed to her, by 1533 Henry already had a mistress and Anne knew of her. When Anne reacted angrily to the news of the affair, the King rebuked her with righteous indignation, not speaking to her for three days. Anne was never a popular Queen, she divided opinion, both at home and abroad; some loved her, but many hated her, some due to her lowly origins and other because Catherine had been such a popular Queen; Anne Boleyn was also hated because of her religious reformist views. As a reformist Queen, she set an example in her court by reading the Bible and supplicating.

Anne had become pregnant twice following the birth of Elizabeth, but both pregnancies had resulted in miscarriages. Additionally, some historians have speculated, that Henry and Anne's relationship was growing increasingly strained, due to Anne's failure to adjust to her new role of wife. As a mistress, she was allowed to act as she pleased and her prolonged refusal to sleep with Henry must have put her in a rather dominant position. However, as Henry's wife,

⁴⁸ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 59.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.60.

she would be expected to be far more submissive, but of course, her lack of submissiveness would likely have been overlooked, had she not committed the terrible sin of failing to produce a son. Following the miscarriage Anne suffered in summer of 1534, King Henry had taken another mistress and when she complained to the King about the situation, his reaction was very harsh. She was expected to “shut her eyes and endure as those who were better than herself had done, and that she ought to know that he could at any time lower her as much as he had raised her”.⁵⁰ The King was clearly losing patience with Anne as well as perhaps regretting having married her at all. Ironically enough, Anne must have realized that without a son, she was in a very insecure and vulnerable position, exactly the position that Catherine had been in, and she felt she had to act. Thus, she took Lady Rochford, her sister-in-law, into her confidence and conspired to have the King’s mistress removed from court. However, their plan failed and only resulted in Lady Rochford being banished from the court and raising the wrath of Henry. Once again, she was expected “she ought to be satisfied with what he had done for her, which he would not do now if the things were to begin and that she ought to consider from where she came from.”⁵¹ By early 1535, Anne was becoming even more isolated at court, her confidante was now gone, she had alienated many others through her outbursts of anger, and her husband preferred the company of his mistress. Anne must have felt alone and isolated as time went by. However, in the summer of 1535 a ray of hope appeared for Anne when the couple were briefly reconciled. Anne had become more accepting of the idea of Henry’s mistresses, if not completely silent about them. Anne got pregnant for the third time and hearing the death of Catherine, Anne was the happiest as her rival was now gone and she was carrying another heir for Henry. Then, on the same day as Catherine’s funeral, Anne went into labour prematurely and after only three and half gestation, she miscarried a little boy. Anne’s grief and frustration must have been plain for all to see as she wept following this tragedy for her and Henry. However, the King’s grief soon turned to anger at Anne, and he confronted her because he thought “he would have no more boys by her”.⁵² Henry turned to Jane Seymour and history was repeating itself, the same thing happened to Anne, just as with her predecessor Catherine of Aragon. The King’s patience had run out and, on the 24 April 1536, a commission was set up by Cromwell to investigate Anne and by May, accusations of adultery were levelled at her and Henry chose to believe them. Accused of incest and witchcraft as well as adultery, she was

⁵⁰ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 70.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 70.

⁵² <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/188194/the-lady-in-the-tower-by-alison-weir/9780771087677/excerpt> seen on 09 June 2022, at 01:40 p.m.

questioned over her behaviour and was installed in the Tower of London. Cromwell used all means at his disposal, including torture and bribes, to bring a devastating case against Anne. All along her arrestation, she kept pleading her innocence and asking for the king but to no avail. She is said to have lost her famous composure and collapsed to her knees. Accusations must have been conjured up by Cromwell and Henry to secure Henry's freedom to marry Jane Seymour. On May 12, four men were found guilty and sentenced to death, whereas Anne and her brother were tried in the Tower. On 15 May, no queen of England had been placed on trial before and so a large scaffold was erected in the Tower to house all the people expected to attend the trial. Anne continued to protest her innocence, but she prepared herself for her certain demise with composure; she even joked with her captor Kingston when she heard the executioner was very good adding that she even had "a little neck"⁵³ laughing at the irony that she would make the executioner's job easy. She spent her final night laughing and joking that she may be known as "Queen Anne Lack-head"; this was perhaps the last act of defiance open to her. On May 19 1536 Anne Boleyn was taken to the scaffold in front of the gathered nobles and dignitaries. She held her composure and walked with dignity to face the crowd and make the last speech of her life

Good Christian people, I am come hither to die, for according to the law, and by the law I am judged to die, and therefore I will speak nothing against it. I am come hither to accuse no man, nor to speak anything of that, whereof I am accused and condemned to die, but I pray God save the King and send him long to reign over you, for a gentler nor a more merciful prince was there never: and to me he was ever a good, a gentle and sovereign lord. And if any person will meddle of my cause, I require them to judge the best. And thus, I take my leave of the world and of you all, and I heartily desire you all to pray for me. O Lord have mercy on me, to God I commend my soul.⁵⁴

The king had sent for an expert swordsman from Calais to come to the Tower to carry out the execution of the Queen; she knelt on the scaffold as there was no need for a block and with one swift blow of his sword, her head was removed from her body and the first Queen of England to be executed was dead, and within twenty-four hours of his wife's execution Henry was already betrothed to Anne's lady in waiting and the woman who would become his third wife, Lady Jane Seymour. Why did not Henry divorce Anne instead of executing her? Probably he was scared that this could have been a long and tiring battle as that of Catherine of Aragon who had her nephew to defend her while Anne had no one on her side. Quite the opposite, her friend Cranmer and her uncle were against her during the trial.

⁵³ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 77.

⁵⁴ <https://englishhistory.net/tudor/anne-boleyn-speech-at-her-execution/> Seen on 01 June 2022 at 08:37 p.m.

Norfolk, whose niece she was, made ready to abandon her. Cromwell viewed her without sentiment, as a piece to be sacrificed at need. Cranmer was her only friend, but he was the King's servant first.
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For Henry there was a new open road which led to his desires being fulfilled once more, to marry whom he wanted and to cast them away when they would become an obstacle to satisfy any of his new whims. He found a way out of his first marriage, i.e., divorce, and now he had to do the same out of his second marriage. For Henry, execution was easier and quicker as Jane Seymour was already pregnant before shortly giving him the son that he had so much desired. As for Anne Boleyn, she is well remembered as the mother of Elizabeth I, one of the most important monarchs to ever grace the throne of England. Anne's main mistake was her inability to suit to her role of a woman of the Middle-Ages, that is to say, a docile and submissive wife, but she definitely was a modern woman, ahead of her time.

⁵⁵ James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, op-cit. 1953, p. 138.

1.3. King Henry VIII's Last Wife: Catherine Parr

For his sixth marriage, Henry VIII decided to be more prudent by settling down with a lady of experience. After what happened with Catherine Howard, who was young, beautiful, full of life, and interested in men. She was condemned for adultery and treason and eventually executed. At this stage, Henry was getting older and now he was attracted to a woman who was older than his three previous wives, a woman known to history as Catherine Parr. She was born in London probably around 1512. She was the eldest child of Sir Thomas Parr and Maud Green who was a lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Aragon who perhaps was her godmother, thus she got her name Catherine.

Catherine Parr was educated by her mother and received a vigorous and thorough education as did her brother. In addition to be trained in courtly etiquette, dance and music, all siblings were instructed in history, French, Italian, Latin and perhaps in other academic subjects as well. Nevertheless, she was the most erudite and the most intellectual of all Henry's wives. Catherine married twice and her second husband had left her a great fortune; he was older than her and she took care of him and his children. By the beginning of 1543, she found herself courted by two gentlemen while she was still married to the ailing Lord Latimer. Thomas Seymour, who may have been in love, was certainly looking for a rich widow; and the second was the King. Catherine was in many ways the exact opposite of her predecessors, and it may well have been her dignity and self-possessed calm which first aroused Henry's interest. In May, Henry got rid of Thomas Seymour by sending him on a permanent embassy. Six months after her husband's death, Catherine and Henry married on 12 July 1543. Why did she accept his proposal? Was she afraid of what might have happened to her had she refused the King? This seems an unlikely consideration in view of Henry's character and reputation. Some historians believe that she accepted his proposal as part of a religious mission to facilitate the advance of reforming England by being a subtle but committed advocate for the Protestant values.

During her last widowhood, she had received Reformers like Coverdale and Latimer into her home and was now of a moderate Protestant persuasion which ran hand in hand with a cultivated Erasmianism.⁵⁶

By December 1543, for the first time, all three royal children gathered together in their father's household. This get-together was certainly influenced by Catherine as she was the one

⁵⁶ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 456.

who reorganized and directed the royal nursery. The warm relationship she had developed with Mary during the previous years may have played a role in the way she had been motivated as a sense of duty to the young woman she had befriended or perhaps to Henry's younger children who needed a mother figure in their life. Once again, Catherine had to be a stepmother as she must have been familiar with Vives' precepts of how stepmothers should be.

A woman will take pity of tender and defenceless age and, remembering her own children, will love those of others. [...] In a word, a good woman will be a mother to her stepchildren, as she will often hear be called. [...] What can be found more effective than the name of mother, a name overflowing with incredible affection.⁵⁷

She had probably seen herself as a missionary sent by God to unify and bring peace into Henry's family, and most of all to embrace young Elizabeth, who had been alone without any friends or influence; so, she brought her to the court and gave her apartments next to hers, making of her the "Queen's particular protégée".

Katherine Parr was fully aware of dangers and difficulties attached to her position of Henry VIII's sixth wife but being a woman of spirit and strong principles, she intended not only to survive but to make a success of the task to which she believed God had called her.⁵⁸

Catherine Parr adapted to her new position as Queen Consort quickly and well. And the royal court became lively with music and dance, after a long time of dullness. She hired a clown and had many pets. One courtier stated that "*Sa grande bonté fait de chaque jour un Dimanche, une chose rare dans les palais royaux*".⁵⁹ Henry took pride not only in his wife's virtues and intelligence but also admired her beauty as she was a tall slender and attractive woman in her thirties. Henry and Catherine seemed to quickly develop an easy intimacy and companionate relationship. They were closer in age than his previous three wives and they were fairly evenly matched in education, intelligence and rhetoric. His faith in Catherine was such that he appointed her to serve as Queen Regent during his absence in 1544 as he was leading another military campaign in France. Apparently, this was another attempt to recapture some of the glory of his lost youth. It was an absurd battle that led to a huge loss in men and resources with virtually no tangible reward. But Catherine offered Henry full support and encouragement in his military endeavours. Aply and intelligently, she managed the affairs of the state as regent and faithfully kept Henry informed of all developments while he remained in France. Upon his coming from the war, she greeted the King as a conquering hero. As a token of real trust and

⁵⁷ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of Christian Woman*, 1524, in Charles Fantazzi ed., *The Education of a Christian Woman, a Sixteenth-Century Manual*, Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 284.

