Privilege, Power, and Patronage: Examining the Lives and Afterlives of Three Tudor Noblewomen

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PRIVILEGE, POWER, AND PATRONAGE:
EXAMINING THE LIVES AND AFTERLIVES OF
THREE TUDOR NOBLEWOMEN

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University
and Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

The Department of History

by

Caroline Elizabeth Armbruster
B.A., Southeastern Louisiana University, 2010
M.A., Louisiana State University, 2013
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For Andrew and Emilia.
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation uses the lives of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk; Anne Stanhope, Duchess of Somerset; and Jane Guildford, Duchess of Northumberland to examine various aspects of their experiences as noblewomen and as members of privileged family groups. By focusing on these three women, whose lives and careers spanned eight decades, this dissertation demonstrates the centrality of such women to Tudor politics. Catherine, Anne, and Jane were born into powerful, landowning families. Their successful marriages allowed them to climb the ranks of the Tudor aristocracy and paved the way for their entry into the Tudor political arena. They served as ladies-in-waiting to Henry VIII’s queens and turned their years of court service into careers. All three women used their positions and influence to further the interests of their family and their faith, particularly as supporters of religious reform during the early years of the English Reformation. They also drew upon personal and political connections – largely built at court – in order to protect their families’ interests at key moments throughout their lives. This dissertation explores the myriad ways in which noblewomen like Catherine, Anne, and Jane could construct and utilize their networks and embrace their roles as public, political actors and as essential figures within influential families.

By participating publicly in the Tudor political arena, Catherine, Anne, and Jane acquired enduring historical reputations based more in myth than reality. Anne and Jane fell prey to both contemporary and later criticism of their perceived use of power and influence over their husbands during and after the reign of Edward VI. In contrast, Catherine’s decision to become a religious exile under Mary I established her own reputation as a Protestant heroine. This dissertation examines the origins and impact of these reputations, which have persisted within historical and literary accounts through the centuries. In doing so, it identifies the ways in which
women have been stereotyped, both in the early modern era and in our own. While Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s lives were unique in many respects, they can be used to determine many universal characteristics among Tudor aristocratic women.
INTRODUCTION

On July 12, 1543, the thirty-year-old Catherine Parr, Lady Latimer was escorted to the “Queen’s Privy Closet” at Hampton Court Palace for her wedding to the cantankerous and corpulent Henry VIII – a man twenty-two years her senior. Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury had issued the marriage license two days earlier, but Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester conducted the service on that warm summer’s day. During the ceremony, Henry and Catherine made the traditional pledges to one another. The king, taking his bride’s right hand, repeated after the bishop, “I, Henry, take thee, Catherine, to my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us depart, and thereto I plight thee my troth.” Catherine likewise repeated, “I, Catherine, take thee, Henry, to my wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to be [bonny] and buxom in bed and at board, till death us depart, and thereto I plight thee my troth.” The king then placed the wedding ring on Catherine’s finger, and his sixth and final marriage was solemnized.¹

Like most of Henry’s weddings, this one was a small and intimate affair. The king chose eleven men to witness his nuptials. Most of them were long-standing courtiers and members of his Privy Chamber. They included his former brother-in-law, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford and his new brother-in-law, Sir William Herbert. The women who attended the ceremony primarily included members of the bride and groom’s family – the king’s daughters, Mary and Elizabeth; his niece, Margaret Douglas; and Catherine Parr’s sister, Anne, Lady Herbert. In

addition to these four close relations, three other women were invited to witness the wedding – Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk; Anne Stanhope, Countess of Hertford; and Jane Guildford, Viscountess Lisle. All three were experienced ladies-in-waiting and, upon Catherine Parr’s royal marriage, they became great ladies of her household. Catherine, Anne, and Jane were also married to influential noblemen whose personal and political connections to the king had established them as key members of his government and court. Through their marriages, these three women were also distant relations of the king. Catherine’s husband, Charles Brandon, had been married to Henry’s sister, Mary, and her step-daughters were therefore nieces of the king. Anne’s husband, Edward Seymour, was brother to Henry’s third wife, Jane Seymour, and therefore maternal uncle to the king’s son and heir. Jane’s husband, John Dudley, was the step-son of the deceased Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle – an illegitimate son of Henry VIII’s maternal grandfather, Edward IV. While these family ties may seem distant and convoluted to the modern eye, they counted for much in the minds of those living in the sixteenth century.

As ladies of the royal court and members of elite family groups, Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were some of the most privileged women living in Henry VIII’s England. Their presence at the king’s wedding in 1543 – an event with only eighteen witnesses in attendance – signifies their place amongst the highest-ranking individuals in the kingdom. Their social rank and proximity to the royal family were not the only characteristics that tied these three women together. Catherine, Anne, and Jane all entered into marriages that – through a combination of utility, affection, and understanding – were a key feature of their social and political success. Catherine’s first husband, Charles Brandon was one of Henry VIII’s oldest and closest confidants. Anne Stanhope’s first husband, Edward Seymour, was a rising star at Henry’s court – his political career skyrocketed after his sister, Jane, married the king in 1536.
The career of Jane Guildford’s husband, John Dudley, was similarly on the rise throughout Henry VIII’s reign, though he had had to work to recover from the disgrace of his father’s execution for treason in 1509. Their marriages to these men, which functioned as both political and domestic partnerships, allowed them to climb the ranks of the Tudor aristocracy and paved the way for their entry into the Tudor political arena. Like so many of their contemporaries, Catherine, Anne, and Jane used their position and influence to further the interests of their family and their faith. Most notably, all three women were prominent supporters of religious reform during the early, turbulent years of the English Reformation. Their adherence to the reformist cause brought them into the center of the precarious factional infighting of the royal court during the mid-1540s. This commitment to reform eventually caused each of them to abandon the Catholicism of their birth in order to join the growing ranks of the Protestant faith. They used their positions as ladies of the court and high-ranking aristocratic women to promote reform, both before and after the Church of England’s adoption of a determinedly Protestant doctrine under Edward VI. After Henry VIII’s death, each of the three women established a reputation as a Protestant patron and a figure at the center of political events. Throughout the unpredictable years of the 1550s, Catherine, Anne, and Jane also experienced moments of crisis, in which political events threatened the position and safety of their families. All three women drew upon personal and political connections – largely built at court – in order to protect their families’ interests. This dissertation explores the myriad ways in which noblewomen like Catherine, Anne, and Jane could construct and utilize their networks and embrace their roles as essential figures within influential families.

The similarities between Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford are not confined to the broad outlines of their personal and political lives. All three women garnered
enduring historical reputations based more in myth than reality. Anne and Jane – whose husbands acquired significant political power during Edward VI’s reign – fell prey to both contemporary and later criticism of their perceived use of power and influence. Anne Stanhope was blamed for encouraging her husband, Edward Seymour to execute his own brother, Thomas, after the latter’s failed coup in 1549. She was also accused of excessive pride and arrogance, which supposedly brought her into conflict with her erstwhile mistress, the Queen Dowager Catherine Parr. Most historians, with few exceptions, have stuck to this representation of Anne, even going as far as to argue that it was her self-importance and negative influence that led to her husband’s own downfall. Jane Guildford’s husband, John Dudley, was actually largely responsible for Edward Seymour’s political ruin, and he replaced his former ally as the leader of the young Edward VI’s government. In 1553, after the death of Edward VI, John Dudley worked to place his daughter-in-law, the Protestant Lady Jane Grey, on the throne instead of the king’s Catholic step-sister, Mary I. After the attempted coup collapsed, Lady Jane herself placed much of the blame on and directed much of her ire at her scheming and ambitious mother-in-law, Jane Guildford. After the reign of Mary I commenced and her government began to conduct religious persecutions against Protestants, Catherine Willoughby chose to flee into exile on the Continent. This decision, influenced by a variety of factors, established Catherine’s reputation, both during and after her lifetime, as a Protestant heroine. This was largely due to her inclusion in John Foxe’s bestselling martyrlogy, *Acts and Monuments*, more popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*. This dissertation examines the origins and overall impact of each of these reputations, which have persisted in common patterns within historical and literary accounts through the centuries, and reframe them within their historical contexts. In doing so, it provides commentary
on the ways in which women have been stereotyped, both in the early modern era and in our own.

