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Reign of Elizabeth I**

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Abstract: Queen Elizabeth I (1533-1603) occupied the English throne for 45 years in what has become known as England’s “Golden Age.” Her reign is one of the most studied and deliberated of any English monarch, and yet, there is one aspect of Elizabeth’s life which remains an enigma, namely her feelings towards her mother, Anne Boleyn (c.1501-1536). Anne was infamously executed on the orders of Elizabeth’s father, Henry VIII (1491-1547), in 1536 on false charges of adultery, incest, and treason when Elizabeth was two years and eight months old. Elizabeth rarely spoke of her mother. Consequently, there is much ambiguity surrounding her feelings towards Anne. This has allowed for a range of theories to develop. Some historians believe that Anne’s death was simply of no consequence to Elizabeth. David Starkey suggested that she airbrushed her mother from her memory. In contrast, other scholars have used psychoanalytic theory to suggest that Elizabeth suffered from the oedipal complex as a result of Anne’s fall. These hypotheses are a misleading representation of not only Elizabeth’s sentiments for her mother, but also the intricate impact that Anne’s memory had on her reign. Through the analysis of literary sources, portraiture, and material objects, this article will work to challenge these theories. Instead, it will suggest that Elizabeth subtly contributed to the rehabilitation of Anne’s memory, adhering to a figurative and symbolic understanding of their relationship as expressed in the works of Protestant authors. This will reveal Anne’s multifaceted legacy and significance to Elizabethan England, in which her memory was used to both legitimise and destabilise Elizabeth’s monarchy.

Keywords: Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth I, Motherhood, Queenship, Reformation, Image, Memory

Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII, featured physically in the life of her daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth I, for two years and eight months. The birth of Elizabeth on 7 September 1533 has commonly been portrayed in both academia and fiction as a catastrophe for Anne,¹ while Elizabeth has been described as “the most unwelcome royal daughter” in English history.² With the gift of hindsight, this is a rational statement to make. However, in September 1533 and in the months that followed, there was no reason to suggest that Anne would have difficulties in producing more children. Rather than being a severe disappointment to her parents, Elizabeth was living proof of Anne’s fertility and a symbol of her importance as the mother of the future King of England.³ To cement the legitimacy of Henry’s second family, Elizabeth was proclaimed “the high and mightie princes of England,” ousting her half-sister’s (the future Mary I) position in the line of succession. The “First Succession Act” was passed on 23 March 1534, which placed the legal position of Henry’s new family beyond doubt. For good measure, an oath to the act’s contents was to be extended to every adult male in England; those who refused were presumed guilty of treason. Henry’s feelings for Anne also remained unchanged, a point revealed by his reaction after Elizabeth’s birth. Anne’s maids of honour noted that the King proclaimed his fervent adoration for her and declared that he would have preferred to beg from door to door rather than give her up.⁴ It would take further miscarriages before Henry became convinced that his marriage to Anne was not blessed by God. In the aftermath of Elizabeth’s birth, however, there was no indication of what was to come in 1536.

Unconventionally for royal mothers, Anne’s affection and pride in her daughter were plainly apparent, often to the embarrassment of those around her. Following her re-entry into the court, Anne took the infant Elizabeth with her and placed the child on a velvet cushion beside her throne under the canopy of state.⁵ A story also circulated that Anne wanted to breastfeed Elizabeth but was prohibited by Henry, as this was believed to prevent mothers from quickly conceiving again.⁶ Barred from an ordinary mother/daughter relationship due to strict royal protocol, Anne did not see Elizabeth

¹ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 13.

² J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (California: University of California Press, 1968), 323.

³ Tracy Borman, *Elizabeth’s Women: The Hidden Story of the Virgin Queen* (London: Vintage, 2010), 22.

⁴ Christopher Hibbert, *Elizabeth I; a Personal History of the Virgin Queen* (London: Penguin, 2001), 14.

⁵ Borman, *Elizabeth’s Women*, 22.

⁶ Borman, *Elizabeth’s Women*, 21–22.

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often. Once she was three months old, the Princess was placed in her own household and separated from her parents. Visits from Anne were short and occasional; therefore, she poured her maternal affection into sumptuously providing for Elizabeth. Her last set of accounts comprised sums paid out for satin caps embroidered in gold, velvet and satin ruffs, and kirtles of yellow satin, green satin, and orange velvet for the Princess.⁷ Anne effectively fashioned Elizabeth in her own image, creating a miniature version of herself. In addition to Anne’s intermittent visits, Elizabeth also visited her parents at court where she was exhibited to foreign ambassadors as a marriage prospect.⁸ One of these prestigious occasions came in January 1536 when the announcement of Katherine of Aragon’s death reached the court. Anne was noted to be clad in yellow, which was interpreted as a gesture of her unbecoming joy at her rival’s death.⁹ Henry, meanwhile, triumphantly displayed Elizabeth to members of his court. Eustace Chapuys, the Imperial Ambassador, reported that Elizabeth was “conducted to mass with trumpets and other great triumphs” while Henry carried her “in his arms” and “showed her first to one and then to another. He has done the like on other days since.”¹⁰ Anne was three months pregnant and undoubtedly revelled in the attention that Henry displayed towards Elizabeth, being confident once more that she was carrying Henry’s long-awaited male heir. Tragically, Anne lost the baby just weeks later. Chapuys reports that Anne’s miscarriage occurred on the day of Katherine’s interment and was identified as male.¹¹ With “much ill grace,” Henry is reported to have said, “I see that God will not give me male children.”¹² Despite her husband’s cruel treatment, Anne consoled her weeping ladies, telling them that the miscarriage was for the best because the next child she conceived would be undoubtedly legitimate owing to the death of Katherine of Aragon.¹³ She was likely putting a brave face on the matter. Indeed, Chapuys reported that Henry left her “at Greenwich, whereas in former times he could hardly be one hour without her.”¹⁴ On 2 May 1536, Anne

⁷ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 13–14.

⁸ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 14.

⁹ Edward Hall, *Hall’s Chronicle* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1809), 818.

¹⁰ “Henry VIII: January 1536, 21–25,” in James Gairdner, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 10, January–June 1536*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1887), 47–64 (hereafter cited as L&P).

¹¹ “Henry VIII: February 1536, 6–10,” in L&P vol. 10, 98–108.

¹² “Spain: February 1536, 21–29,” in Pascual de Gayangos, ed., *Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Volume 5 Part 2, 1536–1538*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1888), 52–66 (hereafter cited as CSP Spain).

¹³ “Henry VIII: February 1536, 21–25,” in L&P vol. 10, 126–135.

¹⁴ “February 1536, 21–29” in CSP Spain, vol. 5, 52–66.

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was arrested on charges of adultery, incest and treason and taken to the Tower of London. She was beheaded by a French swordsman seventeen days later.

The reasons for Anne's downfall remain hotly debated and need not be rehashed here at length. As Eric Ives noted, "that Anne was innocent, and so too the others, is clear."¹⁵ The last occasion where Elizabeth saw her mother is described in a letter from Alexander Ales, which he sent to Elizabeth in 1559:

Never shall I forget the sorrow which I felt when I saw the most serene Queen, your most religious mother, carrying you, still a little baby, in her arms and entreating the most serene King, your father, in Greenwich Palace.¹⁶

Anne's execution transformed Elizabeth's position and, without her mother's protection, the security which she had enjoyed was lost. Henry and Anne's marriage was formally absolved on 17 of May 1536 by Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁷ On 8 of June, a Second Act of Succession was passed which formally bastardized Elizabeth and prevented her from succeeding to the throne. The Princess Elizabeth now became the "Lady Elizabeth", the King's second illegitimate daughter.

Before her arrest, Anne entrusted the spiritual care of Elizabeth to Matthew Parker, who later became her first Archbishop of Canterbury in 1559. Anne's words to Parker are unknown but they were clearly powerful and emotive, as his sense of duty to both mother and daughter remained with him for the rest of his life.¹⁸ Although Anne is not recorded to have mentioned Elizabeth during her imprisonment, a letter was discovered amongst Thomas Cromwell's belongings which *may* have been written by Anne. Dated "this 6th of May," the letter was a last attempt to appeal for Henry's mercy:

You have chosen me from a low Estate to be your Queen and Companion, far beyond my desert or desire; if then you found me worthy of such honour; Good your Grace, let not any light fancy, or bad Counsel of mine enemies withdraw your Princely

¹⁵ E. W. Ives, "Anne [Anne Boleyn] (c. 1500–1536), queen of England, second consort of Henry VIII," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/557.

¹⁶ Alexander Ales, "Elizabeth: September 1559, 1–5," in Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth*, Volume 1, 1558–1559, (London, 1863), 524–542.

¹⁷ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 14.

¹⁸ David Crankshaw and Alexandra Gillespie, "Parker, Matthew (1504–1575), archbishop of Canterbury and patron of scholarship," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21327.

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Favour from me; neither let that stain, that unworthy Stain of a disloyal heart towards your good Grace, ever cast so foul a blot on your most dutiful Wife, and the Infant Princess your daughter.¹⁹

There has been much debate surrounding the authenticity of this letter. It was first published in *The Life and Raigne of King Henry VIII* (1649) by Edward Herbert, 1st Baron Herbert of Cherbury. Herbert states:

But whether this Letter were elegantly written by her, or any else heretofore, I know as little, as what answer might be made thereunto: Only I cannot omit to tell, that the King was so little satisfied with her Actions or Letters, that not content to have gotten proof enough to put her to death, he would further be divorced from her.²⁰

Quoting Herbert, Eric Ives noted that the "elegance" of the letter "has always inspired suspicion."²¹ That the letter is not in Anne's hand and does not stylistically correspond with her other surviving letters, have been the leading causes of dispute. Indeed, historians have questioned whether Anne, imprisoned for high treason, would have been permitted to write, let alone dare write to Henry in such familiar terms.²² It must be considered, however, that Anne was no ordinary prisoner. She was still queen of England. Sir William Kingston, the Constable of the Tower of London, noted that Anne did have access to sending letters. Kingston reported that Anne told him "I shalle desyre you to bayre a letter from me [to Master] Secretary" (Thomas Cromwell). Kingston replied, "Madam, telle it me by word of mouth, and I wille do it."²³ Anne gave thanks to Kingston, which suggests she agreed and dictated a letter for him to transcribe. The fact that the letter is not in Anne's hand does not immediately suggest that it is a forgery. The conversation between Kingston and Anne indicates that if she did not write her own letters during her imprisonment, she had access to people who did on her behalf. Indeed, dictation was a common practice.²⁴

¹⁹ Edward Herbert, *The Life and Raigne of King Henry VIII* (London: Printed by E.G for Thomas Whitaker, 1649), 383.

²⁰ Herbert, *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth*, 384.

²¹ Eric Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn* (New York: Blackwell, 2004), 58.

²² Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 58.