⁵⁸ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 106.

⁵⁹ Jane Bingham, *Les Tudors : La Naissance de l'Angleterre*, Original Books, 2011, p. 128.

commitment, Henry did not seek to bar Catherine from his chambers during his periodic bouts of illness largely centring around his leg wound; the Queen willingly and ably nursed Henry just as she had nursed Lord Latimer through his illness. “As long as His Majesty is sick, I will move my bed to his chambers, the better to care for him.”⁶⁰

Henry was generous to his wife bequeathing to her an annual income of seven thousand pounds as well as the right to keep the Royal Jewels during her lifetime. Following Henry’s death, she retired from court. Shortly after, she quietly married Thomas Seymour, while still in mourning for Henry, in May 1547. Thomas’s brother, Edward Seymour, who had been made Lord Protector during King Edward VI’s minority was furious with both his brother and the dowager Queen because their hasty marriage would have made it difficult to judge the paternity of the child that they could have had during the nine months following Henry’s death; besides, all this had been done in secret and without the permission of the Council. Lady Mary considered the secrecy and hastiness of their marriage to be both indecent and an affront to her father’s memory. Thus, a rift built up between Catherine and Mary, which had never been healed, especially that hastiness seemed out of Catherine’s character. She lived less than a week after her daughter’s arrival, Mary, her only child, on 5 September 1548. Her husband was executed for high treason a year after his wife’s death.

Catherine Parr is credited with an impressive legacy. She was, perhaps, the biggest influence behind Henry’s instating his daughters to the English throne. In addition, reformers remembered and celebrated her for her contributions to the spreading of Protestantism in England. She is also remembered for being one of the most refined, educated and respected women of her class, especially given her knightly background, and most of all, she is remembered through her education of young Queen Elizabeth I whose future visions as a queen would be shaped more by her father’s sixth wife than perhaps by any other person.

⁶⁰ https://www.azquotes.com/author/42394-Catherine_Parr Seen on 26 June 2022 at 03:25 p.m.

II. THE INFLUENTIAL POWER OF THE ROYAL SPOUSES OVER THE KING

2.1. The wives that lost their heads

In the times when women were expected to be a decoration in courts, obedient wives and loving mothers, Tudor Royal Wives, more precisely, some of Henry's wives, would change that image drastically. They struggled into uncertain battles between them, leaving behind an impact, while unintentionally or not, taking part into the creation of Protestantism, thus, the Reformation of England.

Anne Boleyn's personality is among the most intriguing. Was she a victim or a calculating flirt and ambitious manipulator? One thing is sure: she must have been among the early influential Protestants who dared denounce the abuses perpetrated by the Roman Catholic Church, even if she might not have completely done without all aspects of the Catholic faith that she had been used to practicing.

As queen, Anne is believed to have influenced circumstances to reform and preserve religious ideas. In fact, during her stay in court in France, she met King Francis I's sister Marguerite of Angouleme, who was a pious and religious woman and who was also interested in religious reforms, which Anne was in a place to observe.⁶¹ Marguerite was a patron of reformers, including John Calvin. It was she who first influenced Anne with her reformist views. She was sympathetic to the idea of reform after having read smuggled protestant books. So, Anne Boleyn may have been quite influential in convincing Henry to break from Rome and form the Church of England with himself as its head. But we may wonder if she was simply a maid of honour, who could not escape from Henry's declarations of love or if she was on a mission to introduce protestant views to court and influence Henry, who was a strong practicing Catholic, towards new protestant ideologies trending in that time in Eastern Europe. Was she really so? Be that as it may, she may have used her power of manipulation very well, knowing how infatuated the King was with her, and ready do to everything to have her, at least at the beginning of their relationship. Thus, she must have learned how to play with his feelings to get exactly

⁶¹ <https://onthetudortrail.com/Blog/2011/12/21/marguerite-de-navarre-and-anne-boleyn/> Seen on 27 June 2022 at 09:44 p.m.

what she wanted, and it seems that it worked. Henry was blindly in love with her and literally blind to her real intentions:

[...] first moments of Henry's doubts about the legitimacy of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon through the break with the Papacy (1533-34) and attack on the monasteries (1536). Anne helped Henry make this revolution: a woman of charismatic will and political acumen, she stiffened his resolve in facing down Rome, securing his divorce, and asserting the royal supremacy, or headship of the new Church of England.⁶²

Whether she was really a reformist or not is not important, what is true is that in order for Henry to marry her, he had to get his divorce. Which led Henry towards reformation as he was on a quest of finding a solution elsewhere in another church.

Henry was so into Anne that he would let her decide if she could have an audience with his subjects. Once, there was an episode with Cardinal Wolsey, when he came back from France and wanted to see the King, but he had to do so with Anne's permission. "[...] he was back at Boulogne hurrying homewards - to find Henry closeted with Anne and willing to summon him for audience only with her approval".⁶³

It is known that Anne hated Wolsey; many historians believe that she took part in his downfall together with Wolsey's enemies. Some speculate that Wolsey's downfall was because of having prevented her from marrying Percy and others suppose that that was because he could not manage to get the annulment for Henry.

[...] Henry retired to eat with Anne in her sumptuous apartment and, it is said, to be chided by her for entertaining a man who had done so much ill to him and the realm [...] It may be true, as Cavendish says, that Wolsey's fate now apparently nicely balanced, it was Anne who struck the decisive blow. Next day 'by her special labour' either of her own or other's devising, she persuaded Henry to go riding with her to see the sight of the new park, of hunting ground nearby. When Wolsey arrived from Easton to resume yesterday's conversation, Henry was about to set off. Hastily, but kindly he told the two cardinals that there was no time for conversation and bade them take their leave.⁶⁴

⁶² <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/renaissance-quarterly/article/abs/eric-ives-the-life-and-death-of-anne-boleyn-2nd-ed-malden-ma-and-oxford-blackwell-publishing-2004-xix-458-pp-64-bwpls-index-illus-tbls-bibl-6495-isbn-0631234799/74649168CB1B9E10FBB64B0C366D5931> Seen on 15 June 2022 at 08:45 p.m.

⁶³ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 162.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 234.

Two days after this outing, the command came to Wolsey to hand over the seal. He had been found guilty of high treason and Anne seemed to have taken part into his demise. Afterwards, people who had radical views came into stage progressively. “Allied against Catherine’s party were Anne Boleyn’s supporters: Cranmer, Foxe, Cromwell, Thomas Audley, and Sir George Boleyn. They saw their chance to promote radical ideas by solving the divorce crisis”.⁶⁵

Furthermore, Mary refused to take the oath and make a submission to the King. Mary refused many times to surrender which put her in increasing danger. Mary like her mother was very obstinate. Henry and Anne saw this as a direct act of defiance. And because Anne Boleyn and Catherine of Aragon hated each other, it could have been under pressure from the former that Henry demoted Queen Catherine to the rank of princess dowager and had her removed further from London several times from one place to another, each time getting worse and worse until her health deteriorated and eventually died. When Henry declared Mary illegitimate, a delegate was sent to relinquish her title Princess of England to a Lady Mary and although it may have been Anne who inspired this action against his daughter, it was he the King who ordered it and had it carried out. Mary’s house was dismantled, and she was sent to serve at Elizabeth’s household, but she was defiant and would not call her ‘Princess of England’ but ‘sister’ just as she called Henry Fitzroy ‘brother’. Apart from the defiance from Mary, by 1534, Henry and Anne had finally dealt with all those who seemed openly opposed to the new order.

As for her personality, Anne Boleyn was unique; she was a determined driven woman with a strong personality who inspired love in a King that bordered on obsession, a truly exceptional woman of her time, who without a doubt passed on her strong character to her daughter. Anne was influential but she was not diplomatic; she did not know how to please Henry and sweet talk to him into her whims. Her temperamental character and her lack of managing her anger issues led to her own downfall, her death. But her cause remained, and she was remembered by the reformists and described as a saint while her haters described her as a whore. Thus, though she is considered the most controversial Queen in English history, Anne Boleyn’s influence as a Lutheran sympathizer and reformer, is entirely agreed upon as she is mainly remembered as a leading figure of the Reformation. But was she indeed a saintly figure who inspired love (humanly and godly) and suffered because of it or was she an ambitious sinner who manipulated her way into the King’s life for her own ends? As Luther says: “Simul

⁶⁵ John Guy, *Tudor England*, Oxford University Press, 1988, p.125.

peccator ac justus, semper penitens.” Anne may have been both a sinner and a saint, and her last words proved she was constantly repentant.

What is sure is Henry’s weakness around women. He could easily be swayed by them but when he realised that he was used or manipulated, he could become a brutal beast. As happened with Catherine Howard, who was young and beautiful, Henry adored her and called her “my rose without thorns”. He was so into her that if Catherine Howard was a woman of influence, she could have done it very easily. But, by her foolishness she was caught flirting with many men in the court and accused of adultery and finally executed. Although she is remembered as the second Queen of England to be executed. Thus, sixteenth century Tudor England was not a perfect place to live for women. Henry’s wives, in particular, were able to be crowned queens of England thanks to their different types of power, including intelligence and seduction, but their lives hung by a thread.

Catherine of Aragon, metaphorically speaking, could be considered among Henry’s wives that lost their heads, because the crown, for her, symbolized her head. It was so important because it meant losing her honour and dignity and her daughter’s as well. She struggled hard to keep her child’s legitimacy, but she finally lost everything and never would see her daughter again. She could be considered among those who have lost everything together with Anne as they were quite similar. “The battle between Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn recognized none of the rules of war, and in the end, of course, it destroyed them both.”⁶⁶ Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn were somehow both tenacious warriors in their own way.

⁶⁶ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 54.