Contemporaries clearly viewed women of Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s status as capable of an enormous amount of influence over both their families and political events. Historians have offered a wide range of arguments on this subject. Some have contended that such women had very little, if any, influence over their husband’s political actions. For example, Retha Warnicke has argued specifically that Anne Stanhope “did not have great influence over public policy” in order to support her conclusion that the Duchess of Somerset did not force her husband to execute his brother.2 Evelyn Read, one of Catherine Willoughby’s biographers, asserts that Tudor noblewomen “were retiring and quiet people, perhaps beautiful and charming, but quite simply shadowy backgrounds for their husbands, and their sole purpose in life was to run their homes, to bear and rear their children and to keep themselves in the background.” However, she views her subject, the Duchess of Suffolk, as “quite different” and an exception to the rule.3 Other scholars have almost entirely neglected the subject of Tudor women in politics. David Loades’s seminal work, The Tudor Court, provides essential insight into the origins, evolution, and impact of the royal court as an institution. He also examines its function as a political arena, looking specifically at the monarch’s role within the personal politics of the Tudor era. Loades illuminates the ways in which the Tudor monarchy was inherently personal, and how this made the royal court the “immediate context” of politics. Yet he does not spend much time discussing the political participation of women at the royal court, aside from the reigns of the two Tudor

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queens regnant – Mary and Elizabeth. David Starkey’s *The English Court* does briefly address women’s roles, but states firmly that women, including those of the queen’s Privy Chamber, had very little real political function at the royal court.

Many historians have more recently worked to assess the lives and significance of female courtiers – especially women of the queen’s Privy Chamber. These authors have argued that the political actions of such women deserve greater attention from scholars. Many of them have focused on women of Mary and Elizabeth’s Privy Chambers. In “Politics in the Elizabethan Privy Chamber: Lady Mary Sidney and Kat Ashley,” Natalie Mears contends that scholars have ignored the Elizabethan Privy Chamber to their detriment, focusing entirely too much attention on more formal political institutions, like the Privy Council. In her dissertation, “The Household of Queen Katherine Parr,” Dakota Hamilton examines the life and experiences of Henry VIII’s sixth and final queen in order to highlight the circumstances of women at the early Tudor court more generally. Hamilton argues that neither Catherine Parr nor the women of her Privy Chamber had any significant political influence in the 1540s, but that they did have real influence over the pace and direction of religious reform. Some historians have also examined the ways in which aristocratic women and female courtiers functioned within and contributed to their elite family groups. For example, Nicola Clark’s new study on the women of the Howard

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family illuminates the strength of such women’s kinship networks and their roles in establishing and maintaining family dynasties.  

Building on the work of historians of the Tudor court, Barbara Harris has entirely expanded the concept of politics in the Tudor era and challenged the traditional understanding of power and influence. Importantly, Harris asserts that women – especially women at the royal court – could exercise a significant amount of influence independently of their husbands. Harris’s work is foundational for this dissertation, which acknowledges the many ways – formal and informal – that women could take political action. Following Harris’s example, James Daybell has also contested the exclusion of women in studies of the Tudor political arena. He argues that the personal nature of early modern politics meant precisely that women could and did have both informal and formal political functions. By examining their activity in non-institutional roles, such as the building of networks, the formation of marital alliances, and the distribution of patronage, women’s history could not only be added on to traditional narratives of Tudor political history – it could challenge them. Margaret P. Hannay has also established that Tudor women often utilized religious discourse, primarily as patrons, translators, and writers, in order to express their own personal and political opinions.

While Barbara Harris has emphasized certain aristocratic women’s ability to exercise influence independently of their spouses, this study argues that some women were better able to work with their husbands as political partners. As wives of leading courtiers and women of the

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queen’s Privy Chamber, Catherine, Anne, and Jane had far more access to court patronage than most of their female contemporaries. This dissertation proposes that all three women were able to work with their husbands to promote their personal, familial, and religious interests. Such noblewomen’s ability to do so was dependent upon the nature of their marriages and whether or not their beliefs and opinions coincided with that of their spouses. Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford certainly met these criteria. Both had amicable marriages and husbands with a devotion to religious reform. Catherine Willoughby and her husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, also had a harmonious relationship. Although the duke was less interested in reform, his loyalty to the king and desire to remain politically powerful kept him on good terms with the reformers. Married couples like these made the reformist faction at court in the latter years of Henry VIII’s reign a formidable political entity. This dissertation will assess more closely the impact of these marriage partnerships on politics and religion in the 1540s and into the 1550s.

Although not strictly biographical in nature, this study will use the basic outlines of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford’s lives to discuss various aspects of their experiences as Tudor noblewomen and as members of privileged family groups. Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s experiences were unique in many respects, yet their lives can be used to determine many universal characteristics among Tudor noblewomen. By tracing the personal and public lives of these three women, this dissertation shows that Tudor noblewomen could and did function in a variety of roles in order to promote their own interests, as well as those of their families, and to support their chosen religion. In order to accomplish their aims, these women often functioned as public, political actors. Both contemporary observers and later commentators judged such women based on these actions, and their real and perceived ability to influence events often provoked strong reactions from those around them.
Biographies and microhistories – in addition to being inherently popular and readable – provide an important framework from which to examine a historical subject. In Renegade Women: Gender, Identity, and Boundaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean, Eric Dursteler offers an intriguing discussion on the question of “exceptionality and representativity” when examining a topic through the lens of an individual’s perspective. He states that “the narrow focus of microbiographical sketches can reveal facets of a time and place that remain obscured when surveyed from a panoramic societal viewpoint.” He also finds that the experiences of the individual “reveal a much wider reality than just the slender details of their own admittedly engaging lives.” Similarly, Carole Levin has highlighted the importance of “cultural biographies,” or works that focus on “the interplay between an important historical figure and the aspects of culture that shaped that figure’s life.” This dissertation takes inspiration from these approaches. It intends to survey the lives of three women, using a thematic – rather than a strictly chronological – approach. This work hopes to contribute new perspectives to the study of early modern women, marriage, politics, and religion, as well as the subject of historical memory.

Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were exact contemporaries whose lives followed a similar pattern. Each woman was born into a prominent family, served as a lady-in-waiting at the royal court, married well, climbed the ranks of the nobility, and experienced periods of significant influence as well as political turmoil. Of the three women, Catherine Willoughby has received the most scholarly attention. Lady Cecilie Goff published the first complete scholarly biography of Catherine, titled A Woman of the Tudor Age, in 1930. Evelyn Read’s My Lady Suffolk: A Portrait of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk

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followed in 1963. Most recently, David Baldwin has published the comprehensive and readable

*Henry VIII’s Last Love: The Extraordinary Life of Katherine Willoughby, Lady-in-Waiting to the Tudors.* Other studies of Catherine Willoughby have focused on her work as a religious reformer and patron, as well as Protestant exile under Mary I’s reign. The most substantial of these is Melissa Franklin-Harkrider’s *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England.*

While both Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford make occasional appearances in studies of their husbands, there are no comprehensive biographies of either woman. In *Wicked Women of Tudor England*, Retha Warnicke traces the constructed images of six supposed immoral women, including Anne Stanhope, and disproves the stories surrounding their “wickedness.”

Warnicke’s chapter on Anne constitutes one of the only specific examinations of her life. In each of the chapters, Warnicke meticulously detailed the various pieces of evidence that formed each woman’s misrepresentation in the historical record, and provided context for contemporary ideas about women’s inherent sinfulness. Anne Stanhope’s reputation as an imperious and haughty woman has persisted for centuries. However, Warnicke argues that the belief that she urged her husband to execute his own brother or that she had influence over his government policy “is largely a myth.”

In her dissertation, “‘She Governs the Queen’: Jane Dudley, Mary Dudley Sidney, and Katherine Dudley Hastings’ Political Actions, Agency, and Networks in Tudor England,” Catherine Medici-Thiemann provides one of the only illuminating assessments of Jane

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16 Ibid., 104.
Guildford, alongside those of her daughter and granddaughter. Similar to this dissertation, Medici-Thiemann’s examines the ways in which the three Dudley women “participated in personal politics through their communication and patronage networks, involvement in religion, and presence at court and government postings in Tudor England.”¹⁷ This study builds on the themes found in all of the above works, weaving together the lives of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford in order to construct a more holistic understanding of some of the universal experiences of early Tudor noblewomen.