²³ "Henry VIII: May 1536, 1–10," in L&P vol. 10, 329–349.

²⁴ See James Daybell's *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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Regarding the argument that the letter does not stylistically correspond to Anne’s other letters, we must consider the fact that few have survived. Those that have are mainly concerned with practicalities, such as announcing the birth of Elizabeth, and give little to no impression of a “style.”²⁵ Consequently, there is little to compare the 6 May letter against.

The contents of the letter, particularly Anne’s declaration that Henry chose her from a low estate, has also been a main source of dispute. At face value, this seems out of character for Anne. However, the setting under which the letter may have been written must be taken into account. Anne was navigating extreme circumstances, and her state of mind reflected this. She fluctuated between crying and laughing and made irrational statements – for instance, stating that there would be no rain until she was delivered out of the Tower.²⁶ Anne’s uncontrollable emotions and irrationality suggest that her mental health was under considerable strain, which is hardly surprising. Under these circumstances, Anne’s pride broke down. Upon hearing that she would reside in the royal apartments at the Tower, Anne cried, “It is too good for me, Jesu have mercy on me,” before kneeling and weeping at “a great pace.”²⁷ That Anne might humble herself, particularly when attempting to appeal to Henry, appears in keeping with her state of mind during her imprisonment. Indeed, other similarities can be found between the letter and Kingston’s reports. Anne expressed confusion over her imprisonment: “Mr. Kynston, do you know where for I am here?” She declared her innocence and legitimacy as Henry’s wife: “I am as clere from the company of man as for sin as I am clear from you, and am the Kynges trew wedded wyf.” She asked for justice: “Mr. Kyngston, shall I die withyowt justes?” And she expressed genuine concern for the men accused with her: “O, Nores, hast thow accused me? Thow ar in the Towre with me, and thow and I shall dy together; and, Marke, thow art here to.”²⁸

The 6 May letter encapsulates Anne’s state of mind as seen through Kingston’s reports. The letter begins by expressing confusion:

Your Grace's displeasure and my imprisonment are things so strange unto me as what to write or what to excuse I am altogether ignorant.

²⁵ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 58.

²⁶ “Henry VIII: May 1536, 1–10,” in L&P vol. 10, 329–349.

²⁷ “Henry VIII: May 1536, 1–10,” in L&P vol. 10, 329–349.

²⁸ “Henry VIII: May 1536, 1–10,” in L&P vol. 10, 329–349.

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The writer declares Anne's innocence and asks for a justice:

Let me have a lawful trial, and let not my enemies be my judges. Let it be an open trial, I fear no open shames, and you will see my innocence cleared or my guilt openly proved.

And the letter ends by requesting mercy for the five accused with Anne:

My last request is that I alone may bear the burden of your displeasure, and not those poor gentlemen, who, I understand, are likewise imprisoned for my sake.²⁹

The tone and contents of the letter mirrors Kingston's reports of Anne's turmoil and her conflict of emotion, showing both defiance and humility. If Anne did write or dictate the letter, it is the only piece of evidence during her imprisonment which mentions Elizabeth. In parallel with Ales's letter, which describes how Anne entreated Henry with Elizabeth in her arms, the writer of the 6 May letter used Elizabeth as an attempt to plea for clemency. By reminding Henry that Elizabeth was his biological child, the writer attempts to protect Elizabeth's legitimacy and position in Henry's affections.

In contrast to Kingston's reports and the 6 May letter, Anne's execution speech shows no protest:

Good Christen people, I am come hether to die, for according to the Law, and by the Lawe I am judged to death, and therefore I will speake nothing against it...But I pray God save the King, and sende him long to raigne over you, for a gentler, or a more mercifull Prince was there never.³⁰

The fact that Anne, who was infamous for her sharp tongue and tempestuous temper, resigned herself to a position of docility during her last days, could have been an attempt to appeal to Henry and protect Elizabeth by keeping her in Henry's good graces.

These attempts, however, were in vain. Following Anne's execution, the favour which Elizabeth had enjoyed as an infant was lost. With the reduction of Elizabeth's status came a decline in the size of her household, while the exquisite clothing which Anne Boleyn

²⁹ "Henry VIII: May 1536, 1–10," in L&P vol. 10, 329–349.

³⁰ John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*. London: I. Windet, 1583. <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe/>

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had provided came to a standstill.³¹ Elizabeth quickly outgrew her entire wardrobe and by August 1536 had practically nothing to wear. Elizabeth's governess, Lady Margaret Bryan, wrote desperately to Thomas Cromwell:

I beg you to be good lord to her and hers, and that she may have raiment, for she has neither gown nor kirtle nor petticoat, nor linen for smocks, nor kerchiefs, sleeves, rails, bodystychets, handkerchiefs, mufflers, nor begens.³²

This letter reveals Henry's neglect and the value of Anne's protection. It also demonstrates how Elizabeth was forgotten:

Now, as my lady Elizabeth is put from that degree she was in, and what degree she is at now I know not but by hearsay, I know not how to order her or myself.³³

Lady Bryan's desperate and confused tone unveils the disgrace which Elizabeth experienced following Anne's execution and indicates that Henry neglected to show any interest in her, either to confer a new course of direction for her household, or to cater for her most basic needs.

Given that Elizabeth was not yet three when her mother was executed, it is instinctive to presume that she had no recollection or awareness of events. However, Elizabeth was an astute child and given the opulence of her early years, she was keenly aware of the alterations which came in 1536. When informed of her new status, the toddler soberly asked; "how haps it, Governor: yesterday my Lady Princess, and today but my Lady Elizabeth?"³⁴ With Anne's death, the hatred that was once directed towards her was now projected onto Elizabeth. Anne's condemnation on charges of adultery allowed her enemies to refute that Elizabeth was Henry's child; some named Henry Norris the father, and others named Mark Smeaton.³⁵ In letters to Charles V, Eustace Chapuys referred to Elizabeth as the "Little Bastard,"³⁶ while Lady Mary referred to her as the "Little Whore."³⁷

³¹ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 15.

³² "Henry VIII: August 1536, 1-5," in L&P vol.11, 90-103.

³³ "Henry VIII: August 1536, 1-5," in L&P vol.11, 90-103.

³⁴ Hibbert, *Elizabeth*, 20.

³⁵ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 15.

³⁶ "Henry VIII: May 1536, 16-20," in L&P vol.10, 371-391.

³⁷ Lisa Hilton, *Elizabeth: Renaissance Prince* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015), 41.

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Elizabeth’s bastardy was also tarnished with incest, for it was not Anne’s adultery which was used to dissolve her marriage but Henry’s previous relationship with her sister, Mary Boleyn. Under canon law, this made any future union with a family member unlawful.³⁸ Moreover, given Anne’s charge of committing incest with her brother, the taint of incest and illegitimacy followed Elizabeth for the rest of her life. On 10 June 1536, it was claimed that the King’s council declared Elizabeth the child of George Boleyn.³⁹ In the immediate aftermath of Anne’s fall, Elizabeth’s disgrace was total.

In October 1537, seventeen months after Anne’s execution, Elizabeth was granted a place of honour at the baptism of Prince Edward, her half-brother by Jane Seymour. On return to the royal apartments at Hampton Court, both Mary and Elizabeth carried Edward’s train, a symbol of their equal status as Henry’s illegitimate daughters.⁴⁰ Given Elizabeth’s prominent position, it has been claimed that she was merely “temporarily forgotten” and enjoyed a status equal to that of Mary.⁴¹ This, however, is misleading. Records from the King’s council in 1537 reveal how both Mary and Elizabeth were discussed as future marriage prospects, which on the surface appears promising for Elizabeth. Nevertheless, these documents demonstrate that it was difficult for contemporaries to forget Elizabeth’s Boleyn heritage. Mary is described as “the better had in reputation” and more suitable for a royal match.⁴² Elizabeth, meanwhile, was of English aristocratic stock and the daughter of a convicted traitor. Her devalue is reflected by the fact that scarcely any foreign prince displayed an interest in her.⁴³ In April 1543, a contract of marriage was discussed between Elizabeth and the heir of Scotland’s governor, James Hamilton, second earl of Arran.⁴⁴ Compared to the marriage negotiations of Princess Mary, the disparity between the two sisters is plainly apparent. In 1518, Mary was betrothed to the heir of Francis I, a betrothal which lasted for three years. In 1522, she was betrothed to Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor.⁴⁵ Throughout her childhood, Mary was promised to the highest ranks of European royalty. Elizabeth enjoyed no such prospects; her illegitimate status and

³⁸ Hilton, *Elizabeth*, 40.

³⁹ David Loades, *Elizabeth I: A Life* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), 35.

⁴⁰ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 15.

⁴¹ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 24.

⁴² “Henry VIII: April 1537, 1–5,” in L&P vol. 12, 354–366.

⁴³ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 16.

⁴⁴ “Henry VIII: May 1543, 6–10,” in L&P vol. 18, 301–307.

⁴⁵ Anna Whitelock, *Mary Tudor: England's First Queen* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), 18–23.

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Boleyn inheritance no doubt proved to be equal factors in her devaluation in the marriage market.

In 1543 Elizabeth was partly rehabilitated by the Third Act of Succession, which restored both of Henry's daughters to a place in the line of succession behind their younger brother. However, neither sister was legitimated. By restoring Mary and Elizabeth to the succession but denying them their legitimacy, Henry did his daughters a grave disservice, as their legitimacy could be used to challenge their rights to rule. This was the case in 1553 upon the death of Edward VI. Mary and Elizabeth were disinherited in favour of Lady Jane Grey on the grounds of their illegitimacy. Edward referred to Anne directly to denounce Elizabeth's inheritance:

But it was the fate of Elizabeth, my other sister, to have Anne Boleyn for a mother; this woman was...cast off by my father because she was more inclined to couple with a number of courtiers rather than reverencing her husband.⁴⁶

It is doubtful that Henry sincerely believed in Mary or Elizabeth's capacity to rule as women and was hopeful that Edward would live long enough to produce male heirs of his own. Elizabeth's restoration to the succession has often been interpreted to indicate that she and Henry were reconciled, and that Anne Boleyn was largely forgotten.⁴⁷ However, this was not the case, as Elizabeth's illegitimacy put her in a position behind any future son or daughter that Henry, Edward, or Mary (who was also illegitimate) might produce:

in case it shall happen the king's majesty and the said excellent prince his yet only son Prince Edward and heir apparent, to decease without heir of either of their bodies lawfully begotten (as God defend) so that there be no such heir male or female of any of their two bodies...then the said imperial crown and all other the premises shall be to the Lady Mary, the king's Highness' daughter, and to the heirs of the body of the same Lady Mary lawfully begotten.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Chris Skidmore, *Edward VI: The Lost King of England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007), 391–392.

⁴⁷ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 30–34.

⁴⁸ G.B. Adams, *Select Documents of English Constitutional History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1901), 264–267.