2.2. The wives that did not forfeit their lives

2.2.1. Catherine of Aragon

Catherine of Aragon, a Spanish Princess, daughter to a warrior mother and the epitome of the fervent catholic woman, exerted much religious influence on Henry. Together they were the perfect devoted Catholic couple, defending the Catholic faith against the Protestant heresy with everything they had. She was the perfect Queen and very much loved by her people. She also stood for a strong alliance with the strongest country in Europe at that time thanks to whom Henry had an upper hand with this alliance, in comparison with other European countries. “In politics Catherine represented the Spanish alliance. Although a faithful wife, she was also a faithful daughter, and in one letter written to her father she alluded to England as ‘your’ kingdom.”⁶⁷ She was so involved into the affairs of the state that she considered England and Spain as one country. Indeed, she was an intelligent and a strong woman who had serious and well-informed interest in international affairs and there is no doubt that Henry leaned heavily on her judgement in matters of foreign policy, listening to and frequently taking her advice. Thus, in 1513, before Henry left for the war with France, he made Catherine ‘Governor of the Realm and Captain-General’ of the home forces. This was a sign of trust and confidence in her abilities. When Henry crossed the Channel as usual, the Scots attacked England. Catherine a foreign Queen, led an army to defend and protect England during Henry’s absence.

On 9 September the two armies met at Flodden in a fearful, bloody encounter which ended about three hours with the English absolute masters of the field. Most of the Scottish aristocracy, including twelve earls, the archbishop of St Andrews, two bishops, two abbots and, finally, the king himself, were killed.⁶⁸

Everyone agreed that Catherine withstood the situation extremely well, but she tactfully attributed her success entirely to English valour and God’s grace. Her dynamic actions were a personal public relation success and her tenacity and leadership in a national crisis had proven to be effective. Catherine was a very strong, bold, obstinate, and proud person. Even at a young age, these personality traits could have been observed when she became a young widow, she endured everything in order not to lose her face.

[...] even in her teens Catherine of Aragon was no nonentity to be intimidated by rudeness or dismayed by loneliness and penury. If the King had been hoping that she would beg to go home and

⁶⁷ James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, op-cit. 1953, p. P1.

⁶⁸ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 37.

thus give him an excuse for breaking off her engagement, he was disappointed. Courageous, stubborn, and proud, Catherine bore a strong resemblance to her dead mother, that redoubtable warrior Queen Isabella of Castile, and like a good soldier she stayed grimly at her post. The English, she told her father, could not break her spirit, and she would rather die than return rejected to Spain.⁶⁹

Even her enemies were fascinated by her strength of obstinately enduring in order to get what she wanted at any price.

Thomas Cromwell, to whom Catherine's obstinacy and powerful foreign connections represented a tiresome and possibly dangerous obstacle in the way of his plans for creating an all-powerful secular state, told Chapuys that Nature had wronged the Queen in not making a man, as but for her sex, 'she might have surpassed all the heroes of history'. As for Henry, he had long since had to resign himself to the fact that he would never win an argument with his first wife and had therefore wisely confined himself to bullying her through intermediaries. But, like Cromwell, he was in no doubt of her heroic qualities. 'The Lady Catherine', he is reported to have said, 'is a proud, stubborn woman of very high courage. Had she taken it into her head to act, she could easily have mustered an army and waged war against me as fiercely as ever her mother did in Spain'.⁷⁰

Indeed, Catherine's strong personality and sense of resilience were a wonder as much to her admirers as her enemies. Her tenacity, despite herself, was what led the rupture with Rome and paved the way to a reformed Anglican Church.

If Catherine had been a different type of woman, content to take the easy way out, then it is equally safe to say that there would have been no breach with Rome in early 1530s. To say that if Henry had not become infatuated with Anne, in her own way just as strong-willed and courageous a woman as her rival, there would have been no Reformation in England For better and for worse, the driving ambition of one woman and the determination of another to defend what she had believed to be right played a vital part in shaping events which affected the lives of every English man, woman and child and still affect them today.⁷¹

One may wonder if Catherine's obstinacy and determination did not stem from her Spanish origin and her strong Catholic beliefs. In other words, her obstinate character might have originated from the fact that Spain had been conquered by Muslim Arabs and lost their right to freely practice their Catholic faith in their own country. Once they got their freedom and their country back, their religion had become, and it still is, a most valuable thing that they had to protect in the most conservative ways, sometimes. So, perhaps for Catherine, all forms of religious changes or reforms must have been a real threat to the establishment of the Catholic

⁶⁹ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 29.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 67.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, p. 67-68.

faith; divorce must have been something new and that could shake the grounds of the biblical truth she so much believed in and clung to for better or worse.

Catherine of Aragon's tenacity and the divorce triggered the reformation: Anne influenced it, and Catherine Parr started it, which would change religious beliefs in England forever. The Tudor period is indeed a very remarkable period with one tyrant and many strong intelligent women. But we cannot do without mentioning Bloody Mary who would be as cruel as her father had been before and finally Elizabeth, the greatest queen ever, as she found a middle way amidst the boiling religious grounds of England.

In a nutshell, King Henry was surrounded with a lot of women. One could not escape it without being influenced or manipulated by them, even the King himself. Henry sometimes became a tool for them to achieve their purposes but once he realised that, he responded ferociously.

2.2.2. Catherine Parr

Catherine Parr was a remarkable woman, considering the influence she had on Henry VIII, on the court and on Edward VI later.

As far as her influence on the King, she was probably the wife that knew best when to argue with the King and when to show submission to him. She indeed could rise no higher in her husband's favour and this may have given her the confidence to pursue her bills to influence the ongoing religious reforms more openly, even though her attempts to do so eventually placed her in the same danger as both Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard before. Like all her predecessors, Catherine Parr, at first, exercised power but rather minimally. She, then elevated her family members by appointing them to positions of her household, including her siblings and her stepchildren. More significantly, Catherine settled efforts to promote the cause of Protestantism by appointing reformers to key positions, including her personal chaplain and the tutors assigned to teach Lady Elizabeth and Prince Edward. Henry was impressed by her learning and intellectual sophistication and willingly sought her advice on his children's education. His wife, indeed, since her tender age, had learnt that education enabled women to become as eloquent and learned as men of her time and that: "[...] learning by which the reason

is cultivated, is equally suitable to both [men and women]. Both of them, if the seed of good principles be sown in them, equally produce the germs of virtue.”⁷²

However, if Henry, at that point in time, did not seem to be that much troubled by his wife’s sympathy and defence of the reformists’ cause, he was probably unaware of how deeply committed to such a cause she was. He knew that she was not a catholic sympathizer, but this would not become clear to him until 1546. She, indeed, strongly favoured the reformist cause while Henry was, in a doctrinal sense, more religiously conservative than her. His main problem may have been with her increasing habit of being outspoken and off-challenging him especially on religious matters and on policy.

Things would take a more serious turn when, in 1544, Catherine Parr anonymously published an English translation of Bishop John Fisher’s Latin text *Psalms and Prayers*, and a year later, she published *Prayers and Meditations* under her own name, an English translation which sold remarkably well. Henry appreciated and admired Catherine’s learning and public virtue and seemed to find her conversations stimulating for the most part, but her growing popularity and power may have irked him, especially as she grew bolder on her arguments and challenges in religious matter. Once, the King was provoked during a discussion and mumbled to Stephen Gardiner: “A good hearing it is, when women become such clerks, and a thing much to my comfort to come in mine old days to be taught by my wife”.⁷³ Even he felt some jealousy upon receiving, as a new year’s gift in 1546, a Latin translation of his wife’s enormously popular book from his daughter Elizabeth who may have seemed to Henry to admire her stepmother more than her own father.

When Bishops of Winchester, Stephen Gardener and Thomas Wriothesley, approached Henry with allegations of the Queen’s supposedly heretical leanings, the King seemed fairly well disposed to entertain their suspicion. He even permitted to issue a warrant for her arrest and interrogation. Luckily for Catherine, the warrant was never served as the document had somehow come into the Catherine’s hand. When he confronted her about her challenging him and her refusal to allow herself to be instructed by England’s religious authority, namely himself, Catherine’s powerful eloquence and great wit saved her from probably meeting the same as the previous beheaded queens. She indeed ably protested that she had only argued with the King so as to benefit from his superior wisdom as well to distract him from the painful trials

⁷² <https://books.google.fr/books?id=tKdkAAAAMAAJ> Seen on June 16 at 11:30 p.m.

⁷³ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 110.

of the recurring illness; she then affirmed that her duty and her place is to honour Henry's authority.

It was preposterous- against the ordinance of nature- for any woman to presume to teach her husband; it was she who must be taught by him. As for herself, if she had ever seemed bold enough to argue, it had not been to maintain her own opinions but to encourage discussions so that he might 'pass away the weariness of his present infirmity' and she might profit by hearing his learned discourse.⁷⁴

Furthermore, her influence on the King was clear regarding the instating of the King's daughter to the English throne. Indeed, an Act of Succession, annulling two former ones, was passed in 1544 remade of Mary and Elizabeth legitimate heirs. Her orator skills and her eloquence must have helped her make the King reconsider the issue and take such a decision in favour of his daughters, after so much time of disregard.

Catherine enjoyed another type of power, that of love as she was an outstandingly loving stepmother, a role she had already played in her previous marriage. She spared no efforts to care for her loved ones. Thus, shortly after her marriage to the King, she made it her mission to reunite the royal family together; so, within a few months, she arranged for Henry's children to pay visits to their father. She seemed to have had a very warm relationship with the royal children. Catherine also took a keen interest in her stepchildren's wellbeing and made sure they received a good education. She was the perfect Christian stepmother and played the role outstandingly well, twice, fitting the image portrayed by Vives' stepmother model:

A woman will take pity of [her stepchildren's] tender and defenceless age and, remembering her own children (if she has any), will love those of others. She will be mindful of the common lot of all mankind, and that her own children will find that others will treat them as she treated others [...].⁷⁵

In addition to the role that she played in her husband's and her stepchildren's lives, the queen also played a prominent role at court and in state affairs. When Henry was absent on campaign in France between mid-July and late September 1544, he left Catherine to oversee a regency council headed by Cranmer, who was now fully restored to favour. She attended assiduously to her duties, meeting daily with her advisers. None of Henry's wives played a more prominent and constructive role in the affairs of court and kingdom than wife number six.

⁷⁴ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p.113

⁷⁵ J.L. Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, op-cit. 2000, p.284.