Chapter One of this work introduces the early lives of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford. This chapter explores the family backgrounds of the women, the beginning of their careers at court, their marriages to influential men, and the personal and patronage networks constructed in their early years.

Chapter Two examines the household of Queen Catherine Parr and its role as a sanctuary for religious reform. This chapter discusses the positions of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford as great ladies of the queen’s household and outlines the relative timeline of each woman’s conversion to the reformist cause and, eventually, to Protestantism. Finally, this chapter assesses Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s marriages as political partnerships, and it discusses the ways in which their harmonious marriages allowed them to exert both formal and informal influence on religious and political matters.

Chapter Three provides an account of the political maneuverings at the royal court in 1546 and 1547, including Catherine Parr’s near downfall. The arrest, interrogation, and execution of Anne Askew is of particular interest, as the records of these events provide the most

illuminating evidence of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford’s reformist leanings and the existence of a network of reformist women. This chapter also examines the ways in which this female network contributed to the success of the reformist faction after the death of Henry VIII in January 1547.

Chapter Four looks at Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford as women of great influence during the reign of Edward VI. It focuses on their roles as Protestant patrons. This patronage could take the form of literary sponsorship, financial support, and even political backing. All three women used their positions at court to engage in these various forms of patronage. Because their religious patronage in particular is a subject that has already received much attention from historians, this chapter uses evidence of Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s acts of patronage to support the dissertation’s primary claims.

Chapter Five examines the enduring historical reputations that each of the three women earned both during and after their lifetimes. Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford were transformed into the “intolerable wife” and the “wicked mother-in-law” respectively. Both of their husbands served as leaders of Edward VI’s government. The strong personal and public relationships that Anne and Jane had with their husbands gave them both a significant amount of political influence. Contemporary observers and later writers interpreted this influence negatively. In contrast, Catherine Willoughby’s decision to become a Marian exile transformed her into the “Protestant heroine” and earned her the respect and commendation of her contemporaries and of later generations of Protestant authors. This chapter traces the origins of these stereotypes and the historical reputations of the women, as well as their overall impact and their persistence in modern scholarship.
Chapter Six looks at Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford’s actions during times of crisis. Throughout the reigns of Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, these three women experienced periods of turmoil that threatened the safety and position of themselves and their families. Each woman had to draw upon their personal networks in order to safeguard their family interests. This chapter explores the overlap between personal and political relationships in Tudor England, and the ways in which moments of crisis often gave women the occasion to act more publicly on behalf of their families.

The lives of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were full of drama, intrigue, and peril. In many ways these aristocratic women and their experiences were exceptional. However, the broad outlines of their individual stories, set against the backdrop of the turbulent Tudor era, connect the three women together in more ways than one. Their lives also provide a revealing and unique way to examine some of the universal experiences of early modern aristocratic women.

Brief Note on Names and Spelling

Sixteenth-century writers did not follow any standardized system of spelling, and names in particular were often written in a variety of forms. For example, “Catherine” could appear as: Katherine, Katharine, Katheryn, or Kateryn. Each scholar of the Tudor era has chosen their own approach to the spelling of names. This study chooses to standardize spelling as much as possible, and only offers one variation for each name, wherever possible.

The inhabitants of Tudor England were also distinctly unimaginative in choosing names for their children. The same few dozen names were reused repeatedly. This unsurprisingly can create a great deal of confusion when attempting to refer to different individuals with the same first name. The matter becomes even more complicated when individuals share the same
surname. For example, Henry VIII’s younger sister and eldest daughter were both named “Mary Tudor.” This study refers to individuals as specifically as possible, and chooses to identify its three main subjects by their maiden names. Catherine Willoughby became Catherine Brandon after her first marriage to Charles Brandon in 1533, and then Catherine Bertie after her subsequent marriage to Richard Bertie in 1553. Anne Stanhope became Anne Seymour after her marriage to Edward Seymour in 1535, and then Anne Newdigate after her subsequent marriage to Francis Newdigate in 1558. Jane Guildford became Jane Dudley after her marriage to John Dudley in 1525. Using their maiden names provides more consistency and clarity throughout the work. Each of the three women also acquired a number of aristocratic titles throughout their lives. This study refers to their titles, and those of other individuals, based on chronological suitability. For example, Anne Stanhope first entered the ranks of the peerage as Viscountess Beauchamp when her husband became Viscount Beauchamp in 1536. A year later, she and her husband became the Earl and Countess of Hertford. By 1547, they had become the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. Like most aristocratic women, Anne retained the title “Duchess of Suffolk” even after her husband’s death.

The terminology surrounding the beliefs and followers of the early Protestant Reformation is subject to some debate. Prior to the Diet of Speyer in 1529, after which leaders of the Holy Roman Empire “protested” against its decrees, the term “Protestant” was not in widespread use in Europe. Even after its adoption in German-speaking areas, religious reformers tended to use the term “evangelical,” as it emphasized their association with the spread of the word of God. The Church of England did not adopt a decidedly Protestant doctrine until the accession of Edward VI in 1547. When writing about religious reformers prior to the Edwardian era, many scholars prefer to use the term “evangelical.” This study chooses the more general
term “reformer” to refer to those who supported religious reform in England prior to 1547, in order to encompass a wide variety of individual beliefs, motivations, and actions. Like so many individuals in the mid-sixteenth century, early reformers in England did not necessarily subscribe to each of the tenets of any particular religious movement – their beliefs were often in flux. After the Edwardian Reformation, it is more appropriate to use the term “Protestant” to refer to religious reformers in England.
CHAPTER ONE. MARRIAGES AND CAREERS

Family Backgrounds

Catherine Willoughby was the youngest and highest-born of the three women examined in this work. Born in 1519 to William Willoughby, Baron Willoughby de Eresby and Maria de Salinas, she was, according to Barbara Harris, “one of the greatest heiresses of her generation.”\(^1\) Baron Willoughby died in 1526, leaving seven-year-old Catherine as his only heir.\(^2\) The Willoughby estates encompassed properties in Lincolnshire and East Anglia worth roughly 2,000 marks a year.\(^3\) Although Catherine’s uncle, Sir Christopher Willoughby, contested her inheritance, the Dowager Lady Willoughby used her extensive connections at the royal court to secure both her daughter’s position as Baroness Willoughby de Eresby \textit{suo jure} and the accompanying fortune.\(^4\) Catherine’s mother was able to mobilize support at court because she was a close confidante of Henry VIII’s queen, Catherine of Aragon. Maria de Salinas, Castilian by birth, had accompanied Catherine from Spain to England in 1501 and remained a favored lady-in-waiting and trusted confidante of the queen for over thirty years.\(^5\) Like a number of Catherine’s Spanish ladies, Maria had made an advantageous English match when she married

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\(^4\) Gunn, \textit{Charles Brandon}, 95-96; Wabuda, “Bertie, Katherine, duchess of Suffolk.”

Baron Willoughby in 1516. Three years later, she christened her daughter with the name of the queen she loved so dearly.  

When Catherine Willoughby inherited her father’s title and property, she became a royal ward. The Crown therefore had complete jurisdiction over both Catherine and her estates. The Crown usually bestowed or sold such wardships to loyal and well-connected members of the nobility. For example, in 1486 the eight-year-old Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham became the ward of Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother and advisor to Henry VII. Both Margaret and the king benefited immensely from this arrangement, as much of the revenue from Stafford’s estates went directly to the royal coffers. Henry VII also arranged Stafford’s marriage to Eleanor Percy, daughter of the Earl of Northumberland in exchange for a payment of £4,000. In 1529, Henry VIII sold Catherine Willoughby’s wardship to his brother-in-law and close friend, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk in exchange for over £2,000. The Duke of Suffolk’s acquisition of the Willoughby wardship precipitated his involvement in the dowager Lady Willoughby’s legal dispute with her brother-in-law. Suffolk stepped in to protect the Willoughby estates, calling upon the assistance of the king’s most powerful advisor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. Meanwhile, the duke sent his ward to live at Westhorpe Hall in Suffolk with his wife, Mary Tudor, former Queen of France, their son, Henry, Earl of Lincoln, and two daughters, Frances and Eleanor Brandon.