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Henry was simply performing his duty by securing the succession before he left England to embark on a military campaign in France, where his life could be at risk. Although this was significant for Elizabeth, it is important not to overstate it concerning her relationship with Henry. The tone of the act makes clear that she was a last resort. Rather than being a moment of reconciliation between father and daughter, a letter from Elizabeth to her last stepmother, Katherine Parr, demonstrates her anxieties surrounding Henry. In July 1544, Elizabeth laments that she has been "deprived" of Katherine's "illustrious presence" for a whole year, which she describes as her "exile."⁴⁹ This has allowed for speculation that Elizabeth had been banished from court. She goes on to beseech Katherine to speak to Henry on her behalf:

I understand that your most illustrious highness has not forgotten me every time that you have written to the king's majesty, which would have been for me to do. However, heretofore I have not dared to write to him, for which at present I humbly entreat your most excellent highness that in writing to his majesty you will deign to recommend me to him.⁵⁰

The overall tone of her letter suggests that Elizabeth was fearful of her father and did not want to risk writing to him lest she offend him further. Queens consort had a history of acting as mediators, interceding to reconcile family members, and attempting to heal political rifts. Anne Boleyn attempted to play the mediator with Lady Mary but was hindered by Mary's refusal to recognise her as queen. Katherine Howard, Henry's fifth wife, was somewhat more successful and interceded to save the lives of Sir John Wallop and Thomas Wyatt.⁵¹ Therefore, Elizabeth's beseeching of Katherine to intervene on her behalf is entirely in keeping with a person experiencing royal disfavour, which suggests that her choice of the word "exile" was literal. The cause of her offence is unknown; we might assume that a girl of twelve, who unlikely had any memory of her mother, may have asked questions. This would explain her banishment, as all talk of Anne Boleyn was forbidden. It is not known how, or indeed if, the fate of Anne was explained to Elizabeth as a child, which gives credence to the notion that she made her own enquiries. This is speculative, but clues

⁴⁹ Elizabeth I, Queen of England, *Collected Works*, ed. Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller and Mary Beth Rose (London: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 5.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 5–6.

⁵¹ Gareth Russell, *Young and Damned and Fair* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 183.

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to Elizabeth’s psychology can be deciphered through the analysis of her New Year’s gifts to Henry and Katherine in 1544 and 1545, which indicate that Anne Boleyn was in her thoughts during this period.

In 1544, Elizabeth gifted Katherine a handwritten English translation of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Miroir de l’âme pécheresse* (Miroir or Glasse of the Synneful Soul). Significantly, it is believed that Marguerite gave the original manuscript to Anne Boleyn, which contained a set of meditations on family relationships, touching on adultery, illegitimacy, and incest. God was presented as a just king who was kind to daughters and adulterous wives. The fact that Elizabeth chose to translate a manuscript which dealt with such sensitive topics is suggestive, to say the least. This poignancy is amplified when we consider that she may have worked from a copy which had previously belonged to Anne Boleyn. Some scholars have argued that her divergence from the original text and her mistranslations stemmed from her anxiety and anger at her father’s treatment of his wives, rather than a child’s mistakes.⁵² Elizabeth’s anxiety is further reflected in her New Year’s gift to Henry in 1545. She translated into Latin, French, and Italian a collection of prayers and meditations originally composed by Katherine. She used this opportunity to reinforce her royal lineage by referring six times to the familial relationship between her and Henry.⁵³ Elizabeth’s repeated mention of her bloodline is revealing. It suggests that she felt insecure about her legitimacy and her father’s feelings towards her. To further appeal to Henry, she praised him as a “God on Earth” in the epistolary prologue.⁵⁴

Elizabeth’s flaunting of her paternity continued into adulthood. In 1557, the Venetian ambassador reported that she “prides herself on her father and glories in him.”⁵⁵ Much has been made of this to suggest that Elizabeth idolised Henry. However, there are other motives which can explain Elizabeth’s veneration of her father. Her future rested upon being recognised as Henry’s biological and legitimate child. Given that Henry made Elizabeth a target on the grounds of illegitimacy, her display of her paternity and royal descent during Henry’s lifetime appears to be rooted in her insecurity as a rejected child, in which she seeks approval and reassurance. As she entered adulthood and gradually grew closer in line to the throne, her flaunting and emulating of Henry became a matter of

⁵² Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 18.

⁵³ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 19.

⁵⁴ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 19.

⁵⁵ Maria Perry, *The Word of a Prince: A Life of Elizabeth I from Contemporary Documents* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1999), 80.

dynastic necessity. There was no doubt surrounding the paternity of Mary or Edward; Elizabeth could boast no such security despite her resemblance to Henry. If she distanced herself from her father, she not only risked further disfavour and disinheritance, but she would also have cultivated the doubts surrounding her paternity.

Elizabeth's relationship with Henry VIII was complex and strained, but what of her feelings for Anne? It is believed that there are only two recorded instances where Elizabeth spoke publicly of her mother.⁵⁶ This near silence has been interpreted by some to signify that Anne's death was of no consequence.⁵⁷ In contrast, other scholars have suggested that Elizabeth suffered from the oedipal complex as a result of Anne's fall, which accounts for her adulation of Henry and her silence surrounding her mother.⁵⁸ The remainder of this article will argue against such hypotheses through the analysis of Elizabeth's tributes to Anne, which began during her youth and continued throughout her reign.

The first piece of evidence which points to Elizabeth's positive feelings towards Anne came during her restoration to the succession. It is believed that this event was celebrated in the commission of *The Family of Henry VIII* (Figure 1). This painting was an important piece of dynastic propaganda; for over twenty years Henry had battled to secure the Tudor succession, which by 1544 was somewhat eased by Prince Edward. Henry VIII sits centre stage beneath a canopy of state with his deceased wife, Jane Seymour, seated beside him on his right, and his son standing beside him on his left. On Henry's far left is the Lady Mary and on his far right the Lady Elizabeth. The portrait is multifaceted and ambiguous. On the one hand, it symbolised the security of Henry's dynasty and the unity of his family, on the other, it palpably illustrates the dysfunctional family dynamic of the Tudors. Although Mary and Elizabeth have been restored to the succession, they were still legally illegitimate, reflected in their distance from Henry and their detachment from the family unit. Edward is the future, reflected by Henry's hand resting on his shoulder, while Mary and Elizabeth are wedged in an awkward position between recognised heirs and illegitimate children. The idiosyncratic nature of the painting is further demonstrated through Elizabeth's jewellery. Mary has a simple cross pendant, while Elizabeth is wearing an 'A' pendant. Lettered jewellery was popular in the 1530s and Anne Boleyn was no

⁵⁶ Hibbert, *Elizabeth*, 18.

⁵⁷ Neale, *Elizabeth*, 6–7.

⁵⁸ Taylor-Smith, Larissa J., "Elizabeth I: A Psychological Profile," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 15, No. 1 (1984): 50–53.

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exception to the trend. Alison Weir has claimed that Elizabeth inherited pieces of Anne’s jewellery following her execution, which would explain why she is depicted to be wearing an ‘A’ pendant in the painting.⁵⁹ However, why would she wear a piece of jewellery so palpably connected to her disgraced mother, and why would Henry permit it?



Figure 1. British School, *The Family of Henry VIII*, c.1545, oil on canvas, 144.5 x 355.9. Royal Collection Trust, Hampton Court Palace.

Following Anne’s execution, Henry set about wiping her memory from history; her portraits, badges, and symbols were destroyed, while all mention of her was prohibited. For Henry to have allowed Anne’s memory to be resurrected is in direct opposition to his previous actions. Given that both the artist and commissioner of the painting are doubted, a case could be made to suggest that it was commissioned by a member of the Seymour family. This would explain the strong emphasis on Henry, Edward and Jane, and the distance of Mary and Elizabeth. In this case, a reminder of Elizabeth’s illegitimacy and her disgraced mother would appear appropriate. However, given Henry’s efforts to ensure that Anne was a taboo subject, it is doubtful that any courtier would be so bold to deliberately associate Elizabeth with Anne. Henry had full jurisdiction over his public image, therefore, his approval of this important dynastic painting and its details were necessary. Clues to the inclusion of the “A” pendant can be gathered through the analysis of Mary’s depiction. Mary’s cross pendant is entirely in keeping with her ardent sense of faith and her style throughout her life. In a portrait miniature from c. 1525 and in several of her portraits as

⁵⁹ Alison Weir, *The Lady in The Tower: The Fall of Anne Boleyn* (London: Vintage, 2010), 306.

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queen, she is depicted to wear cross pendants.⁶⁰ Consequently, Mary’s jewellery in the *Family of Henry VIII* is an accurate depiction of her image and the jewellery she favoured. This suggests that Elizabeth’s depiction is also accurate, which makes plausible that she openly wore pieces of Anne’s jewellery. Indeed, Elizabeth was painted by William Scrots in 1546 (Figure 2). Her jewellery in this piece appears comparable to Anne’s famous ‘B’ necklace in an Elizabethan copy of a lost portrait (Figure 3). Both the *Family of Henry VIII* and *Elizabeth I When a Princess* strongly indicate that Elizabeth inherited pieces of Anne’s jewellery and wore them publicly. That Henry allowed Elizabeth to inherit and wear such items is no less perplexing as it is poignant. These examples are evidence of Elizabeth’s early tributes and demonstrate that she was not afraid to publicly associate herself with Anne. Indeed, during Mary I’s reign, Elizabeth publicly addressed the sensitive topic of her parent’s marriage and reinforced her connection to her mother.



**Figure 2. William Scrots, *Elizabeth I When a Princess*, c.1546, oil on panel, 108.5 x 81.8.
Royal Collection Trust, Windsor Castle.**

⁶⁰ See *Queen Mary I*, attributed to Lucas Horenbout (1525), and *Queen Mary I*, by Hans Eworth (1554) in the National Portrait Gallery.

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**Figure 3. Unknown English Artist, *Anne Boleyn*, 16th Century, oil on panel, 543 x 416.
National Portrait Gallery, London.**

Historians have suggested that Elizabeth never uttered a single word of Anne.⁶¹ However, a report from Giovanni Michiel contests this. In 1557 he recounted that Elizabeth was:

Proud and haughty, as although she knows she was born of such a mother, she nevertheless does not consider herself of inferior degree to the Queen, whom she equals in self-esteem; nor does she believe herself less legitimate than her Majesty, alleging in her own favor that her mother would never cohabit with the King unless by way of marriage, with the authority of the Church.⁶²

This report is of particular significance when we consider that Michiel was not referring to a specific occurrence, or a personal discussion with Elizabeth, rather, he is recording what he has heard about the court. He asserts that Elizabeth “alleges in her favour,” meaning “she speaks of this,” not “she said this.” Therefore, Michiel is referring to multiple occasions where Elizabeth spoke out in defence of Anne and her legitimacy.⁶³ He went on to report that:

⁶¹ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 23.