But interestingly enough, Catherine may have been considered as a radical in her own time for her protestant views, but her perspective on the role of women was rather conventional to the Tudor period. This is quite patent in the Queen's religious treatises published after Henry's death in 1547, *Lamentations of a Sinner*; which, despite its strong reformist doctrinal views, was actually quite traditional on its attitude to women's roles and place in society. Catherine believed that women should be taught to read and understand the Scriptures, but simultaneously exhorted them to remain silent and obedient to their husbands in all things, in sickness and health, for richer or poorer, matching here, too, Vives's image of the good Christian woman:

If [your husband] is sick, then you can show yourself a true wife. He must be consoled, tendered, cared for, and held no less dear and cherished than if he were healthy and strong [...]. Treat his wounds and sores with yourself with your own hands and comfort his physical anguish.⁷⁶

Catherine Parr cared for the ailing King every step of the way. She seemed to have been aware that it was too early for women to disobey their husbands, considering what had happened to Anne Boleyn and many other women. So, in order to survive, women had no other choice but be docile and submissive. But contrary to other women in her times, Catherine Parr was a religious and clever woman who she knew very well what to say and when to say it. She influenced the King, his children, the court and handed states matters. But perhaps her most notable legacy could be seen on the life and the policy of Edward and more particularly Elizabeth I whose education, ideology, religion, and visions for England's future had been shaped more by Henry's sixth wife than perhaps by any other person. Additionally, her support of Protestantism encouraged the translation of religious works into English and furthered the cause of the Protestant Reformation in England.

⁷⁶ J.L. Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman*, op-cit. 2000, p. 199.

2.2.3. Anne of Cleves

Another queen, who survived and even outlived Henry, was indeed Anne of Cleves, Henry's fourth wife whose marriage was settled by Thomas Cromwell. Henry was persuaded by Cromwell that the support of Cleves would help Henry defend himself against the Emperor Charles V without having to rely on the equally changeable King of France. Henry sought to conclude the marriage negotiations quickly. Thus, he demanded a portrait of her and Hans Holbein made it possible. The portrait depicts Anne in a Dutch-style dress, demure and serene with widely spaced and heavy-lidded eyes and shapely lips. For reasons which are still not clear, Henry was less than pleased with his new bride-to-be. While her coming to England was delayed, Henry set off to meet her earlier than originally planned, he staged his entrance in a highly theatrical manner, in disguise. He approached Anne without hesitation, kneeling before her to kiss her hand. Unfortunately, Anne was taken aback by this behaviour because she had no idea who Henry was. The King was loud in his dissatisfaction as soon as he was out of earshot of his new fiancée. He complained bitterly to Thomas Cromwell about the fact that "[he was] ashamed that men have so praised her as they have done, and I like her not".⁷⁷ He stated emphatically and demanded what could be done to avoid the marriage. Since there was no way to annul the marriage without risking the anger and enmity of Cleves, Henry went ahead with the wedding as planned. Furthermore, Anne had a cold personality which made difficult for her to be loved.

*Anne était jolie, mais elle était froide, réfrigérante même et un tantinet bonnet de nuit : elle transmettait sa frigidité aux autres. La passion que Henri avait éprouvée pour son portrait se transforma en rancune lorsqu'il s'avéra tristement incapable, à défaut de la combler, d'éprouver du moins la joie de la pénétration. [...] L'érection du roi d'Angleterre eût assurément permis de fortifier les alliances internationales du pays. La Providence en décida autrement.*⁷⁸

He spent six months in attempt to divorce her. Henry did not consummate his marriage because Anne repulsed him. Thus, he was setting the stage for an annulment based on non-consummation of the marriage. Considering the state of Henry's health in addition to his obvious disappointment with his new wife, it is entirely possible that Henry may have been experiencing impotence and reacting badly to it by blaming it on his new wife. Whatever the truth of the matter between them, Anne was ill-prepared to address it. She had arrived in

⁷⁷ J.J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, op-cit. p. 370.

⁷⁸ Bernard Cottret, *Henri VIII, Le pouvoir par la force*, Biographie Payot, Paris, 1999, p. 284.

England, married Henry, and had been proclaimed Queen, all in the space of a few weeks without having yet learnt much of English. This did not only make it difficult for her to stay wise to events around her, but also prevented her from being able to express herself to those who might have been able to help her. Henry sent Anne away from court to Richmond Palace. During this time, Henry obtained the annulment to his marriage based on its non-consummation and on Anne's precontact to marry the son of the Duke of Lorraine. If she accepted it, Henry assured her that she would be treated kindly and be provided for. At first, she refused and within a day or so she accepted his offer. Had she not accepted, she would have been discarded and disgraced and most certainly could not have been safe from the dangerous Henry VIII's anger. Anne was quick and resolute in making her decision, and she accepted her divorce from Henry with grace and amiability. Henry was generous with her and offered her five hundred pounds a year, the use of two royal residences, and "the position of the King's adopted sister with precedence over every other lady in the land except the next queen and the princesses".⁷⁹ She now was a free and independent woman, she had found herself in control of her own life. She had neither husband nor master to tell her what to do. Anne lived the last fourteen years of her life quite happily and comfortably. The French ambassador reported that "Madame of Cleves has more joyous countenance than ever. She wears a great variety of dresses and passes all her time in sports and recreations".⁸⁰ Anne of Cleves, indeed, did survive but she did not have any major influence or power apart from, maybe, being at the core of Thomas Cromwell's downfall. Thomas Cromwell was King Henry VIII's champion when it came to Anne Boleyn's case, by assisting the King in her downfall and execution. Ironically enough, Anne of Cleves's marriage to the King would make things turn sour for Cromwell. In other words, when Henry VIII felt rejected then repulsed by his new Queen, he turned on Cromwell, blaming him for everything.

Ce roi, qui avait passé toute sa vie entourée de lances de tournois et autres symboles phalliques, se révéla bœuf plutôt que taureau. Le membre viril de Henri, désespérément flasque là où il eût dû se montrer rond et roide, avait ceci de commun avec le nez de Cléopâtre que le sort du monde en fut (presque) changé.⁸¹

It could also be that Anne of Cleves had in fact no impact whatsoever in the matter and that Cromwell's downfall was in a sense similar to that of Wolsey's: they both were the King's right-arm at some point, and once the King had no use of them, an excuse had to be invented,

⁷⁹ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 90-91.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 92.

⁸¹ Bernard Cottret, *Henri VIII, Le pouvoir par la force*, op-cit. p. 284.

and that was the end of their story! In the end, Anne of Cleves lived her life as a ‘sister’ in luxury. In the end perhaps she is the winner, she outlived Henry and made the most of it.

2.2.3. The continuation of Henry’s wives’ influence over the future of England.

When Henry VIII died in 1547, he left the throne to his son Edward VI, whose reign was short as he died at the age of sixteen. But still his reign marked a more notable move towards Protestantism, in how he tried to differentiate the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church in small ways, initiated in fact by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. He wrote *The Book of Common Prayer*, the service book for the Church of England still in use today in a modernized version. He also dispensed with clerical celibacy, allowing priests to get married, contrary to the Catholic doctrine. On his deathbed, Edward VI tried unsuccessfully to pass the throne to a Protestant successor, the Lady Jane Grey who was beheaded by his sister Mary, who then restored Catholicism with the help of her husband Philip II of Spain. Mary, nicknamed Bloody Mary, from a Protestant point of view, martyred many men and women, including Thomas Cranmer, by burning them alive.

After Mary’s death, her sister Elizabeth took the throne and once again the Anglican Church was restored. In 1559, Elizabeth and Parliament agreed upon *The Elizabethan Religious Settlement*⁸², which aimed at achieving religious uniformity as well as a compromise with Catholics. It stated that Catholics and Protestants alike would be compelled to attend Sunday Services in the Church of England, but at the same time several Catholic practices would be retained. So, while her father did not concretely change anything, her brother, Edward VI, tried to lead the Church of England towards a more Protestant direction, her sister Mary brought back Catholicism, Elizabeth tried to reign over a somewhat moderate type of Protestantism. She was given by the Parliament the title of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. Her settlement would at first pay off, but not for long because the Protestants were not happy with her compromising with the Catholics and all her attempts to achieve a religious uniformity, believing that the Anglican Church was becoming too Catholic. This would lead to the English Civil War

⁸² [The Elizabethan Religious Settlement - World History Encyclopedia](#) Seen on June 19, at 9:10 p.m.

in the next century. Overall, Elizabeth I, during her 44-year reign firmly established England as a Protestant Kingdom.

All in all, from a historical point of view, it was a time of paramount religious changes moving from Catholicism to Protestantism. Women, and Royal wives in particular, from this prospect, did play a role which had not been sufficiently recognised. They were kept in the background and the main objective of this research paper is to put them in the foreground of a history that has been partly shaped by their doings. Henry's wives, for instance, did influence and participate in the Reformation and the rupture with the Roman Catholic Church. In a way or another, it was thanks to women or because of them, namely Henry's wives and most of all his daughter Elizabeth, that England has become a Protestant nation.

III. CAPTIVATING ARTISTIC ICONOGRAPHY AND CINEMATOGRAPHY WORKS

3.1. A Captivating Legendary Story

The Tudor period is certainly the most fascinating and the richest period of English history. Many events happened during this time, but the most fascinating of it happened during Henry VIII's reign. He was a young, tall, athletic, and handsome prince; simply, he was the icon of a perfect prince. Everybody admired his beauty in his country and even abroad; all foreign ambassadors found him captivating. No one could have thought that such a handsome prince gradually would transform into a tyrant, a blood thirsty monster who would kill everyone who dared to come in his way. But at the beginning of his adult life, he was the fairy tales' charming prince who saved the princess kept in captivity on the tower because he indeed did save Catherine of Aragon kept in England as a prisoner in very poor condition not deserving of a princess of her high calibre, Catherine. He was such a prince so much so that even when he changed, she refused to believe it:

But although they had grown apart, although other people had shouldered her out of his confidence, for Catherine, Henry would always remain the beautiful young man who had rescued her from lonely humiliation – gay, generous boy who had loved her his queen in that long-ago joyous springtime [...].⁸³

It was impossible for her to imagine that such a charming man could have changed, so, in her eyes and heart, he would always remain her perfect prince. Maybe, all those children's stories about princes saving princesses are the story of Catherine of Aragon and Henry VIII as Henry really was at the beginning. Catherine was Henry's first love because it was impossible for him to love other girls and because his father kept an eye on him vigorously. So, the only girl who was within his reach was Catherine. At first, he loved her deeply but afterwards when things did not go as he wanted, his love for her started to fade away and with the long battle of divorce seems to have gotten the better of his love, a love that would little by little turn into hate and bitterness. The same story also happened with Anne Boleyn; the King was madly in love with her, so much so that in order to marry her and finally have a male heir, he first had to

⁸³ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 51.

divorce his previous wife, a decision that resulted in drastic majors, namely the break with Rome and pushing England towards the Reformation. Despite his fighting to win Anne Boleyn's love, he would once again do whatever needed to get rid of her once he had no more use of her as she too was unable to give him the son he had been longing for. His love faded gradually until he hated her and eventually executed her. This relation of a love transforming into hate is shocking and all the same fascinating. First of all, in the Middle-ages people did not get married out of love but out of other circumstances and interests. However, for Henry, there was love and different types of love, ending up in hatred, the latter leading to divorce, execution or death. This love-hate relationship was also manifest in the Royals and their subjects. As in every tale, there is good, and there is bad, there is a hero and there is a villain, the same goes with Henry's life and his wives'. Catherine of Aragon, for instance, was a much-loved queen; people loved her as for them she was a perfect queen who led an army and saved the country, who loved her people and did many things for them, whereas, Anne Boleyn, for example, was a very unpopular and much hated Queen.