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After Catherine’s move to Westhorpe, her mother remained a member of Catherine of Aragon’s household. Additionally, the Duke of Suffolk was often absent from his estates, as he could rarely be away from the king’s service. Her education and upbringing were therefore supervised by her guardian’s royal wife, Mary Tudor, who preferred to remain at her estates. The former Queen of France would have provided Catherine and her own daughters with both a practical and a formal education. At Westhorpe, it is likely that, in addition to learning how to run a large household, Catherine was instructed in religion, reading and writing, languages, music, dancing, and deportment.10

Because most girls were instructed within their homes, records of the education of early Tudor women are scarce. However, by the 1520s and 1530s, many aristocratic families were beginning to educate their daughters along humanist lines. Internationally-renowned humanist scholars, such as Desiderius Erasmus, Juan Luis Vives, and Sir Thomas More, recommended that women be provided with more than just religious instruction. As a result, more and more women were learning to read and write, and some elite women were even exposed to scholarly languages, philosophy, poetry, as well as theology. Margaret Roper, Thomas More’s beloved daughter, was the exemplar of a humanist-educated Englishwoman.11 In his preface to Roper’s English translation of Erasmus’s Treatise on the Paternoster, Richard Hyrde, a scholar and translator, extoled the benefits of educating women. While many of his contemporaries “put great doubt whether it should be expedient and requisite or not / a woman to have learning in books of Latin and Greek,” Hyrde argued that “women be not only of no less constancy and discretion than men / but also more steadfast and sure to trust unto than they.” He hoped that

10 Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 143-144, 163; Read, My Lady Suffolk, 29-30.
other women would take Roper’s example “that to the increase of her virtue / she hath taken and taketh no little occasion of her learning.”

Hyrde had previously translated *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* by the Spanish humanist, Juan Luis Vives, into English. In a dedicatory letter to Catherine of Aragon that appeared in his translation, Hyrde pondered what could be “more fruitful than the good education and order of women, the one half of all mankind.”

Vives himself was also a great supporter of women’s academic instruction, though he was more conservative in his estimation of its uses, preferring to focus on women’s education as a tool for “the formation and improvement of morals.” But whatever their motivations, as historian Valerie Wayne argues, humanists “were the best advocates women had during the early years of the Renaissance in England.”

As the ward of the king’s sister and brother-in-law, Catherine Willoughby likely benefited in a reasonable way from these new trends in women’s education. Throughout her studies at Westhorpe, she would have also built personal bonds with Frances and Eleanor Brandon, with whom she was close in age. Thus, by the early 1530s, Catherine was already well-connected among the aristocratic families of England through both her birth and upbringing. In March 1533, Charles Brandon obtained another wardship – that of Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset. He then quickly married Grey to his daughter, Frances. The marriage was a strategic one, as Grey was the great-grandson of Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV, by her first

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12 Margaret Roper, trans. *A deuoute treatise vpon the Pater noster*, preface by Richard Hyrde (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1531), 1-2, 6; For clarity, this work has modernized all spelling.


marriage. Frances, now Marchioness of Dorset and herself a great-granddaughter of Elizabeth Woodville by her royal marriage, therefore became doubly linked to the Tudor royal family. The alliance between the Brandon and Grey families would prove to be a significant one.17

Throughout her formative years, Catherine Willoughby lived in the relative seclusion of the Suffolk countryside. Because of her birth and her position as her father’s only heir, she was an exceptionally desirable candidate on the aristocratic marriage market. Her rank and her mother’s intimacy with the queen would have guaranteed her a position in the royal household, but her debut at court was delayed until after her marriage. For women like Catherine, an advantageous marriage was an inevitability, but for other high-ranking Tudor women, it could be less of a certainty. For these women, like Anne Stanhope, a position at court prior to marriage could provide them with a wider variety of social opportunities.

Born in 1510 to Sir Edward Stanhope and his second wife, Elizabeth Bourchier, Anne Stanhope’s family connections ensured that she would easily find a position at the royal court. Her father had fought for Henry VII at the Battle of Stoke and against the Cornish Rebellion, after which he was knighted. Anne would not have known her father, though, for he died in 1511 – when she was still an infant. Unlike Catherine Willoughby, Anne was not an aristocratic heiress – the heirs to her father’s more modest estates were her half-brothers, Richard and Michael Stanhope – and it is therefore unlikely that she became a royal ward.18 As a result, she was probably brought up by members of her maternal family. Elizabeth Bourchier, her mother, was a descendant of Edward III through his youngest child, Thomas of Woodstock. Edward III had many children and numerous descendants, so the Bourchiers were certainly not considered

members of the royal family. Elizabeth did, nevertheless, provide her daughter with a royal lineage and noble connections. Anne’s maternal grandfather, Fulk Bourchier, held the title Baron FitzWarin. His son, John, became the Earl of Bath in 1536.\(^\text{19}\)

Anne’s extended family connections included her half-brother, Michael Stanhope, from her father’s first marriage. Michael served at court with Anne from a young age and became a chief ally and friend of her husband, Edward Seymour. In 1512, a year after Edward Stanhope’s death, Elizabeth Bourchier married again – this time to Sir Richard Page. Through her mother Anne also had two stepsisters, Catherine Verney (from a previous marriage) and Elizabeth Page. It is clear that Anne Stanhope came from a prominent family and, because familial networks were useful political alliances, a well-connected one as well.

Historian Anthony Martienssen states that “Anne never allowed anyone to forget that she was descended through her maternal great-grandmother from Thomas Woodstock,” considering “herself therefore to be of Royal blood.”\(^\text{20}\) This is, according to Martienssen, evidence of her “snobbery and pride.”\(^\text{21}\) However, in a society that valued social standing, an individual’s ancestry mattered. A “dash of royal blood” was particularly important with regard to marriageable women, as this was an attractive quality for procreation.\(^\text{22}\) All four of Henry VIII’s English queens – Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr – were descended remotely from medieval kings. It was this quality that made them eligible for royal marriage in the eyes of many of Henry’s subjects. Anne Stanhope’s similar background counted

\(^{21}\) Martienssen, *Queen Katherine Parr*, 125.
for much in Tudor England. Naturally, Anne began her career at a young age by serving as a lady-in-waiting at court.

Like Anne, Jane Guildford came from a family with both a history of royal service and a claim to noble ancestry. Born in 1509, Jane was the daughter of Sir Edward Guildford and his first wife, Eleanor West. Edward was a courtier who served as esquire of the body to both Henry VII and Henry VIII. He and his brother, Henry, were part of the close circle of companions who formed the core of Henry VIII’s Privy Chamber at the beginning of his reign. These men fueled the young king’s passion for court entertainments, jousting, and martial exploits. In addition to his role at court, Edward served as Master of the Armoury, Knight Marshall of Calais, and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. He also sat in the House of Commons for Kent in 1529.23 While her father’s career constructed a network at court for the Guildford family, Jane’s mother brought connections to the peerage. Eleanor West was a daughter of Thomas West, Baron De La Warr. Like Anne Stanhope, Jane’s maternal lineage therefore provided her with her own noble ancestry.

Careers at Court

Referring to royal service as a “career” for women is both useful and logical. Women like Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford spent most of their lives at court. It was there they often met their husbands, made social alliances, and later launched their own children on a similar path.24 Like any career, serving as one of the queen’s ladies-in-waiting came with compensation. Each woman received room and board (often referred to as “bouche of

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24 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 211.
court”), as well as stabling for their horses. They were also entitled to their own attendants (who also received room and board) and to special gowns for state occasions. Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s generation was, in particular, shaped by its experiences at court. It was in the households of queens that the three women came into contact with new ideas about religion. They also made a number of useful attachments with other women at the Tudor court. These personal alliances would be of great importance to these women and their families during moments of crisis.