⁶² Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, 80.

⁶³ Hilton, *Elizabeth*, 84.

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even if deceived, having as a subject acted with good faith, the fact cannot have invalidated her mother’s marriage nor her own birth, she having been born under that same faith.⁶⁴

In this passage, Michiel reveals how Elizabeth defended her faith from accusations of heresy. By stating that she was born into the same faith as her mother, Elizabeth tactfully presented herself as a follower of the faith that she was born into, namely the reformed Catholicism of the Henrician settlement. Consequently, she was no heretic, as this reformed faith recognized Henry, not the pope, as head of the English Church. By association, this implied that Henry and Anne’s marriage was valid and Elizabeth legitimate. Importantly, Michiel’s report dates from the penultimate year of the reign of Mary I. Michiel painted Mary as a victim of her past, whose sufferings were rooted in her mother’s usurpation at the behest of “her father’s concubine, that famous Anne Boleyn.”⁶⁵ Mary’s hatred for Anne was total, a hatred which now transferred onto Elizabeth.⁶⁶ As early as November 1553, Simon Renard’s report to Charles V reveals Mary’s fears surrounding Elizabeth’s succession:

As for the Lady Elizabeth, the Queen would scruple to allow her to succeed because of her heretical opinions, illegitimacy and characteristics in which she resembled her mother; and as her mother had caused great trouble in the kingdom, the Queen feared that Elizabeth might do the same, and particularly that she would imitate her mother in being a French partisan.⁶⁷

Anticipating later Catholic objections to Elizabeth’s queenship, Mary used Anne’s infamy to tarnish her sister’s reputation and rights to inherit.⁶⁸ She regarded Elizabeth as “the illegitimate child of a criminal, who was punished as a public strumpet.”⁶⁹ Mary even invoked memories of Anne’s supposed lover, Mark Smeaton, noting that Elizabeth resembled him in appearance and manner.⁷⁰ By no coincidence, Smeaton was the lowest

⁶⁴ Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, 80.

⁶⁵ “Venice: May 1557, 11-15,” in *Calendar of State Papers Relating To English Affairs in the Archives of Venice*, Volume 6, 1555-1558 (hereafter cited as CSP).

⁶⁶ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 216-17.

⁶⁷ “November 1553, 26-30,” in CSP Spain, vol. 11, 387-407.

⁶⁸ Hilton, *Elizabeth*, 84.

⁶⁹ Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, 80.

⁷⁰ Hilton, *Elizabeth: Renaissance Prince*, 84.

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born of those condemned of adultery with Anne. These claims did not gain enough support, indeed, Michiel noted that “everyone” believed Elizabeth resembled Henry more than Mary, meaning that Elizabeth’s parentage was difficult to challenge.⁷¹ The fact that Mary would engage in such methods of slander with no real prospect of her claims being believed, is expressive of the hatred and insecurity which she experienced with Elizabeth as her heir. Indeed, she favoured the claim of Margaret Douglas and ordered Elizabeth to give precedence to her.⁷² Elizabeth had been disinherited by her father and brother; therefore, she would have had every reason to be fearful that Mary would follow suit. Her defence of her parents’ marriage and Anne’s chastity was necessary to defend her rights to the succession. However, to have openly invoked the subject at her sister’s court on multiple occasions was dangerous given Mary’s hatred for Anne; to publicly defend her mother could equally have sabotaged her rights to the succession. Elizabeth must have ardently believed in the legitimacy of her parent’s marriage and Anne’s innocence to have risked further disfavour and disinheritance. Mary had, after all, almost consented to Elizabeth’s execution three years earlier.

On 18 March 1554, a twenty-year-old Elizabeth was escorted to the Tower for suspected involvement in the Wyatt Rebellion. She was imprisoned in the same royal apartments where Anne had been held before her death. Elizabeth became so distraught with the prospect of her execution that she considered asking for a swordsman because she heard it was swifter than the axe.⁷³ As a show of “mercy,” Henry VIII hired a French swordsman to behead Anne on the same grounds. Facing the prospect of death in the same place and manner as her mother must have been a traumatizing event for Elizabeth. Indeed, in November 1566 she remarked: “I stood in danger of my life, my sister was so incensed against me.”⁷⁴ Extraordinarily, she was released on 19 May 1554, the eighteenth anniversary of Anne’s execution.⁷⁵ When Elizabeth arrived at the Tower again on 12 January 1559, it was in triumphant celebration for her coronation. For the first time since her death, Anne was publicly celebrated as a legitimate queen. The first pageant that greeted Elizabeth during her coronation procession took place on Gracechurch Street. This

⁷¹ Perry, *The Word of a Prince*, 80.

⁷² “November 1553, 26–30,” in CSP Spain, vol. 11, 387–407.

⁷³ Borman, *Elizabeth’s Women*, 150.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 96.

⁷⁵ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 35.

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spectacle depicted the Queen's genealogy, portraying Henry VII, Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII, and:

...the right worthy ladie queen Anne, wife to the said king Henry th'eight, & mother to our most sovereign ladie quene Elizabeth that now is, both apparelled with sceptours & diadems, and other furniture due to the state of a king & queene.⁷⁶

Elizabeth was evidently proud of her ancestry and tactfully used it to distance herself from Mary I. She remarked: "Was I not born in the realm? Were my parents born in any foreign country?"⁷⁷ Through her mother, Elizabeth could present herself as entirely English, in contrast to her half-Spanish predecessor. When the spectacle of Elizabeth's ancestry was interpreted to her by a boy in a little chair, she "listened to him most attentively, evincing much satisfaction."⁷⁸ Perhaps her satisfaction derived from seeing Anne depicted in a positive light for the first time in living memory. Indeed, Aloisio Schivenoglia, an Italian in the service of Sir Thomas Tresham, noted that the pageant depicted Anne's heraldic badge, which had been adopted by Elizabeth:

Queen Anne Boleyn, mother of the present one, with a white [falcon] and a gold crown on its head and a gilt sceptre in its right talon, the other resting on a hillock; and surrounded in front of her by small branches of little roses, the coat of arms and device of the said Queen.⁷⁹

Anne's falcon originated from the heraldic crest of the Butlers, earls of Ormonde. Anne's father, Thomas Boleyn, was recognized as the Butler heir in 1529. Anne adopted the badge upon her marriage to Henry but added numerous symbols relating to her newfound royal status. As Schivenoglia noted, the falcon stood on a tree stump, a centuries-old royal badge, which issued an abundance of red and white roses. This was undoubtedly a reference to Anne's fertility in comparison to the barrenness of her predecessor, Katherine of Aragon. Anne's falcon also adorned an imperial crown and carried a sceptre, emblems of her majesty and power bestowed by God.⁸⁰ The badge played an integral part in the

⁷⁶ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 22.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth I, *Collected Works*, 95.

⁷⁸ "Venice: January 1559, 16-31," in CSP vol. 7, 10-24.

⁷⁹ "Venice: January 1559, 16-31," in CSP vol. 7, 10-24.

⁸⁰ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 221-222.

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propaganda and symbolism of Anne’s coronation in 1533, drawing on comparisons between Anne and the Virgin Mary. According to the New Testament, an angel appeared before Mary to herald that the Holy Ghost would visit her and that she would conceive the Son of God.⁸¹ In Western art, this visitation was often presented as a white dove. During Anne’s coronation, this image was metamorphosed into the white falcon descending on the tree stump to symbolize that the child Anne carried was a gift from God.⁸² The badge was a symbol of Anne’s greatest triumph, namely her recognition as Henry’s lawful queen and her motherhood of the long-awaited heir who would bring peace and stability to England. Elizabeth, being a master of iconography and symbolism, would have been aware of the connotations that the badge conveyed. By continuing to use Anne’s falcon during her reign and allowing it to play a prominent role at her coronation, Elizabeth expressed her mother's legitimacy as Henry’s queen and conveyed to the nation that she was the sovereign who would bring peace to England. Far from being ashamed of her mother, Elizabeth strategically used Anne’s symbols to reinforce her legitimacy, her English heritage, and validate her queenship. Poignantly, Elizabeth also used Anne’s motto, “Semper Eadem” (always the same).⁸³

During her lifetime, Anne was vilified as “Nan Bullen that hoore”, while her memory revived recollections of Elizabeth’s illegitimacy.⁸⁴ Even Anne’s supporters needed to detach themselves from their association with her to avoid disfavour after her death.⁸⁵ Recognising the damaging impact that Anne’s legacy could inflict on Elizabeth’s queenship, a bill was passed in 1558-59 called ‘An Acte wherby the Quenes Highnes is restored in bloode to the late Quene Anne her Highnes Mother.’ The bill uncovers Elizabeth’s intent to exonerate her mother’s memory and protect her queenship. It proclaimed that “every Act, Record, Sentence, Matter or Writing whatsoever as is or shall be herunto contrary or repugnant (towards Anne Boleyn), shall be from henceforth clerely and utterly voyde and of none effecte.”⁸⁶ Significantly, the statute also recognised Elizabeth as Anne’s heir. The bill not only allowed people to speak and write positively about Anne for the first time in twenty-three years, but it also outwardly repealed the annulment of Henry and Anne’s

⁸¹ Luke 1:26–38

⁸² Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 222.

⁸³ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 21.

⁸⁴ Henry Ellis, *Original Letters, Illustrative of English History* (London: Thomas Davison, 1825), 44.

⁸⁵ Maria Dowling, ed., *William Latymer’s Cronickille of Anne Bulleyne* (London: Camden Fourth Series, 1990), 30.

⁸⁶ John Strype, *Annals of the Reformation and Establishment of Religion, Volume 1* (London: T. Edlin, 1725), 7.

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marriage. In response, Protestant authors began the arduous task of dismantling the concept of Anne’s whoredom and illegality to construct an idealized image of a saintly queen and paragon of womanhood.

The Protestant veneration of Anne Boleyn can be split into two periods of Elizabeth’s reign, both of which had different objectives. Upon Elizabeth’s accession in 1558, there was uncertainty surrounding which religious policy she would favour. Consequently, early writings championed Anne as the inaugurator of the English Reformation to influence Elizabeth towards a Protestant policy.⁸⁷ In contrast, later works from the 1570s sought to vindicate Henry and Anne’s marriage to protect Elizabeth’s queenship from threats of deposition.