Popular sentiment was against the Boleyns, who were hated also by most of the nobility. The national interest required peace with the Emperor's dominions, and the ill-treatment of his aunt caused continental uneasiness. Apart from interest, there was a general personal sentiment in Catherine's favour.⁸⁴

The popularity of Catherine of Aragon and the unpopularity of Anne Boleyn must have been one of the reasons behind their rivalry which was so intense to the extent that they were ready to lose everything or having it all. Catherine of Aragon once observed Anne and stated: "My lady Anne, you have the good hap to stop at a king, but you are not like the others, you will have all or nothing".⁸⁵ Catherine hated Anne as Anne hated Catherine and did everything to help Henry to get his divorce and their battle continued even after the divorce. This time, Henry was Anne's, so the battle "mistress-wife" was over, making way to a battle of "mothers and daughters". In other words, Catherine of Aragon was fighting for her daughter Mary's rights, while Anne for her daughter Elizabeth, each of the two mothers fighting over a rival heiress to the throne. Both obstinate and tenacious, they would refuse to accept any relegation. Which princess would be legitimate, and which would become illegitimate? A long battle between them, Anne fighting and doing every possible thing to get rid of her daughter's rival.

The battle of the mothers and daughters continued with undiminished bitterness throughout 1534 and 1535, but in the face of the old Queen's terrible, implacable patience and Mary's

⁸⁴ James A. Williamson, *The Tudor Age*, op-cit. 1953, p. 133.

⁸⁵ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 56.

gallant young defence of her birth right, it often seemed as though Anne could only rage in furious impotence.⁸⁶

The rivalry and obstinacy from both sides made life difficult for all parties. One was fighting to get rid of her husband's ex family and the other was doing all she could not to make easy at all. Anne wanted Catherine and Mary both dead. Thus, when Catherine did die, people believed that Anne had poisoned her. Anne was relieved at last when her rival was gone but her misery remained. She had new rivals, Henry's new mistresses. She hated them and did everything to get rid of them, but she led a risky endeavour and finally she lost.

As for Henry's life, it is similar to another story: 'Beauty and the Beast', but this time, Beauty transformed into a Beast. Indeed, Henry was handsome in his early adulthood years, but gradually, as he got older, he got fatter and uglier, too. His obsession with having a male heir and with beauty had become more and more obvious. His wives had to be attractive and beautiful. Thus, he immediately divorced his fourth wife Anne of Cleves with no valid reason except for not being attractive and beautiful enough in his eyes. Also, Henry's habit of killing his wives could also be compared to 'Bluebeard' who killed his wives. Maybe this story derives from Henry's life also. Henry as a brute and six women; six different stories, each of them with its beauty and uniqueness.

Another fascinating fact is the type of life the Tudor royals led. Henry VII strengthened the country and left countless riches to his son to enjoy. Thus, Henry VIII lived a very luxurious life. The abundance of wealth enabled him to have almost everything in his realm. Musicians, fools, plays. It also allowed him to wear extravagant clothes and jewels, gems, pearls, precious stones, to name but a few. Furthermore, Anne Boleyn came back from France and brought with her new tendencies and new fashion. She was considered as a fashion icon; her neckless, with the letter B 'as big as chickpeas' showed how fashionable and elegant, she was, "But she knew how to make the best of herself. She dressed well and had become a leader of fashion at court."⁸⁷

All in all, Henry VIII and his wives remain a legend in every aspect from the captivating stories of their lives to how they used to live from all aspects possible including beauty, love, sex, betrayal, richness, jewels, etc. These aspects make their era so special and fascinating that people have never stopped talking about it; it is always trending, there is always something new to learn about them in books, paintings, on the screen and even in songs. Indeed, this period

⁸⁶ Alison Plowden, *Tudor Women: Queens and commoners*, op-cit. p. 71.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 56.

remains as a universal subject loved by many. There has always been suspense and a lot of drama around this story, and this is what makes their lives remarkable and keeps them alive over the years and centuries.

3.2. The Richness of Artistic and Cinematographic Representations of Henry and his Wives

3.2.1. Some of the Royal Portraits

Some artworks at Castle Howard tell us about the multifaceted story of Henry VIII and his wives. Henry VIII was one of the most colourful of the Tudor kings. During his reign, and later with his daughter Elizabeth I, portraits of the Royals would start to develop. So, numerous of reign portraits were produced by numerous artists⁸⁸; however, the most famous ones were realised by Hans Holbein the Younger, a German talented painter. He was born in about 1497 in Germany, the son of a painter, too. He was one of the King's contemporary artists that was anointed by the King himself as the court painter in 1536⁸⁹ because he needed for himself a



look that would be indisputably recognisable in England and all around the world and hence commissioned Holbein to make portraits of him to hand out to passing dignitaries and those he wanted to impress. From then on, the painting of portraits became fashionable and his portraits, up to today, have kept important records of the Tudor court members and made their legacy live over the years. Today, Holbein is recognised as the greatest portrait painter of all time. He painted with such talent his paintings resemble photographs in their accuracy and richness of detail.

This is a copy of a lost full-length Portrait of Henry VIII by Hans Holbein the Younger⁹⁰, produced after Hans Holbein the Younger, after 1537. The original is said to have been lost in the Whitehall Palace fire of 1698.⁹¹ It is

⁸⁸ [Portraits of Henry VIII - National Portrait Gallery \(npg.org.uk\)](https://www.npg.org.uk) Seen on June 22, at 10:15 p.m.

⁸⁹ [NPG 4027; King Henry VIII; King Henry VII - Portrait - National Portrait Gallery](https://www.npg.org.uk) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.

⁹⁰ ["Portrait of Henry VIII of England" by Hans Holbein the Younger – Joy of Museums Virtual Tours](https://www.joyofmuseums.com) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.

⁹¹ [NPG 4027; King Henry VIII; King Henry VII - Portrait - National Portrait Gallery](https://www.npg.org.uk) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.

believed that Holbein was commissioned to make this portrait so as to decorate Henry's private chambers during his marriage with Jane Seymour on the occasion of the birth of Henry's long-awaited and only male heir, Edward, born in October 1537.

In this portrait, Henry's royal and majestic aura is portrayed through his aggressive posture, erect body, and piercing gaze into the viewer, the classic and famous Henry VIII's classic pose. His legs are spread apart, and arms held from his side in the pose of a warrior or a wrestler. In his right hand he is holding a glove while his left hand is extended towards a dagger. His ornamented and embroidered costumes, the jewels, including the large rings and necklaces as well as his luxurious surroundings show how wealthy he was. His imposing figure and large codpiece and massively large shoulders further accentuate the aggressive masculinity. This may be interpreted as a bold gesture meant to impress all those who would think the King's lack of a male heir from Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, for instance, was not because of him but because of them! The King must be in his early forties, and he seems healthy, but historians believe the King at this age suffered from a leg injury and his health had already started declining. So, how accurate could artists like Holbein be when painting a powerful king like Henry VIII? Or rather were they able to be so however talented they were? Was accuracy really an issue? In fact, portraiture, at the time, was a massive weapon for propaganda, so obviously, telling the truth was not really Holbein's business, but making portraits of Henry as massive, imposing and luxurious as possible so that no one would dare argue with him. Furthermore, the



King is believed, after Jane Seymour's death, to have sent Holbein to foreign courts and commissioned him to make portraits of potential wives for him to enable him to choose a wife based on Holbein's portraits. He agreed to marry his fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, before he had even seen her, trusting by Holbein's portrait of her. Once he saw her in person, he said she looked like a horse and called her "the Flanders Mare"⁹² and divorced her soon after.

This is another fascinating portrait of King Henry VIII made by Hans Holbein the Younger in 1542⁹³. What makes it such a striking portrait is once again the typical

⁹² <https://thehistoryjar.com/2016/04/08/the-flanders-mare-anne-of-cleves/> Seen on 27 June 2022, at 05:15 p.m.

⁹³ <https://www.alamyimages.fr/portrait-d-henry-viii-d-angleterre-1491-1547-d-apres-hans-holbein-1542-alias-le-portrait-de-castle-howard-image245597417.html> Seen on June 22, at 9:49 p.m.

piercing look straight into the viewer's eyes, the size, and the detail of the King's richly and even extravagantly ornamented outfit. In fact, when Henry VIII became king and during his early years of reign, he was among the handsomest kings of Europe. But as he grew older and sicker, his body grew abnormally big and disfigured. When Holbein was commissioned to make this portrait in 1542, we may imagine how difficult it had become for him to faithfully paint the ailing king and still produce a powerful public image. This is a three-quarter portrait of the King, an imposing size to highlight power and might and a dominating figure. His features are sharply drawn, including the line of his mouth, his cheeks, his double chin, his reddish beard. His piercing eyes are staring straight into the viewers'. His gazing shows arrogance mixed with power and self-confidence. He is wearing a black hat with pearl ornament. The dark background enhances the King's red silk and velvet robe and emphasises the shape of his body. The bright gold threads decorating the robe, as well as all pearls and other jewels highlight the King's wealth and status. In his right hand, he is holding a glove, just as in the previous portrait, and a walking stick in his left hand. We understand that his health is failing as he now needs something to lean on while in the previous painting, he is holding a dagger.⁹⁴



As for the King's wives, there are different portraits of them, especially reproductions by unknown artists. We shall only tackle three of them: Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and Catherine Parr. First, Catherine of Aragon has been painted by different unknown artists. This is for example a portrait of Catherine of Aragon by an unknown artist⁹⁵, not the most famous of her, though. She is wearing a Spanish hood, but her hair is covered with a



veil and the hood is pulled further forward. Her dress is velvet and gold, decorated with jewels. In the second painting, her shoulders seem broader, and she

⁹⁴<https://www.alamyimages.fr/portrait-d-henry-viii-d-angleterre-1491-1547-d-apres-hans-holbein-1542-alias-le-portrait-de-castle-howard-image245597417.html> Seen on June 22, at 11:50 p.m.