The three women would have likely met one another for the first time while living at court after Henry VIII’s marriage to Anne Boleyn, who was queen from 1533 to 1536. By the time the queen gave birth to her daughter, Elizabeth, in September 1533, both Catherine Willoughby and Jane Guildford were married to influential courtiers and likely both present at the princess’s christening on September 10. Catherine, who became the Duchess of Suffolk at the young age of fourteen after marrying her erstwhile guardian, Charles Brandon, earlier that year, undoubtedly accompanied her new husband to the ceremony. The Duke of Suffolk played a prominent role during the christening, as he and the Duke of Norfolk accompanied the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk while she carried the infant princess into the church. Jane Guildford was likely also in attendance, as her husband, John Dudley, bore the princess’s christening gifts. In May of that year, Jane may have also been at the queen’s coronation feast, where her husband served as cupbearer to the Archbishop of Canterbury. Because it was common for the wives of courtiers to either live at court with their husbands, or at least to accompany them on great

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26 L&P, Henry VIII: Vol. 6, 1111.  
occasions of state, it is reasonable to assume that Catherine and Jane were both present at such
events.\textsuperscript{28}

While Catherine was living at court with her new husband, Jane and (likely) Anne were
serving in the new queen’s household.\textsuperscript{29} Although there is no record of Anne Stanhope’s arrival
at court, it is probable that she began her career earlier as a maid of honor in the 1520s.\textsuperscript{30} Her
first position was under Henry VIII’s first wife, Catherine of Aragon.\textsuperscript{31} There were essentially
four ranks among ladies-in-waiting – great ladies, ladies of the Privy Chamber, maids of honor,
and chamberers.\textsuperscript{32} The responsibilities of maids of honor, as well as all ladies-in-waiting more
generally, varied considerably. These duties could, at times, be “of a very menial nature.” The
queen’s ladies and maids served her at meals, often holding a cloth ready “for when she list to
spit or do otherwise at her pleasure.”\textsuperscript{33} Ladies also helped the queen dress and kept her company
in her chambers. More importantly, they attended her during formal audiences, banquets, and on
visits outside of the court. Here they could watch and learn from their mistress, using the court as
a “finishing-school and marriage-market.”\textsuperscript{34} Many ladies-in-waiting also participated in the

\textsuperscript{28} Harris, \textit{English Aristocratic Women}, 213, 222.
January 25, 2020); Anne Stanhope was one of Catherine of Aragon’s maids of honor (see below) and it is
probable that she transferred her service to the new queen’s household after 1533, as it was necessary for
ladies-in-waiting to “provide continuity” despite Henry VIII’s “rapid change of wives.”; See Harris,
\textit{English Aristocratic Women}, 211.
\textsuperscript{30} Any date before this is unlikely, as Anne (b. 1510) would have been too young to serve at
court. She certainly waited on Catherine of Aragon, who was Henry VIII’s first queen until 1533. Queen
Catherine lost her position at court to Anne Boleyn, however, in 1531. Thus, Anne must have become a
lady-in-waiting at some point in the 1520s.
\textsuperscript{31} Patrick Fraser Tytler, ed. \textit{England Under the Reigns of Edward VI and Mary} (London: Richard
Bentley, New Burlington Street, 1839), 1: 51; Mary Tudor writes to Anne Stanhope – “…when you were
one of her Grace’s [Catherine of Aragon’s] maids…”
\textsuperscript{32} David Loades, \textit{The Tudor Court} (London: Batsford, 1986), 41; Anne Somerset: \textit{Ladies in
\textsuperscript{33} Somerset, \textit{Ladies in Waiting}, 13.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
increasing number of court masques. These elaborate performances, along with the necessary rehearsals, potentially allowed court ladies to interact informally with both the king and the men of his household. This was an especially important opportunity for unmarried women.  

While performing her duties as a young maid of honor to Catherine of Aragon, Anne Stanhope made, arguably, the most significant personal connection of her life, Princess Mary Tudor, with whom she formed a strong attachment. Henry and Catherine’s only living child, Mary was born in 1516, making her only a few years younger than both Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford, and only three years older than Catherine Willoughby. Mary retained affection for her mother’s memory long after Queen Catherine’s death in 1536. This affection often extended to those individuals, such as Anne, who had served her mother loyally. Despite the fact that the two women’s religious beliefs diverged beginning in the 1530s, Mary never lost her fondness for Anne. Mary’s affection likely also extended, at least initially, to Catherine Willoughby, whose Spanish mother had served her own so faithfully.

When Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon in 1533 and proclaimed a pregnant Anne Boleyn the new queen consort of England, the newly-styled “Lady” Mary lost both her mother (who was banished from court) and her position as her father’s heir. In 1536, Catherine of Aragon died a few months before Henry VIII had Anne Boleyn executed. It is worth noting that Catherine, now styled the Dowager Princess of Wales, took her last breaths in the arms of Maria de Salinas, who had disobeyed the king by visiting her former mistress in exile. While Catherine Willoughby and Mary Tudor later became bitterly divided over the question of religion, the relationship between their mothers no doubt encouraged affection between the two

35 Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 213.
at least during the 1530s and 1540s. By May of 1536, the king, rid of his first two wives, then moved on to his third, Jane Seymour, who was sympathetic to Mary Tudor and worked to bring her back under her father’s wing. Soon back at court and in her father’s good graces, Mary could now show her gratitude to those who had supported her mother.

Mary was a prolific bestower of gifts. She served as godmother to at least one of Jane Guilford’s sons, and gave money to “Lady Dudley’s” nurses and midwives on multiple occasions. Jane had briefly served in Mary’s household while Henry VIII was between wives in the late 1530s. To Catherine Willoughby, Mary regularly bestowed financial gifts, as well as expensive fabrics and even a turquoise ring. She also played cards with the Duchess of Suffolk on at least one occasion. However, it is clear that, of the three women, Anne Stanhope cultivated the closest attachment to Henry’s eldest daughter. Throughout the 1530s and 1540s, Mary and Anne exchanged a variety of gifts, played cards and chess, and paid visits to one another. When Anne gave birth to her first child in February 1537, Mary did not hesitate to congratulate and support her friend. As she had with Jane Guildford, she gave money to Anne’s nurse and to her midwife. A month later, Mary visited Anne and her child and, once again, gave money to the nurse. Anne gave birth for the second time the next year, and Mary presented her with similar gifts for the child’s christening. When writing letters to Anne, Mary

40 Madden, Privy Purse Expenses, 7, 50, 51, 55, 58, 68, 82, 96, 102, 143.
41 Ibid., 69.
42 Ibid., 33, 46, 49, 57, 58, 97, 113, 143, 149, 184.
43 Ibid., 16.
44 Ibid., 19.
always referred to her affectionately as “my Good Gossip” and “my good Nann.” She often signed her letters as “your assured friend to my power during my life.”

When Jane Seymour supplanted Anne Boleyn as Henry VIII’s queen, Mary was not the only one to benefit. With her marriage to the Duke of Suffolk, Catherine Willoughby had already risen to the highest ranks of the nobility. Both Jane Guildford and Anne Stanhope, who had made an advantageous marriage to Sir Edward Seymour in 1535, continued their service at court. A year after marrying Edward, Anne’s new sister-in-law became the new queen of England. It was Henry VIII’s third marriage that allowed Anne Stanhope and her husband to begin their slow climb up the ranks of the peerage.

Promising Marriages

For early modern women, marriage marked the end of childhood, a transformation in public position, and the creation of an essential partnership with personal, social, and economic functions. When successful, such unions provided both spouses with communal ties, financial stability, and emotional satisfaction, and carried with them “the promise of respectability [and] the privileges of marriage and adulthood.” However, because the arrangement of Tudor marriages, and those of the landed elite in particular, nearly always involved influence both from the couples’ families and members of their community, this was not necessarily a decision in which the prospective bride had much of a say. Yet, the success or failure of a Tudor noblewoman’s marriage often dictated her emotional and material happiness. The most infamous example of a disastrous Tudor aristocratic marriage was that of Thomas Howard, the third Duke

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of Norfolk to Elizabeth Stafford, daughter of the third Duke of Buckingham. Like so many marriages among the highest ranks of the nobility, the purpose of this match “was to increase the lineage’s wealth, political power, and social connections rather than to secure happiness for the two people involved.” While many such marriages often worked fairly well, Thomas Howard and Elizabeth Stafford were not compatible, and their union fell apart after the duke fell in love with a woman from the minor gentry and took her as his mistress with little discretion. The increasingly violent quarrels between the duke and duchess created a public scandal, and eventually the two separated. Unfortunately, this left the Duchess of Norfolk isolated from her children and in a state of virtual imprisonment. The unhappy example of the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk exemplifies “the reality of patriarchal power within the early sixteenth-century aristocratic family,” but it also indicates that women did not always benefit from arranged marriages. Those women who did find stability, harmony, and perhaps even romantic love within their marriages were at a significant advantage. Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford all made successful marriages in this respect. Each of the three women gained companionship, security, and social advancement through their husbands.