One of the first pieces to champion Anne was John Aylmer’s *An Harborowe for Faithful and Trewe Subiectes*. Published in Strasbourg in April 1559, Aylmer’s work was a critical response to John Knox’s *Monstrous Regiment of Women*, in which Knox condemned female monarchy as an offence “repugnant to nature.”⁸⁸ Aylmer endeavoured to rectify the damage inflicted by Knox, protect Elizabeth’s queenship, and influence her religious settlement. He glorified Anne’s role in the Reformation by declaring: “Was not Quene Anne the mother of this blessed woman, the chief, first, and only cause of banishing the beast of Rome.”⁸⁹ Aylmer progressed to acknowledge the contributions that Henry VIII and Edward VI made to religious reform, but reasoned that the “croppe and roote was the Quene,” for if “God had not gyuen Quene Anne fauour in the sight of the kynge” the English Reformation might never have surfaced.⁹⁰ Aylmer presented Anne as a godly figure, whose triumph in ousting the beast of Rome illustrated God’s capacity to work through women. Indeed, Aylmer questioned if England had ever seen a “greater feate” brought about by a man, in comparison to the Reformation brought about by a woman.⁹¹ Aylmer’s Anne was an instrument of God, who had been blessed with the wisdom to be the sole instigator of English Protestantism. His work is a testament to the Protestant representation of Anne Boleyn, in which her legacy was reconstructed to benefit and influence Elizabeth’s

⁸⁷ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 39.

⁸⁸ John Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women* (Geneva: J. Poullain and A. Rebul, 1558), 9.

⁸⁹ John Aylmer, *An Harborowe for Faithful and Trewe Subiectes Against the Late Blown Blaste, Concerninge the Gouernment of Wemen* (London: John Day, 1559), 9.

⁹⁰ Aylmer, *Harborowe*, 9.

⁹¹ Aylmer, *Harborowe*, 9.

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Protestant monarchy, going so far as to protect female sovereignty. *An Harborowe for Faithful* set the tone for future works on Anne, in which Protestant writers began to subtly exonerate her of the crimes for which she was condemned and tackle the difficult subject of her death.

Similar to Aylmer, William Latymer attempted to influence Elizabeth's religious policies through the memory of her mother. Latymer's *A briefe treatise or cronickille of the moste vertuous ladye Anne Bulleyne late quene of England* was dedicated to Elizabeth and aimed to rehabilitate Anne's memory.⁹² Latymer was an evangelical who had served as one of Anne Boleyn's chaplains. Latymer's desire to rescue Anne's name from vilification was rooted in his loyalty and respect, a point which is evident in his depiction of his former benefactor.⁹³ Latymer tactfully began his chronicle on the date of Anne's recognition as Queen of England, removing the intricacy and scandal which surrounded her rise to the throne. Latymer's Anne Boleyn is the antithesis of the popular view of a capricious and provocative temptress. In contrast, she is presented as a solemn epitome of female virtue who oversees the stern morality of her household, she is charitable, pious, a patron of educational causes, and a protector and advocate for Protestants.⁹⁴ Thus, Anne is the archetypal Protestant queen, an example which Latymer urged Elizabeth to follow; "And in her highnes behalfe wee hope your grace will contynew, and wee truste your highnes shall encrease to the whisshed desire of your moste deare and naturall mother."⁹⁵

The boldest of these early texts came in the form of a letter by Alexander Ales in September 1559. This letter was sent to Elizabeth and indicates some form of financial recompense; therefore, Ales' motives were not exempt from advancement.⁹⁶ However, Ales' letter was the first piece to speak of Anne's downfall since Lancelot de Carle's 1,318-line French poem twenty-three years previously.⁹⁷ Ales was briefly in attendance at Anne's court, and according to him, Catholics manoeuvred her downfall by circulating letters which contained accusations of adultery due to her insistence on sending an embassy to German Lutheran princes. These allegations reached Thomas Cromwell, who despised

⁹² Dowling, *Cronickille*, 30.

⁹³ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 30.

⁹⁴ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 49–57.

⁹⁵ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 65.

⁹⁶ Alexander Ales, "Elizabeth: September 1559, 1–5," in Joseph Stevenson, ed., *Calendar of State Papers Foreign: Elizabeth, Volume 1, 1558–1559*, (London, 1863), pp. 524–542 (hereafter cited as CSP Foreign).

⁹⁷ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 37–8.

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Anne due to her threat of informing the King that he was manipulating religious reform for financial gain.⁹⁸ For Ales, Anne’s death was a consequence of her endorsement and protection of the Reformation. This is an early reference to her martyrdom, which will surface more prominently later in Elizabeth’s reign. For Ales, “true religion in England had its commencement and its end” with Anne. Ales did not credit Henry for the Reformation at all, instead, he praised Anne as its inaugurator and reasoned that “laws hostile to the purer doctrine of the Gospel” appeared as soon as Anne’s power ebbed.⁹⁹ Ales urged Elizabeth to guard herself against Catholics who were responsible for Anne’s death, prompting her to favour Protestant policies and follow in the footsteps of her mother.¹⁰⁰

These texts reveal much about Elizabeth, who according to several historians glorified in her father’s memory and never mentioned her mother.¹⁰¹ If this were the case, it is surprising that these men sought to influence Elizabeth’s religious policies through Anne’s memory. Indeed, Henry’s legacy to the reformation was shunned in comparison to the glorification of Anne’s benefaction to religious reform. If Elizabeth’s sentiments were known to have rested solely with her father, it is doubtful that Henry’s role would have been so dramatically diminished in these documents. Moreover, Aylmer and Latymer had experienced royal disfavour under Mary I, therefore, it is unlikely that they would have risked further alienation if they were uncertain surrounding the reception that would greet their comments. Elizabeth evidently received their works well; Aylmer became Bishop of London in 1577,¹⁰² while Latymer became Elizabeth’s chaplain and clerk of her closet, as well as a canon of Westminster and Dean of Peterborough.¹⁰³ This suggests that their interpretation of Anne was one to which Elizabeth adhered.

Significantly, through the endorsement of Anne, there existed a hidden denunciation of Henry. To be pro-Anne was to be undisputedly pro-Elizabeth. However, this came at a cost. If Anne was a pious paragon of womanhood, then Henry must have played a role in her fall. Ales hints at this, suggesting that her execution was rooted in Henry’s susceptibility to being influenced by Catholics and his desperate need for a son.

⁹⁸ Ales, “Elizabeth: September 1559, 1–5.” in CSP Foreign, 524–542.

⁹⁹ Ales, “Elizabeth: September 1559, 1–5.” in CSP Foreign, 524–542.

¹⁰⁰ Ales, “Elizabeth: September 1559, 1–5.” in CSP Foreign, 524–542.

¹⁰¹ Starkey, *Elizabeth*, 23.

¹⁰² Brett Usher, “Aylmer, John (1520/21–1594), bishop of London,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/935.

¹⁰³ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 29.

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Future writers struggled to grapple with the sensitive subject of Anne’s downfall due to Henry’s culpability. In response, her death was reconstructed into that of a martyr and phoenix, which allowed writers to evade the topic of Henry while giving meaning to her death. These subsequent works also defended the validity of Henry and Anne’s marriage, thus protecting Elizabeth’s legitimacy. In 1570, Pope Pius V released a bull of excommunication against Elizabeth, while conspiracies such as the Ridolfi Plot of 1571 planned to place Mary, Queen of Scots on the English throne. Consequently, there was a growing need to protect Elizabeth’s regime as the divide between Catholics and Protestants widened.

Ulpian Fulwell’s *The Flower of Fame* (1575) was a piece of pro-Tudor propaganda and included verse poetry on a selection of Henry VIII’s queens. Fulwell included two poems devoted to Anne Boleyn in this collection, which reinforced Anne’s legality as Henry’s wife and addressed the controversial subject of her death. Fulwell’s Anne was the epitome of female virtue, whose “heauenly giftes” surpassed all others; her beauty and intellect was a subject celebrated by Fulwell as a feat to which others could only marvel at.¹⁰⁴ Similarly to Aylmer, Fulwell depicted Anne as a godly figure, who came from a “heauenly throne” and was endowed with the knowledge of God’s truth, presenting her as a proclaimer of the will of God. Again, this placed Anne at the forefront of religious enlightenment, features which made her name worthy of a place in “Bibels tome.”¹⁰⁵ Anne’s marriage was not a subject in need of discussion or vindication, her position was simply credited as the king’s “lawfull spowse,” removing the intricacy which surrounded the legality of Henry and Anne’s marriage.¹⁰⁶ The question of Elizabeth’s legitimacy also became a topic which was in no need of justification or debate.

Fulwell skilfully tackled Anne’s death by presenting her as a phoenix, “whose ashes yeldes another byrde.”¹⁰⁷ Consequently, Anne became the sole creator of Elizabeth, inextricably linking mother and daughter. Being a mythical bird that can regenerate from its cinders, the phoenix is associated with immortality and longevity. Fulwell proposed that Anne’s legacy continued to live on through Elizabeth, this legacy being the Reformed Protestantism of the Elizabethan Church. By reconstructing Anne’s image into a phoenix

¹⁰⁴ Ulpian Fulwell, *The Flower of Fame* (London: William Hoskins, 1575), 40.

¹⁰⁵ Fulwell, *Fame*, 40.

¹⁰⁶ Fulwell, *Fame*, 40.

¹⁰⁷ Fulwell, *Fame*, 40.

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who gave life to Elizabeth, Fulwell both recognized and gave significance to her death, without raising the matter of Henry VIII or the causes of Anne’s execution. Fulwell progressed to grieve the loss of Anne in *An Epitaph on the death of Queene Anne Bullayne*, in which her death was presented as a tragedy for England. The mournful readers of Fulwell’s poem are consoled by the comfort of knowing that Anne’s “blessed soule is lodge with God.”¹⁰⁸ Being positive of Anne’s place in heaven, Fulwell obliquely absolved her of any crime, which reinforced Anne’s innocence without exploring her downfall. Once more Fulwell strengthened Anne’s connection to the phoenix, lamenting that if it was not for the “royall Impe” that she left behind, the nation could not have survived its grief.¹⁰⁹

Overall, Fulwell’s Anne is comparable to a religious prophet, whose beauty, intellect and piety reflected the ideal of queenship. By reimagining Anne as a phoenix, Fulwell was by association conferring these qualities onto her daughter. Elizabeth herself strengthened her connection to the phoenix, later being described as “the Phoenix of the worlde.”¹¹⁰ However, although Anne’s death is an integral part of Fulwell’s work, he is overly cautious in comparison to other authors from the 1570s, who were more candid in their approach to Anne’s death.

In contrast to Fulwell, John Bridges refused to sidestep Henry VIII’s part in Anne’s fall. The *Supremacie of Christian Princes*, published in 1573, was a bold piece of Protestant advocacy, which went so far as to endorse the nullity of Henry VIII’s first marriage to Katherine of Aragon. Bridges referred to this union as the Kings “greatest misfortune” and condemned the authority of the Pope in sanctioning the marriage, being “contrarie to Gods expresse lawe,” citing Leviticus 20:21.¹¹¹ Consequently, Anne’s marriage to Henry was valid, given that Katherine was never his legal wife. Unlike other publications, Bridges protected Elizabeth’s legitimacy and attacked Queen Mary’s, which condemned the Catholic regime which had gone before. Indeed, Bridges praised God’s mercy in delivering the realm from Mary’s reign, for if it had continued England was in danger of ruin.¹¹² Therefore, Anne was

¹⁰⁸ Fulwell, *Fame*, 41.