⁹⁵ [Portraits of a Queen: Katherine of Aragon – Tudors Dynasty](#) Seen on June 23, at 12:06 a.m.

has obviously lost some of her youth beauty certainly because of her numerous pregnancies and miscarriages as well as advancing in age and the draining divorce struggle with Henry. Her dress is still rich, and she still wears a lot of jewels, but she looks tired and more vulnerable.

Regarding Anne Boleyn, this is one of the most famous portraits of her, still by an unknown artist. She is portrayed as a fair dark-haired dark-eyed beautiful young woman. She is wearing a French hood, from her time in France at the court of Queen Claude, her trademark 'B' necklace, and a dark dress with red accents. In the first portrait she holds a red rose, symbolising her connection to the royal Tudor house. This portrait is likely to have been painted during Anne Boleyn's marriage to the King 1533-36, before the King had her beheaded. Her images were destroyed and deleted from history so eagerly that only one damaged medallion with her lifetime



portrait has survived to this day, which is preciously stored in the British Museum.

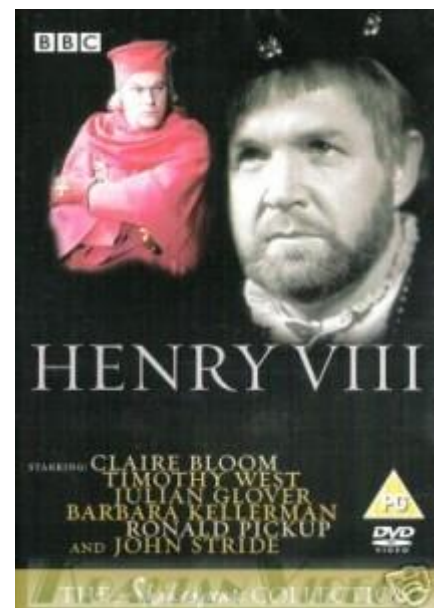
Last but not least, Catherine Parr. This is a portrait of her by Master John painted in 1545 when she was queen. It is a full-length portrait on which we can see Catherine wearing a red and gold coat, with animal fur and imposing jewel pieces. Red as a colour was very popular with royals and so were gold embroidery. It is unusual for queens to be painted full-length, and this is the only wife of Henry VIII of whom a full-length portrait still exists. It is believed that Catherine was the reason behind the commissioning of “full-length portraits of her stepdaughters Elizabeth and Mary, where she flatly wanted to emphasize their status as the heirs to the English crown.”⁹⁶

⁹⁶ [History in paintings. King Henry VIII and his six wives | Artchive \(arthive.com\)](https://www.artchive.com/artchive/england/1545/John-Master-Catherine-Parr) Seen on June 23, at 9:52 p.m.

3.2.2. Henry VIII and his wives on the screen over the years

Henry VIII and his wives have outlived the Tudor time through portraits as we have seen whether the art of portraiture was accurate at the time or intended to flatter them and exaggerate their status, wealth, and beauty. They have also survived through history drama (writings and dramatization) and documentary

drama. We cannot start without mentioning film and TV adaptations of the Shakespearean portrayals of King Henry in his play entitled simply *Henry VIII*. Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree's legendarily lavish production of 1910. The same play was filmed twice in for the cinema in 1911 and for television in 1979. The latter “provides a dramatized account of the events surrounding the divorce of Henry VIII from his first wife, Katherine of Aragon.”⁹⁷



⁹⁷ [Henry VIII \(1979\) - Kent Film Office](#) Seen on June 23, at 10:42

Other non-Shakespearean portrayals of Henry VIII include:

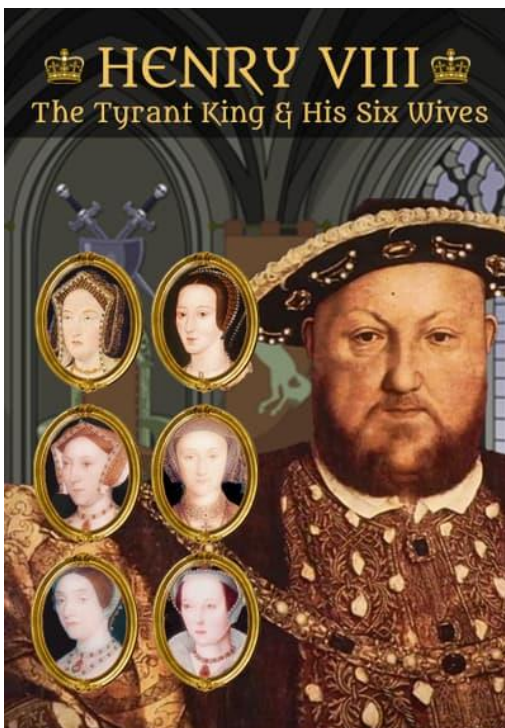
- Ernst Lubitsch's *Anna Boleyn* (1920)
- Charles Laughton's *Private Life of Henry VIII* (d. Alexander Korda, 1933)
- Keith Michell in *Henry VIII and His Six Wives* (d. Waris Hussein, 1972)
- Ray Winstone in the two-part mini-series *Henry VIII* (Granada, tx. 12-19/10/2003)
- Sid James in *Carry On Henry* (d. Gerald Thomas, 1971).
- Michael Hirst's historical fiction television series *The Tudors*, consisting of four seasons and ending 2010.
- *The Other Boleyn Girl* Focusing on the story of Anne Boleyn and her sister Mary (Henry's original mistress), this 2008 movie does not give Henry VIII as much screen time as other adaptations, however, the film offered a unique look at the famous story.



The Private Life of Henry VIII
(1933)



Documentary drama



Henry VIII: The Tyrant King and

His Six Wives is an Amazon documentary produced by Danny O'Brien, directed by Bruce BURGESS and hosted by Tracy BORMAN. It stages key moments of Henry VIII's life, namely his six marriages to Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard and Catherine Parr, respectively. In addition to tackling the tyrant King's life, this documentary delves into Henry's infamous riding accident leading to his leg wound. It reveals exclusive details of "how his ulcerated leg developed and was treated. It also explores other topics, including medicine and treatments in Tudor times, Henry VIII's

fascination with astronomy and the cuisine in Henry's court.”⁹⁸

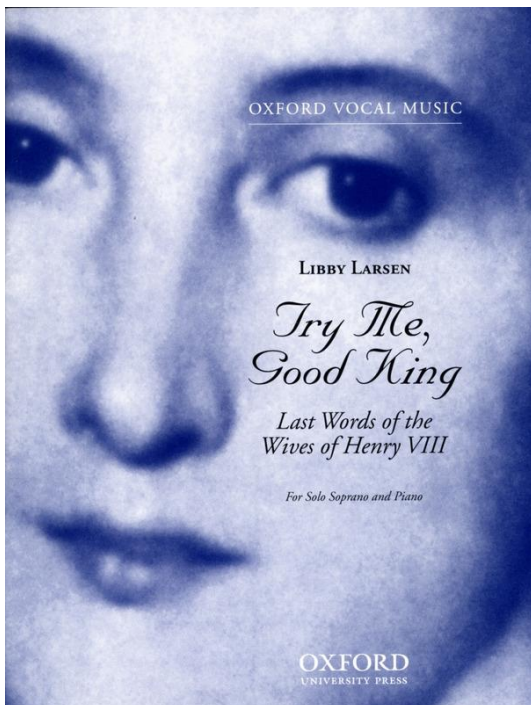
⁹⁸ [Watch Henry VIII: The Tyrant King and His Six Wives | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](#) Seen on June 23, at

Six Wives with Lucy Worsley, first aired on BBC One in 2020, is a documentary series presented by the historian Lucy Worsley. It is a dramatic reconstruction which revisits key events in the lives of Henry VIII's six wives.⁹⁹



3.2.3. Henry VIII and his wives in music

Just as in literature, the cinema, the theatre and on TV, music as well has been inspired



by and has thus kept Henry VIII's and his wives' legacy alive and well. Libby Larsen's *Try Me, Good King*, songs drawn from the final letters and speeches of the King's six wives. Also, the Herman's Hermits' *I'm Henry VIII, I Am*, which is a pun, playing on the fact that Henry VIII had six wives. Kids as well get to learn about Henry VIII's story and wives through songs and rhymes, the most famous of which is the following rhyme to help them remember the fate of each wife:

“Divorced, Beheaded, Died

Divorced, Beheaded, Survived”.

Thus, the legend of Henry VIII and his wives has fascinated people around the world and is likely to carry on for the years and centuries to come. Through different works of art such as the ones mentioned earlier, we can see how such a legend has been represented over the

7:08 p.m.

⁹⁹ [BBC One - Six Wives with Lucy Worsley](#) Seen on June 23, at 10:10 p.m.

years. It is still relevant and newsworthy in the numerous series and magazines that never stop staging and reinventing it because it is still a favourite subject of many people, so much so that there are so many series, films, and documentaries on this subject. They have died more than four hundred years ago but they are still alive through all forms of art for the pleasure of us all!

In the framework of this MEEF research paper, we may wonder how to introduce the story of Henry VIII and his wives to French English students through different forms of art, including portraits, TV series, plays, films, magazines, etc. We can tackle it with them by studying illustrations, iconographic and/or cinematographic representations of King Henry VIII and his wives, especially when we know that illustrations and images are something that appeals to the public the most, especially when dealing with a universal subject like this one. We may also want to try, with students, to see how Henry and his wives are represented today and understand why this subject is so fascinating for people. Learning English through illustrations is something that often renders the learning process easier, more appealing and more productive for students. Another aspect that could be of greater interest is the influence of the Tudor women in art over the years and/or how, during the Tudor period, women evolved from a hidden power in the background towards the power of sovereignty and see how this power manifested itself.

CONCLUSION

In this research study, we have raised the question of power of the royal wives and their influence on the King and how they shaped the development of the English Reformation. We have shown that as for Catherine of Aragon, the strongest aspect of her influence on the King manifested itself in how her obstinance and refusal to accept the divorce pushed him to break from the Roman Catholic Church and pave the way to the English reformed Church. We have also dealt with how Anne Boleyn was the one behind the King's wanting a divorce and hence leading to the same result: the break with the Roman Papacy.