Sometime between 1525 and 1527, Jane Guildford married her father’s ward, John Dudley. John had been placed under Edward Guildford’s guardianship in 1512, two years after his own father, Edmund Dudley, had been executed for treason. John was raised alongside the Guildford children at the family estates in Halden, Kent. Rather than following in his father’s footsteps and becoming a lawyer, John was raised to be a courtier and a soldier, like his guardian. His first public appointment was as a servant in the retinue of Cardinal Thomas

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51 Harris, “Marriage Sixteenth-Century Style,” 379.
Wolsey during his mission to mediate between France and the Holy Roman Empire in 1521.\textsuperscript{52} When these negotiations failed, John accompanied Guildford to Calais the next year and served as a minor commander in the garrison there. Like Edward Seymour, with whom he was close in age, John Dudley’s career largely began as a soldier in France – he participated in the war in 1523 and was knighted by the Duke of Suffolk alongside Seymour that same year. Like Seymour, he also served as an esquire of the body in the king’s household after returning from France. Following in the footsteps of Edward Guildford, John Dudley began to make a name for himself in the lists, participating regularly in the jousting tournaments beloved by Henry VIII. When John married Jane Guildford in the mid-1520s, he was an experienced soldier and courtier already distinguishing himself at court. Jane’s father had always treated John as a son, and it is likely that the two had been betrothed since youth. Luckily, both were content with the match.\textsuperscript{53}

As mentioned above, Catherine Willoughby wed her erstwhile guardian, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk in September 1533. Mary Tudor, former Queen of France and Charles’s former wife, had died in June of that year. Ambassador Eustace Chapuys explained in his letter to Emperor Charles V early that month that the Duke of Suffolk intended to wed “the daughter of a Spanish lady named lady Willoughby,” despite the fact that “she was promised to his son.” The ambassador commented wryly that “although it is not worth writing to your Majesty, the novelty of the case made me mention it.”\textsuperscript{54} In fact, the marriage of fourteen-year-old Catherine to a man three times her own age was not particularly extraordinary. Henry VIII’s grandmother, Margaret Beaufort, for instance, gave birth to the future Henry VII when she was just fourteen, only to remarry a year later to a man more than twice her age. Heiresses like

\textsuperscript{52} Loades, \textit{John Dudley}, 18-24.
\textsuperscript{53} Loades, “John Dudley,” in \textit{ODNB}.
\textsuperscript{54} \textit{L&P}, \textit{Henry VIII}: Vol. 6, 1069.
Margaret Beaufort and Catherine Willoughby often entered arranged marriages at a very young age. At the time of her marriage, Catherine did not openly object to wedding a high-ranking member of the peerage who still had both significant influence with the king and undimmed “sex appeal.” However, nearly twenty years later, in response to a proposal to marry her son to one of Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope’s daughters, she wrote an explicit condemnation of arranged marriages. Catherine explained that she could not “tell what more unkindness one of us might work more wickedly than to bring our children into so miserable a state [as] not to choose by their own liking such as they must profess so strait a bond and so great a love to forever.”

It is not clear whether her words were a reflection of her own marital experience or simply an attempt to avoid allying herself and her family to the Seymours, who were at that time undergoing a political crisis. Whatever her innermost feelings on her marriage, Catherine and her new husband both benefited from the match. Charles Brandon’s motivations were likely financial, as he had significant monetary obligations in 1533, including the organization of the wedding of his daughter, Frances, and Mary Tudor’s outstanding debts. According to the anonymous Spanish Chronicle, Charles gained 15,000 ducats from his new marriage. As his wife, the teenaged Catherine became one of only two duchesses in England at the time. According to S. J. Gunn, Charles Brandon’s biographer, the marriage also increased the Duke of Suffolk’s interest in the ongoing legal disputes between the dowager Lady Willoughby – now his

56 Catherine’s letter is quoted in Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 58.
59 The other was the unhappy Elizabeth Stafford, Duchess of Norfolk.
mother-in-law – and Sir Christopher Willoughby. After 1533, the duke initiated petitions on his young wife’s behalf, and within three years, a settlement was concluded between Charles and Sir Christopher, allowing 300 marks of the Willoughby inheritance to pass in the male line to the latter.60 As the Duke of Suffolk’s wife, Catherine also came into closer contact with the royal court and with the king himself. In 1535, the king served as a godfather to the Suffolks’ eldest son, Henry. The boy’s christening was therefore treated as a state occasion.61

Anne Stanhope wed Edward Seymour sometime in early 1535, certainly before March 9.62 She probably knew him well before this, for Edward had been at court since 1514. He served in various positions, beginning as a page of honor to Henry VIII’s sister, Mary Tudor, when she became Queen of France. He then attended Emperor Charles V, Catherine of Aragon’s nephew, on his visit to England in 1522. In 1523 he participated in the invasion of France and was knighted that November. A year later, he became an esquire of the king’s household before serving as master of horse for the Duke of Richmond, Henry’s VIII’s illegitimate son. He also accompanied Cardinal Thomas Wolsey on his embassy to France in 1527. By 1531, Edward was an esquire of the body to Henry VIII himself.63 At the time of his marriage to Anne Stanhope, Edward Seymour was in good favor with the king, who likely considered him a dedicated servant. Because the king and queen were often involved in arranging and even financing marriages between members of their respective households, it is plausible that Henry VIII may have had a hand in Edward and Anne’s match.64

60 Gunn, Charles Brandon, 132-133.
64 Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 217-218.
Edward was born in 1500, making him a full decade older than his new wife. The eldest son of Sir John Seymour and Margery Wentworth, Edward (like Anne) was a remote descendant of Edward III. He first married Catherine Fillol sometime before 1518. She gave him two sons, John and Edward. At some point, Edward repudiated his first wife because of a possible infidelity on her part. Catherine may have gone into a nunnery soon after, and was certainly deceased by the time of Edward’s second marriage.\(^{65}\) Though he continued to acknowledge his sons by Catherine as legitimate, he was determined to keep his hereditary titles from them. His second wife, Anne Stanhope, was more suited to Edward’s needs. Both had served at court from a young age and were (as will be shown) politically astute and ambitious. According to historian Antonia Fraser, “the combination of a calculating husband and a strong-minded wife made the Seymours a team to be reckoned with.”\(^{66}\)

Edward Seymour had many siblings, though he was closest with his sisters, Jane and Elizabeth, and his brother, Thomas. Jane Seymour, as mentioned above, caught the eye of Henry VIII in early 1536. Although he was still married to Anne Boleyn at the time, the king began courting Jane and, after a time, decided that he wanted to do so more privately. Edward Seymour, his new wife, and his sister were installed in Thomas Cromwell’s rooms at Greenwich, “which the King can go by certain galleries without being perceived.” As Jane had “been well taught for the most part by those intimate with the King,” she succeeded in marrying Henry VIII a mere eleven days after Anne Boleyn’s execution.\(^{67}\) Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, implied that Jane had been coached by her family in order to attract the king and, consequently, bring about the downfall of the Boleyns and the rise of the Seymours. Anthony Martienssen


takes this even further, claiming that Anne Stanhope’s personal ambitions, her determination “to regain the position in society to which she believed she was entitled,” pushed her husband and his immediate family forward.  

Like so many writers before and after him, Martienssen falls back on the trope of Anne as an overly-ambitious woman who urged her inactive and hesitant husband to action. This is an inaccurate portrayal of their relationship. Edward Seymour and his family were every bit as ambitious as Anne Stanhope.