¹⁰⁹ Fulwell, *Fame*, 40.

¹¹⁰ Joe Nigg, *The Phoenix: An Unnatural Biography of a Mythical Beast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 194.

¹¹¹ John Bridges, *The Supremacie of Christian Princes Ouer all Persons Throughout Theor Dominions, in all Causes so Wel Ecclesiastical as Temporall* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1573), 852.

¹¹² Bridges, *Supremacie*, 862.

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Henry's "firste true and lawfull wife," making Elizabeth the King's first legitimate heir.¹¹³ Similarly to Aylmer, Bridges found reason to commemorate Henry and Anne's marriage as a union endowed with God's favour, for it had been "blessed with such a fruit" as Elizabeth. However, Bridges also reflected on Anne's downfall and scrutinized Henry's accountability. For Bridges, Henry was guilty of being too easily swayed by the "sclanderous undermining Papists" who perceived Anne as a danger to Catholicism and schemed to procure her death.¹¹⁴ By presenting Anne as a victim of Catholicism, Bridges reconstructed Anne's downfall into that befitting a martyr; the crimes of which she was accused were no more than malicious gossip, procured by Catholics who sought her destruction out of hatred for the "gospel that she professed."¹¹⁵ Thus, Anne was a "sacrifice to God and a most holy martyr," killed for her religious convictions at the behest of Catholics and by the hand of a husband who was too easily manipulated.¹¹⁶

The godly, charitable, lawful, and innocent Anne Boleyn who emerged from these publications is best embodied in the work of martyrologist John Foxe. Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* chronicled Protestant history and is comprised of four editions, the first being published in 1563 and the last in 1583. Unlike the works discussed above, Foxe's version of Anne was centred on her death, in which he reproduced Anne's scaffold speech to tactfully exhibit her innocence and holy character. For Foxe, Anne's speech "declared no lesse her sincere fayth and trust in Christ, then dyd her quiet modestie vtter forth the goodnesse of the cause and matter."¹¹⁷ Foxe skilfully reproduced Anne's own words to reinforce her innocence, her virtue and pious nature. Moreover, similarly to Bridges, Foxe referred to the causes of Anne's downfall, but reasoned "whatsoever the cause" her "godly" status was beyond condemnation, for her virtues rendered her incapable of committing the crimes of which she was accused. For Foxe, Anne was not merely charitable, chaste, and holy, but gentle and compassionate "toward all men."¹¹⁸ She was a model of virtuous queenship, whose gifts and commitment to the endorsement of true religion rendered the achievements of previous English queens futile by comparison. For Foxe, the principal defence of Anne's innocence was "Gods fauour, in mainteining, preseruing, & aduaunsing

¹¹³ Bridges, *Supremacie*, 853.

¹¹⁴ Bridges, *Supremacie*, 853.

¹¹⁵ Bridges, *Supremacie*, 853.

¹¹⁶ Bridges, *Supremacie*, 853.

¹¹⁷ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1106.

¹¹⁸ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1106.

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the offspring of her body.”¹¹⁹ Elizabeth was not only divine proof of her mother’s irreproachability, but a gleaming symbol of Anne’s benefaction to English Protestantism, transforming her image into that of a martyr and weaving her memory into the fabric of Elizabeth’s monarchy.

These depictions of Anne created an image of an exemplary Protestant queen with a divine purpose. This protected the foundations of English Protestantism, which Catholics argued began with Henry’s illicit lust for an unchaste concubine. In contrast, the Reformation was inaugurated and protected by an instrument of God, giving Protestantism in England a respectful and holy beginning.¹²⁰ Anne’s memory became a tool by which Protestants could protect Elizabeth’s religious policy, her legitimacy, and her claim to the throne. Although these works sought to vindicate Anne, their primary function was to glorify the queen; Elizabeth was the focus of these texts and those who wrote them ultimately sought favour with her. Celebrating and defending Anne became a method by which others could advance themselves, a suggestion that Elizabeth was known to possess no shame in her mother. Indeed, her promotion of these authors suggests that she adhered to their interpretation and believed in Anne’s crucial role to the Reformation and her innocence.

Despite Protestant efforts to rescue Anne’s name from vilification, her memory became the principal method by which Catholics attempted to overthrow Elizabeth and sanction her murder. The Anne Boleyn who emerged from Catholic publications was repugnant to sixteenth-century ideals of women and is arguably more prevalent in the popular memory which surrounds her today. It is important to reflect on these sources to better understand why Elizabeth did not regularly and openly associate herself with her mother. As previously highlighted, it was a matter of dynastic necessity that she allied herself with Henry VIII. As these documents reveal, it was also a matter of necessity that she did not regularly affiliate herself with Anne.

Both Catholics and Protestants regarded Anne Boleyn as the inaugurator of the English Reformation, however, the extent to which Protestants glorified Anne for banishing popery was equalled in Catholic denunciation. As Elizabeth’s reign advanced, the toleration which she afforded English Catholics became thwarted with the accession of Pope Pius V in 1566 and the arrival of Mary, Queen of Scots in 1568. The Northern Rebellion

¹¹⁹ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, 1106.

¹²⁰ Dowling, *Cronickille*, 32.

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of 1569 was the first conspiracy to replace Elizabeth with Mary and was supported with papal money. The quelling of this uprising emphasized the futile position of Catholicism in England, leading the pope to adopt a policy which sought Elizabeth’s downfall by any means necessary. The publication of *Regnans in Excelsis*, which excommunicated and deposed Elizabeth, was a declaration of war against England. This excommunication was renewed under Pope Gregory XIII and Sixtus V, while the Northern Rebellion proved to be the first of many attempts on Elizabeth’s crown which enjoyed papal support.¹²¹ Consequently, England was forced into a defensive position against Catholicism. It became treasonable to refer to Elizabeth as a heretic or usurper, and anyone who returned to the see of Rome would be punished as traitors. This defence became increasingly severe throughout the 1570s and 1580s.¹²² Therefore, Catholic publications emerged which undermined Elizabeth’s rule, with Anne Boleyn featuring as the primary method by which this was achieved. The picture of Anne that emerged from these works became increasingly grotesque and depraved to better attack Elizabeth’s Protestant monarchy.

The first significant work to attack Anne Boleyn was Nicholas Harpsfield’s *A Treatise on the Pretended Divorce Between Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon*, in which Harpsfield defended the legality of Henry’s marriage to Katherine, and thus condemned Henry’s marriage to Anne. Harpsfield challenged certain biblical texts that were used to validate the nullity of Henry and Katherine’s marriage, such as Leviticus, which declared; “if a man shall take his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing...they shall be childless.”¹²³ Harpsfield rejected the hypothesis of supporters of the divorce, who exploited Leviticus to propose that “a man cannot marry his brother’s wife because she is one flesh with his said brother”, which demonstrated the incestuous nature of Henry’s marriage to Katherine.¹²⁴ For Harpsfield, once widowed, this sentiment no longer applied, making the divorce case void.¹²⁵ Thus, the King was a bigamist, whose marriage to Anne was never valid for he was not judicially divorced from Katherine when he took Anne for his wife, rendering any children of the marriage illegitimate. Furthermore, Harpsfield played on Anne’s licentious

¹²¹ Henry M. Shires, “The Conflict between Queen Elizabeth and Roman Catholicism,” *Church History* vol. 16, No. 4, (1947): 226–28.

¹²² Shires, “Conflict,” 230.

¹²³ Leviticus 20:21

¹²⁴ Nicholas Harpsfield, *A Treatise on the Pretended Divorce Between Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon* (London: The Camden Society, 1878), 20.

¹²⁵ Harpsfield, *Treatise*, 20.

reputation, claiming she had carnally known Sir Thomas Wyatt before her marriage to Henry. Harpsfield recounted a conversation between Wyatt and Henry, reportedly heard by Mr. Anthony Bonvise, in which the Tudor poet urged Henry not to take Anne for his wife, as her way of life "hath been so loose and base," which Wyatt could prove due to his own "carnal pleasure with her."¹²⁶ For Harpsfield, this confession should have deterred Henry from Anne, however, his infatuation was such that he could not be discouraged. Harpsfield lamented Henry's "strange and unlucky" misfortune in casting away Katherine "for such an incestuous woman."¹²⁷ Harpsfield's use of language suggests that Henry's desire for Anne was not an ordinary passion, but bewitchment, which reinvigorated memories of Anne's trial where she was described as tempting her alleged lovers into sin.¹²⁸ Harpsfield's Anne Boleyn was conceptualized through memories of her trial; the overtly lascivious and incestuous seductress was an image of Anne that was embedded into the collective memory of many contemporaries. Harpsfield's claims did little to further demonize her. However, his assertions surrounding Anne's base living before her marriage attached new ground to her whoredom and illegality, which later writers, such as Nicholas Sander, exploited to further blacken her character and hint at witchcraft.

It is significant to note that, contrary to popular belief, Anne was not accused of witchcraft at her trial, nor was she explicitly accused of being a witch by her contemporaries.¹²⁹ In the 16th century, there was a fine line between a witch and a seductive woman. A witch used "the aid of the devil" to "distract the minds of men, driving them to madness, insane hatred, and inordinate lusts."¹³⁰ A seductress, or "a woman in the pay of a lover," "encourages with words...and can often captivate you with their eyes," sometimes making use of "spells and incantations."¹³¹ Anne's eyes were often commented upon, Lancelot de Carle wrote:

even more attractive were her eyes, which she knew quite well how to wield appropriately, sometimes keeping them still, other times using them to send a

¹²⁶ Harpsfield, *Treatise*, 253.

¹²⁷ Harpsfield, *Treatise*, 255.

¹²⁸ "Henry VIII: May 1536, 11–15," in L&P vol. 10, 349–371.

¹²⁹ Roland Hui, "Anne of the Wicked Ways: Perceptions of Anne Boleyn as a Witch in History and in Popular Culture," *Parergon* 35 (2018): 102.

¹³⁰ Heinrich Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, trans. Rev. Montague Summers (1486; reprint, London: The Pushkin Press, 1948), 14.

¹³¹ Juan Luis Vives, *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth Century Manual*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), 111.

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message to bear the secret testimony of her heart. And, to be sure, their power was such that many a man yielded to her his obedience.¹³²

Other commentators refused to recognise Anne’s qualities, painting her as a seductress who used “philters” (love potions) and “charms” to drag Henry into “illegitimate love.”¹³³ This, however, did not signify that Anne was a witch. Rather, it attached greater gravity to her apparent sexual misconduct. Much has been made of Henry VIII’s alleged statement in early 1536 to argue that Anne was accused of witchcraft. Shortly before Anne’s final miscarriage, Chapuys reports that Henry confessed in “great secrecy...that he had been seduced and forced into this second marriage by means of sortileges and charms.” However, Chapuys concedes that such a confession from Henry seems “almost incredible.”¹³⁴ Indeed, he received the information third hand and from his description it appears to be mere gossip, which he recognised needed further investigation. Even if Henry did say this, it does not suggest that he believed Anne was guilty of witchcraft, rather, he was playing on sixteenth century ideas of seductive women who resorted to spells and potions. The image of Anne the witch was a posthumous invention.¹³⁵ However, we can see from the parallels between seductiveness and witchcraft how the association was made.