Furthermore, we have seen that Catherine Parr played a part, however big or small it was, in the King's instating his daughters, Mary I and Elizabeth I, to the English throne. Finally, we have seen how the legend of Henry VIII and his wives has fascinated the public over the years and how it has survived through different forms of art, mainly on the screen. Indeed, what intrigues and fascinates people all the same is the fact that, all along his rather long reign, the English sovereign had a paradoxical relationship with women as he was both seduced by them and cruel towards them; he loved them and hated them; he crowned them and beheaded them.

This period of English history has been appealing to the public and continues to surprise them, today more than ever. Art, differently from history, has kept Henry's unrivalled legend alive and well, has formed it, reformed it, invented and reinvented it, written it, interpreted it and rewritten it. It has been recorded, constructed, reconstructed. It has been staged in the cinema, for instance, in TV series like *THE TUDORS*, blurring the lines between the past, the present and future, between facts and fiction, between history and myth. All forms of art, indeed, including painting, sculpture, literature, music, the cinema and theatre, etc., have endeavoured to keep it remembered. And what is remembering but keeping alive past events and people in our collective memory, and this very research paper is by all odds a way to contribute to such a memory and make Henry VIII and his wives' legend going!

APPROCHE DIDACTIQUE

Titre Séquence		Remembering the story of Henry VIII and his wives in the cinema today	
Problématique		How and why do present cinematographic works keep alive Henry VIII's and his wives' legend alive?	
Thème		L'art de vivre ensemble/ Le passé dans le présent	
Compétences travaillées		Parler en continu / écrire	
Niveau	2 nd e	Cycle	De 2 nd e
Durée séance	55min	Nombre d'heures par semaine	3
Nombre de séances : 4-5		Tâche finale : Rédaction d'une critique de film/série (EE)	
Niveau attendu à la fin de l'année de 3ème		B1	
Activités langagières dominantes	CO, CE, EE		
Activités langagières secondaires	EOI		

Prérequis de la séquence : le présent simple et le prétérit simple

Objectifs de la séquence :

- **Objectifs Pragmatiques et Méthodologiques :** Structurer et organiser une critique de film et réinvestissant les cours et en respectant le format de ce type d'écrit.
- **Objectifs Culturels :** Faits historiques liés au Roi Henri VIII et ses épouses
- **Objectifs Linguistiques :**
 - ✓ **Grammaticaux :** la voix passive, le génitif, l'expression de la permission, de l'obligation et l'impossibilité dans le passé
 - ✓ **Lexicaux :** *king, monarch, queen, realm, reign, throne, etc.*
 - ✓ **Phonologiques :** la prononciation des auxiliaires modaux (forme faible vs forme pleine) ainsi que la prononciation de -ED

✓ **Orthographiques** : le dédoublement de la consonne avant -ED

Tâche(s) Intermédiaire(s) / Evaluation(s) Formative(s) :

Tâche Finale / Evaluation Sommative + activité(s) langagière(s) concernée(s) :

As fan of *The Tudors*, write a review of one of the episodes of seasons of the Tudors series or any other series or film dealing with them (about 150 words).

Séances	Documents Utilisés	Activités langagières travaillées et consignes
1	<p>Document N°1 (voir annexes)</p> <p>L'objectif de cette activité est de revenir sur des faits historiques en lien avec le roi Henri VIII et ses six épouses de manière factuelle et simplifiée.</p>	<p>a. Brainstorming :</p> <p>What do you know about the Tudors?</p> <p>⇒ Partir de ce que les élèves savent sur les Tudors comme introduction à la séquence</p> <p>b. Reading Comprehension activities</p> <p>⇒ Travail individuel, en binôme ou de groupe selon le profil des classes.</p> <p>⇒ Correction (voir document annexe)</p>
2	<p>Documents N°1 + N°2 (voir annexes)</p> <p>Travail sur la description d'image</p> <p>Le but de cet exercice est de sensibiliser les élèves au choc des représentations. En effet, l'acteur Jonathan Rhys Meyer joue</p>	<p>a- Describe the two pictures. What can you see?</p>

	<p>Henri VIII dans "The Tudors". Un choix étonnant, car on est très loin de l'image que l'on associe volontiers au vieil Henri VIII. L'acteur est beaucoup plus petit qu'Henri VIII, il est épilé, érotisé, et n'est pas roux. C'est un choix qui marque une rupture avec l'image que l'on associe traditionnellement au monarque. Ce choix nous invite-t-il à nous interroger sur nos représentations les plus figées de l'histoire ?</p>	<p>b- Compare and contrast both pictures. What are some of the similarities and differences you can spot?</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>a. La scène qui ouvre la série : The Tudors, Artistic Licence and Outright Fictions – History in the (Re)Making (thehistoricalnovel.com)</p> <p>L'objectif est de voir les avantages narratifs de la fiction dans la dramatisation de faits historiques. Il faut donc amener les élèves à constater la simplification narrative dans la scène qui ouvre la série, d la pure fiction : l'assassinat, par des Français, d'un oncle imaginaire d'Henri VIII. Les amener donc à voir l'intérêt narratif pour les scénaristes et le public de ce type de scénarisation voire de réécriture de l'histoire :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - La création d'une tension dramatique qui nous jette d'emblée dans le drame que constitue la vie du roi. - Faire l'économie d'une très longue mise en contexte. <p>L'objectif est aussi d'amener les élèves à repérer des anachronismes et les erreurs dans ce type de séries (Ex.</p> <p>b. Analyse de la bande d'annonce de la série https://youtu.be/ZpXYmF0Zq_o</p> <p>On a largement reproché à la série ses nombreux anachronismes et ses distorsions de la réalité historique. Il serait intéressant d'amener les élèves à se demander pourquoi les auteurs ont-ils assumé des choix aussi radicaux et comment les ont-ils mis au service de la dramaturgie ?</p>	<p>Demander aux élèves s'ils connaissent de la série, s'ils l'ont visionnée, ce qu'ils en pensent.</p> <p>-1er visionnage en entier sans prise de notes : prise de connaissance de la situation d'énonciation et vérification des hypothèses émises avant le visionnage (à partir des connaissances des élèves).</p> <p>⇒ Premier recueil d'informations à l'oral: What did you understand? (Who? When?)</p> <p>- Visionnage(s) fragmenté(s) avec prise de notes guidée Who? What? Where? Why? How?</p>

<p>4</p>	<p>A FILM REVIEW (voir document N°4 en annexe)</p> <p>Travail sur la méthodologie de la rédaction d'un « film review » en préparation à la tâche finale.</p>	<p>Look at the film review and do the exercises to improve your writing skills. (voir documents annexes)</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Réalisation de la tâche finale en classe</p>	

Documents Annexes

Document 1: King Henry III and his wives: historical facts (CE)

King Henry VIII


Remembered as one of the most famous monarchs in history, Henry VIII is probably most known for his many wives and his incredibly bad temper. In fact, Henry is responsible for significant changes in England and across Europe, many of which have influenced the world around us today.

Childhood

Henry was born on 28th June 1491 in London. He was the second son born to King Henry VII and Elizabeth of York. His older brother, Arthur, was born five years earlier and Henry was second in line to the English throne. As well as a brother, Henry had two sisters; Margaret, who was two years older, and Mary, who was born five years after Henry.

In 1502, Arthur died aged only 15. This meant that Henry, at only ten years old, was heir to the throne. His father kept him well supervised and he had very little training as to what a king's role involved.

Henry VII died on 21st April 1509, and 17-year-old Henry was crowned. Soon after, Henry married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon.



Did You Know...?






Henry VIII was also an author and composer. He also enjoyed jousting and playing tennis.




Church of England

Henry wanted a son to carry on his legacy. As Catherine had only given him a daughter, Henry decided to divorce her and find another wife. In 1525, he fell in love with Anne Boleyn and chose her to be his next queen. However, the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope, would not allow him to divorce. This made Henry furious, so much so that he decided to break England away from the Catholic Church and create the Church of England, of which he would be the head. This was known as the Reformation and shocked much of Europe.

Henry's Six Wives

 <p>Catherine of Aragon</p>	<p>Born: 16th December 1485</p> <p>Marrried: 11th June 1509</p> <p>Divorced: 23rd May 1533</p> <p>Died: 7th January 1536</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Castile, Spain. • Married to Henry's brother Arthur for six months before his death. • Gave birth to a daughter, Mary. • Henry divorced Catherine after she failed to give him a son.
 <p>Anne Boleyn</p>	<p>Born: 1501</p> <p>Marrried: 25th January 1533</p> <p>Died: 19th May 1536</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine. • Gave birth to a daughter, Elizabeth. • Executed after being accused of being unfaithful to Henry.
 <p>Jane Seymour</p>	<p>Born: 1508</p> <p>Marrried: 30th May 1536</p> <p>Died: 24th October 1537</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne. • Gave birth to a son, Edward. • Died a few days after Edward was born due to complications from childbirth, leaving Henry devastated.
 <p>Anne of Cleves</p>	<p>Born: 1515</p> <p>Marrried: 6th January 1540</p> <p>Divorced: 9th July 1540</p> <p>Died: 16th July 1557</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • German princess born in Dusseldorf. • Henry agreed to marry Anne after seeing her portrait but did not like her when he met her in person. • After six months of marriage, Anne agreed to Henry's request for a divorce. Henry was grateful and referred to her as his 'beloved sister'.
<p>1. Supports pour la CE</p>  <p>Catherine Howard</p>	<p>Born: 1523</p> <p>Marrried: 28th July 1540</p> <p>Died: 13th February 1542</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Born in Lambeth, London. • Catherine was only 17 years old when she married the King. • Executed in 1542 after being unfaithful to Henry.

 <p>Catherine Parr</p>	<p>Born: 1512</p> <p>Marrried: 12th July 1543</p> <p>Died: 5th September 1548</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had been married and widowed twice before marrying Henry. • Helped to restore Mary and Elizabeth to the line of succession.
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Death

Henry began to grow frailer due to his weight and many leg ulcers and, in 1547, Henry died at the age of 55. His son, Edward, succeeded him as King. He requested to be buried next to his third wife, Jane Seymour, who he referred to as his 'true wife'.

Did You Know...?

Henry VIII is thought of as the 'father of the British Navy'. During his reign, he ordered several new warships to be built and increased the strength of England's armies on the seas.



Reading comprehension questions

1. What was the name of Henry's brother?

2. Fill in the missing words.

Henry VIII was also an _____ and _____.

He also enjoyed _____ and playing _____.