As a result of Jane’s royal marriage, the Seymour family did well by their determined maneuvering. In July 1536, less than two months after the marriage, Henry VIII made Edward Seymour Viscount Beauchamp of Hache. In 1537, when Jane gave birth to the king’s longed-for son and heir, Henry made Edward Earl of Hertford. Throughout his rapid rise to power and influence, Anne was at Edward’s side. Within two years, she had gone from the wife of a mere knight to a viscountess, then a countess and aunt to a future king. Her career at court persisted and she continued to serve in the queen’s household – under her sister-in-law and all of Henry’s remaining wives. As Edward’s wife and a lady of the queen’s chamber, she became a formidable noblewoman with both royal and factional connections at court.

As women at court with husbands serving in the king’s household, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were part of an elite social group. Others immediately recognized their increased status. Honor, Viscountess Lisle, wife of Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle (an illegitimate son of Edward IV), petitioned a number of important court ladies throughout the early months of 1537 in order to obtain a place for her two daughters in the royal household. The girls, Anne and Catherine Basset, were from Lady Lisle’s first marriage. Well acquainted with the rules of court,

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68 Martienssen, *Queen Katherine Parr*, 125.
70 Ibid.: Vol. 12 Part 2, 938.
their mother knew that “parents who wanted their daughters to become the queen’s maids had to cultivate and reward senior members of her entourage.”  

Lady Lisle was unable to speak with such women in person, as she was in Calais where her husband was Lord Deputy. Consequently, she sent gifts and tokens to various ladies at court through her husband’s agent, John Husee. She cultivated, in particular, the services of the Countesses of Sussex and Rutland, the Duchess of Suffolk (Catherine Willoughby), and the Viscountess Beauchamp (Anne Stanhope).  

Although they had not yet joined the ranks of the peerage, Jane Guildford and her husband were also important contacts at court for Lady Lisle and her daughters. John Dudley’s mother, Elizabeth Grey, had been Lord Lisle’s first wife until her death in 1529. John was therefore the viscount’s stepson. During Lady Lisle’s quest to place her daughters in the queen’s service, Jane Dudley reportedly feasted the girls at court “with right good dishes and great cheer.”  

As the young Basset sisters were part of her extended family, it was likely important to Jane that they were welcomed accordingly. Lady Lisle’s suit was successful in July 1537, when she sent the pregnant Queen Jane a gift of quails. Anne Stanhope, along with the Countesses of Sussex and Rutland, served them to their mistress at dinner. John Husee wrote to Lady Lisle, “Her Grace chanced, eating of the quails, to comment of your ladyship and of your daughters; so that such communication was uttered by the said ladies that her Grace made grant to have one of your daughters.”  

The queen chose Anne Basset, who from that day launched her own successful career at court. After serving Queen Jane as a maid of honor, she continued to do so in the households of Henry VIII’s remaining three queens. Lady Lisle thanked the women responsible

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74 Ibid.
for her daughter’s court position by sending more gifts. She clearly looked to the queen’s ladies for guidance while living in Calais away from court, as John Husee reassured her that year that her nightgowns and waistcoats “are in every point made as my Lady Beauchamp’s [Anne Stanhope’s]; and it is the very fashion that the Queen and all the ladies doth wear.”

It was probably the successful exchange in 1537 that led Lady Lisle to later request a position for her daughter, Catherine (the one Queen Jane did not pick), this time in Anne Stanhope’s own household. Edward Seymour, then Earl of Hertford, wrote to Lady Lisle that Catherine “shall be welcome when you please to send for her.” Unfortunately, Catherine expressed a desire to remain with the Earl and Countess of Rutland, with whom she was already staying. Hertford accepted this, but wrote back with regret, “if she had come she would have been welcome to him and his wife as one of his own daughters.” William Seymour, a family biographer, writes that Catherine Basset declined a place in the Hertfords’ household because “she was certain that Anne Seymour would treat her as a servant.” Seymour based this assessment on Husee’s letter to Lady Lisle, in which he stated that Catherine “is unwilling to leave my lady Rutland, lest being with lady Hertford she should be taken but as her woman.” However, Catherine Basset’s hesitance to enter the Hertford household was surely primarily motivated by her attachment to the Countess of Rutland rather than any genuine antipathy to Anne Stanhope. Lady Lisle was equally reluctant to send her daughter into the household of

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75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.; 4: 872.
79 Ibid., 1033.
Catherine Willoughby, whom she described as “virtuous, wise and discreet.”

Noblewomen like Anne Stanhope considered it their duty to foster the next generation – to help educate them and launch their own careers. Parents of the nobility often sent their children at a young age to live in other households. This was usually done in order to strengthen personal alliances, to arrange early marriages, and to teach the children how to serve their superiors (in the hopes that one day they would do so at court).

Anne and Edward treated their own children exceptionally well. Both sons and daughters received “identical instruction in the Bible and classics by humanistic tutors.” They provided positions in their household to leading intellectual figures of the period such as Thomas Becon, Nicholas Denisot, and William Samuel. These men influenced the children’s upbringing, as they were responsible for their education. Denisot, for example, was the Seymour girls’ French tutor. Becon, who believed “that women are the intellectual equals of men,” praised Anne Stanhope and her husband for their progressiveness with regard to education. In his work dedicated to their daughter Jane, The Governance of Virtue, Becon stated “there are no parents, most godly lady, that deserve better of the Christian public weal, than they which, through God’s gift having children, employ all their endeavours to train them up, even from their very cradles, in good letters and in the knowledge of God’s most blessed will.”

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82 Byrne, The Lisle Letters, 4: 854a.  
84 King, “Patronage and Piety,” 53.  
85 Ibid.  
86 Ibid.  
Anne Stanhope and Edward Seymour had ten children, four boys and six girls. The Seymour girls, particularly the eldest three – Anne, Margaret, and Jane – were lauded by contemporaries for their learning. On the death of Marguerite de Navarre, the three Seymour girls produced a Latin tributary poem in her honor, titled *Annae, Margaritae, Ianae, Sororum Virginum Heroïdum Anglarum, In Mortem Divae Margaritae Valesiae Navarrorum Reginae, Hecatodistichon.*

Marguerite, sister of King Francis I of France, was an author and renowned patron of humanist scholars. The girls’ French tutor, Denisot, praised their accomplishment and edited their work. Their continental connections also included the reformers Martin Bucer, Paul Fagius, and even John Calvin. Jane wrote to Bucer and Fagius thanking them for their “exceeding praise of the addresses of myself and my sisters.” Calvin wrote to Jane’s sister, Anne, that she was “not less distinguished by… virtue than by… birth.” He had been informed of her “liberal education (which is very unusual in a lady of such birth and station)” and that she was “conversant in the doctrine of Christ.” As with Thomas Becon, Calvin recognized the source of this education to be Anne Stanhope, “the most illustrious princess, your mother.”

Retha Warnicke states that Edward and Anne’s decision to provide their daughters with a classical education was probably “politically motivated” in order to associate “their education with that of the king’s daughters.” As discussed above, their decision was certainly in keeping with the humanist trends of the time. According to Susan James, “the precedent-setting

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89 King, “Patronage and Piety,” 53.
90 Hastings Robinson, ed. *Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, Written During the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary: Chiefly from the Archives of Zurich.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846), 1: 2.
92 Ibid.
educations of the royal Tudor princesses encouraged a century-long trend.”

With mothers such as Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, and a stepmother in Catherine Parr—all women with renowned intellectual abilities and a devotion to humanist teachings—the princesses Mary and Elizabeth became educational trendsetters.

Anne Stanhope’s decision to educate her daughters was politically astute but it also probably sprang from a sincere appreciation for learning. Catherine Willoughby and Jane Guildford shared this interest and set their children on a similar educational path. Jane’s marriage to John Dudley produced thirteen children, eight boys and five girls. The Dudleys seem to have created a warm and loving environment for their children. In a letter from 1552, John wrote on behalf of himself and his wife, reassuring their eldest son that they would take care of his financial difficulties, saying that “I and your mother will forthwith see [the debts] paid.” Jane added in a postscript to the letter in her own hand, “Your loving mother that wishes you health daily.”