Nicholas Sander is the first author who hints at Anne’s witchcraft in *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, published in 1585. The *Schismatis Anglicani* was the first work to appear in print which provided readers with a comprehensive account of the Reformation from an English Catholic outlook. Demand for the book was high; between 1585 and 1628 the *Schismatis Anglicani* appeared in six Latin editions and was translated into French, Italian, German, Portuguese, Spanish, and Polish. With this extensive demand and its lack of scholastic theology, the *Schismatis Anglicani* was quickly attainable to a general audience, which did much to shape European perspectives of the English Reformation.¹³⁶ Thus, the Anne Boleyn who emerged from this work was taken as literal by many

¹³² JoAnn DellaNeva, *The Story of the Death of Anne Boleyn: A Poem by Lancelot de Carle* (Arizona: ACMRS Press, 2021), 157.

¹³³ “June 1532, 21–30” in CSP Spain, vol. 4, 462–478.

¹³⁴ “January 1536, 21–31” in CSP Spain, vol.5, 11–29.

¹³⁵ Hui, “Anne of the Wicked Ways,” 117.

¹³⁶ Christopher Highley, *A Pestilent and Seditious Book: Nicholas Sander's Schismatis Anglicani and Catholic Histories of the Reformation* (California: Huntington Library, 2006), 150–152.

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throughout Europe, and, as Retha Warnicke suggested, "filtered into the intellectual frameworks of writers," which accounts for many of Sander's assertions being prevalent in the popular culture of Anne today.¹³⁷ As one of his sources, Sander referenced Nicholas Harpsfield, who he referred to as "that great light of all England."¹³⁸ Sander embellished Harpsfield's work to validate his own claims surrounding Anne Boleyn's unchaste lifestyle before her marriage to better attack Elizabeth's rule.¹³⁹ The Anne Boleyn who emerged from Sander's work was an excessively sexualized woman, who had sinned with her father's butler and chaplain, French courtiers, and the King of France before taking up a position at Henry's court.¹⁴⁰ Sander's description of Anne's appearance has entered legend:

Anne Boleyn was rather tall of stature, with black hair, and an oval face of a sallow complexion, as if troubled with jaundice. She had a projecting tooth under the upper lip, and on her right hand six fingers. There was a large wen under her chin, and therefore to hide its ugliness she wore a high dress covering her throat.¹⁴¹

Sander's excessive sexualisation of Anne, combined with his description of her appearance, parallels sixteenth-century ideas of witchcraft. Anne is presented as a sexual threat, rather than a seductress, whose outward deformities reflected her internal criminality, similar to Shakespeare's Richard III. Her supposed sixth finger could have been interpreted by contemporary readers as a "witch's mark," a bodily mark which was used to identify witches. The practice of searching for a witch's mark had been in use in England from the 1570s and was described as a "common token to know all witches by."¹⁴² Although Sander falls short of explicitly accusing Anne of witchcraft, he was certainly pushing the boundaries, which he took to the extreme regarding Anne's paternity and final miscarriage.

Sander claimed that Anne was born during Thomas Boleyn's two-year absence in France. During this period, Henry is alleged to have tempted Anne's mother, Elizabeth

¹³⁷ Retha Warnicke, *Conflicting Rhetoric about Tudor Women: Anne Boleyn* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 47.

¹³⁸ Nicholas Sander, *The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, trans. David Lewis (1585; reprint, London: Burns and Oates, 1877), 201.

¹³⁹ Sander, *Schism*, 29.

¹⁴⁰ Sander, *Schism*, 25–26.

¹⁴¹ Sander, *Schism*, 25.

¹⁴² Darren Oldridge, *The Witchcraft Reader* (Milton: Routledge, 2019), 316.

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Boleyn, into carnal relations. As a result of this union, Anne's biological father was "no other than Henry VIII."¹⁴³ This doubled the incest charge against Anne, making her sexual relationship with her brother appear credible. Therefore, Henry and Anne's marriage was tarnished with illegitimacy and incest, which accounted for Anne's final miscarriage of a "shapeless mass of flesh."¹⁴⁴ For contemporaries, the birth of a malformed foetus signalled divine punishment for ungodly sexual acts. Sander's double charge of incest attached new weight to Anne's deviant sexual nature, but also emphasized the contravention of religious endogamy, making Anne the architect of heresy in England.¹⁴⁵

Sander's principal aim was to depict the reformation in the most abhorrent light and to tarnish Elizabeth's queenship.¹⁴⁶ By presenting Anne as a monstrous figure of deformity and sexual depravity, Sander condemned the foundations of English Protestantism, for, in parallel with Protestants, he believed that without Anne the question of reform "might have been left."¹⁴⁷ Similarly to Protestant authors who invoked Anne's memory to give Protestantism a respectful pedigree in England, Sander infiltrated Anne's benefaction to the Reformation in order to tarnish it, which demonstrates the intricacy of Anne's legacy and the wider religious controversies of the age.

Sander's attacks were designed to taint Elizabeth's bloodline and bring her queenship into doubt. Sander identified Anne's body as a grotesque reproductive system, which produced deformed children as a result of her sexual corruption, incest, and heresy.¹⁴⁸ Thus, Anne's body personified the Anglican schism, which, through illicit copulation with her own father, produced an incestuous Protestant anomaly, whose unlawful reign plunged England into the "hour of Satan."¹⁴⁹ For Sander, Elizabeth was a "child born in adultery and worse, and therefore unworthy of the crown."¹⁵⁰ Sander's slants against Anne quickly found their way into far-reaching documents during the Spanish Armada in 1588. These documents were created to incite rebellion and depose Elizabeth, a testament to how Anne's memory was used against her on a global scale.

¹⁴³ Sander, *Schism*, 24.

¹⁴⁴ Sander, *Schism*, 132.

¹⁴⁵ Highley, "Reformation," 159.

¹⁴⁶ Sander, *Schism*, xxiii.

¹⁴⁷ Sander, *Schism*, 18.

¹⁴⁸ Highley, "Reformation," 159.

¹⁴⁹ Sander, *Schism*, 233.

¹⁵⁰ Sander, *Schism*, 231.

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In support of the Spanish Armada, Pope Sixtus V renewed the *Regnans in Excelsis*. In *A Declaration of the Sentence and Deposition of Elizabeth*, all English and Irish subjects were released from their obedience to her, while Elizabeth was excommunicated and damned as an enemy of God. The sentence proclaimed Elizabeth “unworthy to live.” As well as relinquishing their allegiance to Elizabeth, her subjects were urged to “concurr by all meanes possible to her chastisement.”¹⁵¹ Consequently, the Pope publicly supported and encouraged regicide. The Vatican attempted to achieve this by listing Elizabeth’s inadequacies as a monarch. Anne Boleyn featured as the second cause of Elizabeth’s excommunication, the first being her heresy, which highlights the significance of Anne’s memory in condemning the rule of her daughter. The declaration played on Sander’s double charge of incest, describing Elizabeth as a “Bastard, conceyued and borne by incestuous adultery.”¹⁵² Anne’s memory served as a useful tool in justifying Elizabeth’s deposition and assassination; simply being the daughter of Anne Boleyn signalled that Elizabeth was deserving of death to zealous Catholics.

However, the need to incite memories of the unpopular Anne also demonstrates the extent to which Catholicism had declined in England by the 1580s. Evidence from the ecclesiastical courts suggests that by the early 1570s lay dedication to most forms of Catholic worship had declined in many parts of England, while the influx of Catholic priests did little to prevent gentry families from converting to Protestantism. Reports suggest that by the mid-1580s, individuals and the Catholic gentry were converting to Protestantism at a substantial rate, while popular Catholicism effectively perished.¹⁵³ Support in England for the Armada was minimal; the majority of lay Catholics remained devoted to Elizabeth and opposed the power of the pope in sanctioning regicide.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the Armada needed all of the support it could raise, which is further demonstrated by the work of William Allen, in which Anne Boleyn was again utilized as a prominent force against Elizabeth’s rule.

William Allen’s *An admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland*, devised in 1588, supported the Pope’s sentence, urging all English Catholics to relinquish their loyalty to Elizabeth and support the Spanish fleet. The work was intended for distribution

¹⁵¹ Sixtus V, *A Declaration of the Sentence and Deposition of Elizabeth, the Vsurper and Pretensed Queen of Englande* (Antwerp: A. Conincx, 1588).

¹⁵² Sixtus V, *Deposition*.

¹⁵³ Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and Religion, 1558-1603* (London: Routledge, 1994), 52–55.

¹⁵⁴ Doran, *Religion*, 57.

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by Alexander Farnese, Duke of Parma upon his arrival in England.¹⁵⁵ Similarly to the *Deposition of Elizabeth*, Allen listed Elizabeth’s defects as monarch, the first deficiency being her parentage. Similarly with Sander, Allen referred to Henry and Anne’s union as an “incestuous copulation,” re-emphasizing Henry’s supposed carnal knowledge of Elizabeth Boleyn, resulting in the king’s paternity of Anne.¹⁵⁶ Throughout the work, Henry is cited as Elizabeth’s “supposed father,” a reference to Anne’s wanton reputation and consequent doubts surrounding Elizabeth’s paternity.¹⁵⁷ Thus, Allen palpably illustrated Elizabeth’s illegitimacy; she is either the product of an incestuous and unlawful union between a father and his daughter or the offspring of one of Anne’s countless lovers. Furthermore, dissimilarly to the *Deposition of Elizabeth*, Allen returned to the subject of Anne, reiterating Elizabeth’s bastardy and reminding readers of Anne’s execution for “aduoutery, treason, heresie and incest...with her owne naturall brother.”¹⁵⁸

These Catholic depictions of Anne Boleyn were devised to denounce Elizabeth and the foundations of English Protestantism; the precise reasons why Protestant authors glorified Anne were the causes of Catholic condemnation. By playing on memories of Anne’s trial, Catholic authors were effortlessly equipped with destructive material which could be exaggerated to paint a drastically more depraved image. Moreover, given Anne’s extensive unpopularity, these embellished images of corruption, deformity and promiscuity would have been accepted by resentful readers who wanted to believe the worst. Indeed, the Vatican and fervent Catholics adhered to the most absurd of Sander’s claims. Thus, Anne Boleyn’s memory became the most prominent method by which Catholics could condemn Elizabeth’s monarchy; some fifty-two years after Anne’s death, her memory served as justification for the Spanish Armada, while the Pope believed Elizabeth deserved assassination for simply being the daughter of Anne Boleyn. Given the severity of Anne’s destructive legacy, it was politically astute for Elizabeth to limit the extent to which she personally defended and associated herself with her mother. However, as we have seen with Elizabeth’s use of Anne’s badge and motto, and her endorsement of Protestant scholars who defended Anne’s memory, she did not altogether distance herself from Anne’s memory.