3. Give two reasons Henry decided to divorce Catherine of Aragon.

• _____

• _____

4. What was the name of Henry and Anne Boleyn's daughter?

Anne Mary

Elizabeth Margaret

5. Number these wives in the order they married Henry.

Catherine Howard Anne of Cleves

Anne Boleyn Catherine Parr

Catherine of Aragon Jane Seymour

6. In your own words, explain what the Reformation was.

7. Why do you think Henry was grateful to Anne of Cleves after their divorce, referring to her as his 'beloved sister'?

8. Why do you think Henry chose to be buried next to Jane Seymour?

9. At the start of the text, it says that Henry is remembered for his bad temper. What evidence is in the text to support this?

Éléments de réponse

1. What was the name of Henry's brother?

Arthur

2. Fill in the missing words.

Henry VIII was also an **author** and **composer**. He also enjoyed **jousting** and playing **tennis**.

3. Give two reasons Henry decided to divorce Catherine of Aragon.

- **Henry wanted a son and Catherine had only given him a daughter.**
- **He had fallen in love with Anne Boleyn and wanted to marry her.**

4. What was the name of Henry and Anne Boleyn's daughter?

Anne	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Elizabeth	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Margaret	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Number these wives in the order they married Henry.

Catherine Howard	5	Anne of Cleves	4
Anne Boleyn	2	Catherine Parr	6
Catherine of Aragon	1	Jane Seymour	3

6. In your own words, explain what the Reformation was.

Pupil's own response, such as: The Reformation was when Henry VIII broke away from the Catholic Church and created the Church of England with himself as the head. He did this because the Catholic Church would not allow him to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon.

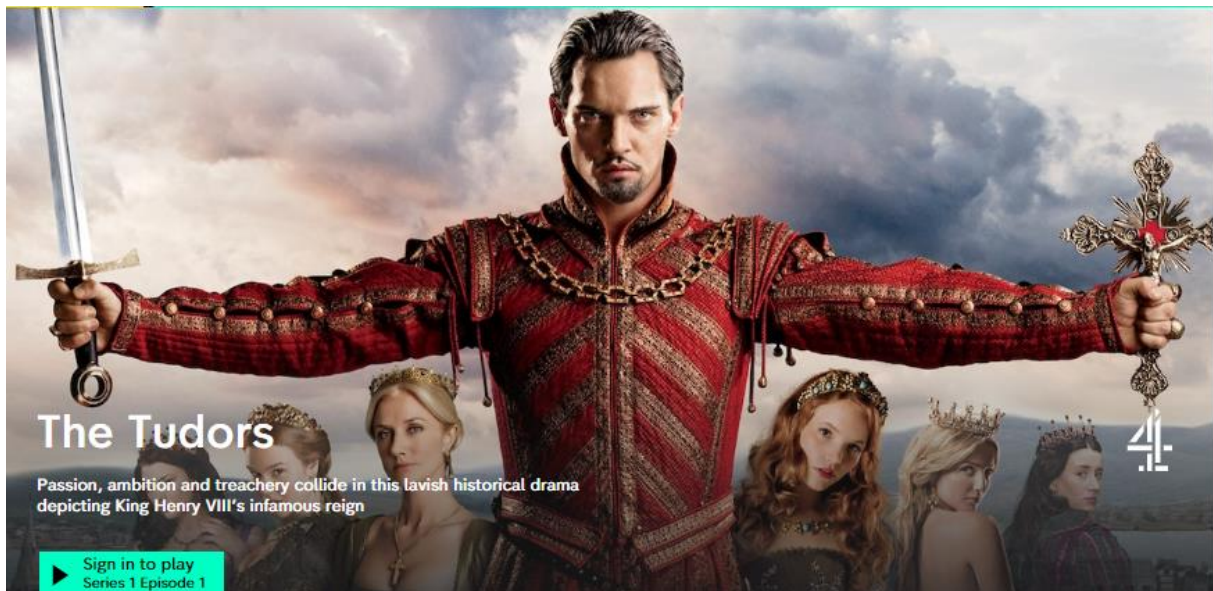
7. Why do you think Henry was grateful to Anne of Cleves after their divorce, referring to her as his 'beloved sister'?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think Henry was grateful to Anne of Cleves for agreeing to his request for his divorce as he had a lot of trouble divorcing his first wife, Catherine of Aragon and so it was quick and easy for him to move on to his next wife.

8. Why do you think Henry chose to be buried next to Jane Seymour?

Pupil's own response, such as: I think Henry chose to be buried next to Jane Seymour as she had given him the son he had always wanted - the only one of his wives to do this. The text also says that Henry was 'devastated' when she died, showing that he loved her very much.

2. Documents N°2 + N°3 (description d'image)





Document N°4 (A film/series review)

Circle *True* or *False* for these sentences.

- | | | | |
|----|---|-------------|--------------|
| 1. | If you are writing a film review, you should write about a film that you have watched and can remember well. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 2. | You should give your opinion of the film. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 3. | You should mention basic information about the film such as the title, genre and actors' names. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 4. | You should say what happens in the film's ending. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 5. | You should talk about the acting, the music and the special effects and other individual aspects of the film. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |
| 6. | You should tell readers whether you think the film is worth seeing. | <i>True</i> | <i>False</i> |

Complete the gaps with a word from the box.

aspects	plot	paragraphs
recommendations	opinion	structure

A film review should be well organised with a clear ¹ _____. One way of doing this is to divide your review into four ² _____.

The first paragraph can be quite short and contain your brief overall ³ _____ of the film. You will explain this opinion in later paragraphs. Also give some basic facts like the names of the actors and the year of release.

The second paragraph can be a summary of the ⁴ _____, but make sure you don't give away the ending.

The third paragraph can be your opinion of various ⁵ _____ of the film such as the acting, the music, the special effects and the script. You can praise or criticise them.

The final paragraph should include your ⁶ _____. Should people watch this film? Give reasons why or why not. You can also suggest who the film would most appeal to, for example teenagers, people who like action films or fans of spy films.

Skyfall is one of the best **action films** in recent years. Released in 2012, it **stars** Daniel Craig as secret agent James Bond and Spanish actor Javier Bardem in the role of Raoul Silva, the **villain** in this film.

The plot involves a genius computer hacker who is an ex-spy. He wants to take revenge on the organisation he used to work for and James Bond has to prevent this from happening. There are a lot of exciting action scenes as Bond pursues him around the world. **Can he stop him before it is too late?**

The film is set in a variety of **locations** including Istanbul, Shanghai, Macau, London and Scotland, which gives it a very international atmosphere. The **soundtrack** is impressive and includes the theme song 'Skyfall', performed by English singer Adele. The **acting** is also **of a very high standard** and Bardem brings his character to life with a **dazzling and memorable** performance.

I would highly recommend Skyfall, especially if you are keen on action films. It will have you on the edge of your seat until the very end and I am sure you will not regret watching it.

Top Tips for writing

1. **Use vocabulary specifically related to films.**
2. **Say what happens in the film, but ...**
3. **... don't give away the ending!**
4. **Talk about different aspects of the film.**
5. **Use a variety of adjectives and descriptive phrases.**
6. **Finish by saying whether you would recommend the film or not, and why.**

[skyfall_film_review_-_exercises_0.pdf \(britishcouncil.org\)](#) See on June 26, 2022, at 11:30 p.m.

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Links

["Portrait of Henry VIII of England" by Hans Holbein the Younger – Joy of Museums Virtual Tours](#) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.

[BBC One - Six Wives with Lucy Worsley](#) Seen on June 23, at 10:10 p.m.

[Henry VIII \(1979\) - Kent Film Office](#) Seen on June 23, at 10:42

[History in paintings. King Henry VIII and his six wives | Artchive \(arthive.com\)](#) Seen on June 23, at 9:52 p.m.

<https://books.google.fr/books?id=tKdkAAAAMAAJ> Seen on June 16 at 11:30 p.m.

<https://englishhistory.net/tudor/anne-boleyn-speech-at-her-execution> Seen on 01 June 2022 at 08:37 p.m.

<https://onthetudortrail.com/Blog/2011/12/21/marguerite-de-navarre-and-anne-boleyn/> Seen on 27 June 2022 at 09:44 p.m.

<https://thehistoryjar.com/2016/04/08/the-flanders-mare-anne-of-cleves/> Seen on 27 June 2022, at 05:15 p.m.

<https://www.alamyimages.fr/portrait-d-henry-viii-d-angleterre-1491-1547-d-apres-hans-holbein-1542-alias-le-portrait-de-castle-howard-image245597417.html> Seen on June 22, at 9:49 p.m.

https://www.azquotes.com/author/42394-Catherine_Parr Seen on 26 June 2022 at 03:25 p.m.

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Isabella-I-queen-of-Spain> Seen on 20 April 2022, at 03:18 p.m.

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/renaissance-quarterly/article/abs/eric-ives-the-life-and-death-of-anne-boleyn-2nd-ed-malden-ma-and-oxford-blackwell-publishing-2004-xix-458-pp-64-bwpls-index-illus-tbls-bibl-6495-isbn-0631234799/74649168CB1B9E10FBB64B0C366D5931> Seen on 15 June 2022 at 08:45 p.m.

<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/188194/the-lady-in-the-tower-by-alison-weir/9780771087677/excerpt> Seen on 09 June 2022, at 01:40 p.m.

[NPG 4027; King Henry VIII; King Henry VII - Portrait - National Portrait Gallery](#) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.

[NPG 4027; King Henry VIII; King Henry VII - Portrait - National Portrait Gallery](#) Seen on June 22, at 10:25 p.m.
p.m.

[Portraits of a Queen: Katherine of Aragon – Tudors Dynasty](#) Seen on June 23, at 12:06 a.m.

[Portraits of Henry VIII - National Portrait Gallery \(npg.org.uk\)](#) Seen on June 22, at 10:15 p.m.

[The Elizabethan Religious Settlement - World History Encyclopedia](#) Seen on June 19, at 9:10

[The historie of the Council of Trent Conteining eight bookes. In which \(besides the ordinarie actes of the Councill\) are declared many notable occurrences, which happened in Christendome, during the space of fourtie yeeres and more. And, particularly, the practises of the Court of Rome, to hinder the reformation of their errors, and to maintaine their greatnesse. Written in Italian by Pietro Soaue Polano, and faithfully translated into English by Nathanael Brent. \(umich.edu\)](#), Seen on 12 June 2022, at 12:15 p.m.

[Tudor Queens Come to Life with Portraits, Wax Figures and Descriptions of Appearance – Tudors Dynasty](#) Seen on 01 June 2022, at 04:08 p.m.

[Watch Henry VIII: The Tyrant King and His Six Wives | Prime Video \(amazon.com\)](#) Seen on June 23, at 7:08 p.m.

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