¹⁵⁵ Colin Martin and Geoffrey Parker, *The Spanish Armada* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 27.

¹⁵⁶ William Allen, *An admonition to the nobility and people of England and Ireland* (Antwerp: A. Coninncx, 1588), 9.

¹⁵⁷ Allen, *admonition*, 11.

¹⁵⁸ Allen, *admonition*, 11.

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This article has examined Anne Boleyn’s complex legacy by highlighting how her memory could be used to both condemn and endorse Elizabeth’s queenship. It has also pinpointed moments throughout Elizabeth’s life in which she defended her parents’ marriage, as well as Anne’s legitimacy and innocence. However, a case could be made to suggest that Elizabeth only defended Anne when it concerned her legitimacy and right to rule, implying that her motives were self-interested and devoid of any genuine feelings of affection. Therefore, the remainder of this article will analyse alternative pieces of evidence which are devoid of self-interest to uncover Elizabeth’s private feelings.

Elizabeth’s relationships with members of her paternal family have been the subject of much scholarly attention. In contrast, her relationships with her Boleyn relatives have not been discussed as thoroughly. Unlike members of her father’s family, Elizabeth’s maternal relatives did not pose a significant threat as alternative monarchs. This allowed for close and multigenerational relationships with her Boleyn relatives to develop.

Anne’s sister, Mary Boleyn, had been a mistress of Henry VIII during her marriage to William Carey. She and William had two children, Katherine Carey, born c. 1524, and Henry Carey, born in 1526. Katherine and Henry were Elizabeth’s maternal first cousins, and perhaps her half-siblings. Some contemporaries believed that Henry Carey was fathered by the King.¹⁵⁹ The first pieces of evidence relating to the bond between the Carey cousins and Elizabeth are the appointment of Henry as a gentleman to Elizabeth’s household in 1554, and a letter from Elizabeth to Katherine in 1553. This letter was written following Katherine’s religious exile from Marian England. Elizabeth signed herself as “cor rotto,” meaning ‘broken heart,’ conveying the warmth of their familial attachment and Elizabeth’s sorrow at Katherine’s departure from England.¹⁶⁰ Once queen, the bond between Elizabeth and her cousins became plainly apparent. Soon after Elizabeth’s accession, she knighted Henry and bestowed upon him the title of Baron Hunsdon, meanwhile, Katherine was made Chief Lady of the Bedchamber.¹⁶¹ The depth of Elizabeth’s sentiment can be seen in a letter she wrote to Henry after he led a military force which suppressed the rebellion of the northern earls in 1570. Elizabeth writes of her joy that Henry had been the instrument of her glory, which pleased her more than the victory itself.

¹⁵⁹ “Henry VIII: April 1535, 11–20,” in L&P vol. 8, 202–218.

¹⁶⁰ Kristin Bundesen, “Lousy with Cousins: Elizabeth I’s Family at Court,” in *The Rituals and Rhetoric of Queenship: Medieval to Early Modern*, ed. Liz Oakley-Brown and Louise J. Wilkinson (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009), 80–83.

¹⁶¹ Bundesen, “Cousins,” 80–83.

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Moreover, the language Elizabeth used was informal and affectionate; she referred to Henry as “my Harry” and signed herself off as “Your loving kinswoman.”¹⁶² The many promotions Elizabeth granted Henry throughout her reign led others to criticize and reflect upon the reasons for their close bond. In a letter from Francis Walsingham to William Davison, Walsingham objectively reported that Henry’s “propinquyte in blood doothe somewhat preveyle.”¹⁶³ For Walsingham, Henry Carey was favoured due to his maternal connection with Elizabeth. This favour was later conferred onto Henry’s children. Henry’s daughter, Catherine Carey, Countess of Nottingham, was made First Lady of the Bedchamber in 1572 and died shortly before Elizabeth in 1603. Contemporaries noted that her grief at the loss of her second cousin may have hastened Elizabeth’s death just weeks later.¹⁶⁴

Elizabeth’s affection for her Carey cousins was also conveyed to lesser Boleyn relatives, who were promoted far beyond their stations due to their familial connection with Anne Boleyn. Anne’s first cousin, Sir Richard Sackville, became a privy councillor upon Elizabeth’s accession despite his previous relatively small office of under-treasurer of the exchequer. Moreover, following Sackville’s death, his son Thomas was made Baron of Buckhurst, a great advancement granted only because of his Boleyn connection.¹⁶⁵

Elizabeth’s flurry of favours did not solely apply to those who were related to Anne, but also to those who had been associated with her during her lifetime, such as Matthew Parker, who was Anne’s chaplain. Elizabeth appointed Parker her first Archbishop of Canterbury in 1559, which he only consented to in consideration of his former relationship with Anne.¹⁶⁶ Significantly, Elizabeth also brought Henry Norris, 1st Baron Norreys into her trusted circle. Norris was the son of Henry Norris, who was one of five men executed for adultery with Anne Boleyn. Upon her accession, Elizabeth removed the restrictions on his inheritance incurred due to his father’s execution.¹⁶⁷ If Elizabeth had any reservations surrounding her mother’s innocence, it is unlikely that she would have befriended the son

¹⁶² Bundesen, “Cousins,” 82.

¹⁶³ “Elizabeth: July 1584,” in *Calendar of State Papers, Scotland: Volume 7, 1584-85*, ed. William K. Boyd, 215–245 (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1913).

¹⁶⁴ Bundesen, “Cousins,” 82.

¹⁶⁵ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 20.

¹⁶⁶ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 20.

¹⁶⁷ Susan Doran, “Norris, Henry, first Baron Norris (c. 1525-1601), courtier and diplomat,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/20272.

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of a traitor who had been convicted for an illicit affair with Anne. This recognition did not go unnoticed amongst contemporaries; several other men drew Elizabeth’s awareness to their ties with Anne in hope of advancement. William Bercher, a Cambridge scholar who had benefitted from Anne’s support, wrote in a brazen appeal for promotion; “And so deryvyng the course of my days, from a renomyd quene, the mother, to a moste exelent quene the daughter, I maye in the one, honour the memory of the other.”¹⁶⁸ Elizabeth’s close relationships with her Boleyn relatives and her promotion of Boleyn supporters indicate that she made no concerted effort to distance herself from her Boleyn heritage. On the contrary, she found comfort in her maternal family.

The private depth of Elizabeth’s sentiments can be seen in the Chequers Ring. Commissioned in c. 1575, this locket ring contains two miniature portraits, one of Elizabeth and one of Anne Boleyn. There has been much speculation surrounding the identity of the woman presumed to be Anne in this piece. Some scholars have challenged the assumption that the unknown sitter is Anne, suggesting that the miniature is Elizabeth’s stepmother, Katherine Parr.¹⁶⁹ However, the sitter bears a striking likeness to contemporary descriptions of Anne and is dressed in the French fashion, a style associated with Anne Boleyn. Significantly, there is an image of a phoenix painted in enamel on the underside of the bezel. The phoenix was a symbol of the Seymour family, which has traditionally complicated the identification of the other woman as Anne. However, as this article has highlighted, the 1570s was a period of Protestant veneration towards Anne, in which she was depicted as a phoenix who created Elizabeth from her ashes.¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth closely aligned herself with the symbolism of the phoenix bird during this period, as seen in the *Phoenix Portrait* associated to Nicholas Hilliard (Figure 4) and the *Phoenix Jewel* (Figure 5).

¹⁶⁸ Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, 20.

¹⁶⁹ Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 109.

¹⁷⁰ Fulwell, *Fame*, 41.

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Figure 4. Nicholas Hilliard, *Phoenix Portrait*, Queen Elizabeth I, c. 1575, oil on panel, 780 x 610. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Given the connections between Anne, Elizabeth, and the phoenix during the 1570s, the theory that the miniature portrays Anne becomes convincing. This likelihood is further apparent when we consider the position of the miniatures, and the jewels attached to them. Elizabeth’s portrait is on the leaf of the jewel inset with a ruby, whereas Anne’s image is on the shank of the jewel inset with a diamond. When the locket ring is opened, Elizabeth’s image features below the other portrait, which could be a sign of deference. Indeed, diamonds were considered superior to rubies, meaning that the woman featured above Elizabeth is adorned in superior jewels, signifying that the sitter herself was superior. Considering the Protestant portrayal of Anne, the only woman who could have been considered superior to Elizabeth was her mother. Therefore, it is credible that Elizabeth believed in the symbolic relationship that she shared with Anne as expressed by Protestant authors, namely, that she had risen miraculously from the flames of her mother’s ashes.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Ives, *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*, 373.

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Figure 5. Unknown, *Phoenix Jewel*, c. 1570-1580, gold and enamel, 60 x 44. The British Museum, London.

Anne Boleyn’s legacy in Elizabethan England was multifaceted and contentious. On the one hand, her memory could be used to give the English Reformation a respectful pedigree, on the other, it could be infiltrated to endorse regicide. Elizabeth understood this intricacy, and yet, she did not shy away from it. Conscious of Anne’s innocence, Elizabeth cautiously and tactfully contributed to the rehabilitation of her mother’s name. From the onset of her reign, she made her position known through her actions, rather than her words. By overturning any act or sentence against Anne, to including her image and symbols during her coronation festivities, Elizabeth ensured that her mother was no longer a taboo subject. These actions allowed Protestant authors to publicly defend Anne in a way that Elizabeth could not, weaving her memory into the fabric of Elizabeth’s Protestant monarchy. What becomes clear from their works is that Anne and Elizabeth were seen as one and the same; Anne was a phoenix and from her cinders rose Elizabeth, whose duty was to ensure the continuation of Anne’s legacy to religious reform. As one contemporary noted, “Anne’s advent was a blessing from God as she was the mother of the Phoenix, Elizabeth.”¹⁷² Rather than airbrushing her mother from her memory, Elizabeth’s actions indicate that she adhered to this symbolic understanding of their relationship. From

¹⁷² M. H. Cole, “Maternal Memory: Elizabeth Tudor’s Anne Boleyn,” *Explorations in Renaissance Culture* 30, no. 1 (2004), 6.

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adopting Anne’s falcon badge and using her motto, to keeping a locket ring with a portrait of herself and Anne inset with an image of a phoenix, Elizabeth allied herself with the memory of her mother. Anne’s memory was a constant throughout Elizabeth’s reign and more prevalent to Elizabeth’s monarchy, and to Elizabeth personally, than she has ever been given credit for.

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