As Eric Ives argues, this letter contains a level of “remarkable sympathy” and is indicative that the Dudley family was “solid and genuinely affectionate.” In addition to affection and support, John and Jane provided their children with excellent educations. The Dudley children, boys and girls, learned a variety of languages, natural philosophy, and geography, as well as astrology. Their eldest daughter, Mary, became fluent in French, Italian, and Latin. Notably, she also became interested in poetry, as evidenced by her personal copy of *Hall’s Chronicle*, in which she and her husband, Henry Sidney, wrote a mixture of Latin, French,

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94 Susan James, *Catherine Parr: Henry VIII’s Last Love* (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2008), 128.
95 The Dudleys’ letter is quoted in Loades, *John Dudley*, 224.
and English verses to one another.\textsuperscript{98} The Dudley children were familiar with Henry VIII’s children, particularly Elizabeth. While historians usually emphasize Elizabeth’s relationship with Robert Dudley, Mary Dudley’s classical education also made her a suitable companion for the highly-educated princess. She later served as a gentlewoman in Elizabeth I’s Privy Chamber from 1558 until her death.\textsuperscript{99} While Mary’s children, Philip and Mary Sidney, later outshined her own educational and literary achievements, it is clear that her upbringing and education helped to pave the way for their success. In his biography of Philip Sidney, Thomas Moffett wrote that Mary Dudley “[surpassed] her sex and her generation in excellence of wit and of skill in arts.”\textsuperscript{100} Mary’s reputation was certainly a reflection of her upbringing in the Dudley household, as Jane Guildford herself was recognized for her own dedication to learning.\textsuperscript{101}

As Duchess of Suffolk, Catherine Willoughby gave birth to two sons, Henry and Charles. She entrusted their education to the humanist Thomas Wilson, who praised her as a woman of “wit great, of nature gentle.” In \textit{The Arte of Rhetorique}, Wilson explained that the duchess had hired him as her sons’ tutor because she recognized “that wealth without wit, is like a sword in a naked man’s hand.”\textsuperscript{102} In addition to Wilson, Catherine, like Anne Stanhope, employed and patronized other important intellectual and religious figures. Her “chief protégé,” Hugh Latimer, later became “the most influential preacher during Edward VI’s reign.” After serving as a


\textsuperscript{100} Thomas Moffett, \textit{Nobilis; or, A View of the Life and Death of a Sidney}, trans. Virgil B. Heltzel and Hoyt H. Hudson (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1940), 85.

\textsuperscript{101} Arthur Collins, \textit{Letters and memorials of state in the reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, part of the reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver’s usurpation. Written and collected by Sir Henry Sydney} (London: T. Osborne, 1746), 30-36.

\textsuperscript{102} Thomas Wilson, \textit{The arte of rhetorike for the use of all suche as are studious of eloquence} (London: John Kingston, 1553).
“spiritual advisor” to Catherine Parr, Henry VIII’s sixth queen, Latimer resided in Catherine’s manor at Grimsthorpe in Lincolnshire after leaving court.\footnote{King, “Patronage and Piety,” 57.}

It is important to remember that “to the Tudor mind, education and religion were inextricably linked.”\footnote{James, \textit{Catherine Parr}, 128.} As will be discussed in greater detail later, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were all firmly devoted to religious reform. Each of the three women also eventually became great patrons of reformist scholars. By giving their children a progressive education, they were contributing to the “new religious order,” in which female learning became a necessity in order to fulfill “spiritual requirements.”\footnote{Ibid.} Literacy was essential, for women needed to become familiar with scripture in order to lead a pious life.

As the parents of children celebrated for their intellectual abilities, servants of the crown, and respected members of the nobility, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were each firmly established as high-ranking members of the court by the mid-1530s. Anne Stanhope and her husband were brother- and sister-in-law to the king himself, as well as aunt and uncle of the infant Prince Edward. However, a mere twelve days after the prince’s birth, Queen Jane Seymour died. Henry VIII mourned his third wife and remembered her fondly as the mother of his only son. He did not remarry for nearly three years. A royal family portrait painted in the 1540s includes the king with his son, Edward, at his side, while the Princesses Mary and Elizabeth (still legally illegitimate from their mother’s annulments) stand away at either side. Standing near Henry and Edward is Jane Seymour, despite the fact that when the portrait was painted the king was married to his sixth wife, Catherine Parr.\footnote{James, \textit{Catherine Parr}, 132.}
Henry’s affection for Jane extended to her relatives and friends. In 1538, over a year after her death, the king was finally in good spirits and hosted a lavish banquet. Those present were some of his closest friends and confidantes – the Earl and Countess of Sussex, Lady Lisle, the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk (Charles Brandon and Catherine Willoughby), and the Earl and Countess of Hertford (Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope). It is possible that Jane Guildford may have been present as well, as “other maids that were the Queen’s women” were invited.\(^{107}\) Jane had, as one of her former ladies-in-waiting, ridden in the queen’s funeral procession the previous year.\(^{108}\) The Seymours, Brandons and Dudleys remained permanent fixtures in the royal households. When Henry finally married again in 1540 to Anne of Cleves, all three couples attended her reception.\(^{109}\) John Dudley served as the new queen’s Master of the Horse, while his wife, along with Catherine and Anne, entered her household.\(^{110}\) Less than a year later, all three women were serving in the household of the new queen, Catherine Howard.\(^{111}\) As ladies with extensive experience serving Henry VIII’s queens, women like Catherine, Anne, and Jane were fixtures at court and provided a sense of continuity despite the instability of the king’s marriages.\(^{112}\) Henry had the teenaged Queen Catherine executed in 1542 after learning of her sexual escapades before and after her royal marriage. Jane Parker, Viscountess Rochford and a lady of the queen’s household, was executed alongside her for complicity in the queen’s misconduct. However, the majority of the former queen’s ladies remained disconnected from such dangerous matters and suffered no loss of status when their mistress fell from power.

\(^{108}\) Ibid.: Vol. 12 Part 2, 1060.
\(^{109}\) *Byrne, The Lisle Letters*, 6: 1634.
During the king’s progress north – when Catherine Howard had committed adultery with
Thomas Culpeper, a member of the Privy Chamber – Anne Stanhope remained in London with
her husband. On their progress, Henry VIII and his traveling court stopped in Lincolnshire at
Grimsthorpe, a manor belonging to the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. Although Catherine
Willoughby served as hostess to the king and his young queen, it is highly unlikely that she knew
of the infidelity occurring under her own roof.

As shall be shown in more detail later, women like Catherine, Anne, and Jane were
deeply devoted to maintaining their own (as well as their family’s) dignity and honor. This was
not due to an overabundance of pride or snobbery, as sometimes alleged by their critics, but from
the practicality and experience of service at the Tudor court. “The court is full of pride, envy,
indignation and mocking, scorning and derision,” John Husee wrote to Lady Lisle when her
daughter Anne attained a position in Jane Seymour’s household. It was also a place where a
single misstep could result in loss of life. By 1542, Henry VIII had executed two wives, two of
his closest advisors, and various members of his extended family. Yet Catherine, Anne, Jane, and
their husbands managed not only to survive but to prosper under the Henrician regime.

Charles Brandon, whose rise to prominence stemmed from his role as the young Henry
VIII’s boon companion, maintained a close relationship with the king throughout the rest of his
life. His position as Duke of Suffolk made him an important public figure and substantial
landowner. While he and his former wife, Mary Tudor, had opposed Henry VIII’s marriage to
Anne Boleyn, Charles managed to remain a relatively neutral political figure at court while
married to Catherine Willoughby. As England’s two senior military leaders, he and the Duke of

113 Martienssen, *Queen Katherine Parr*, 138.
Norfolk headed north in 1536 to lead the suppression of the Pilgrimage of Grace, the greatest rebellion of Henry VIII’s reign. Charles benefited from the resulting dissolution of the monasteries, receiving large grants of monastic property.\textsuperscript{116} In 1537, he stood as one of Prince Edward’s godfathers, along with the Duke of Norfolk and Archbishop of Canterbury.\textsuperscript{117} In 1540, the king also appointed Charles as Great Master of the royal household. As Duchess of Suffolk, Catherine divided her time between her roles at court and her responsibilities as a mother and the mistress of her own great household.

Edward Seymour gained further honors between 1540 and 1543. He became a Knight of the Garter, Warden of the Scottish Marches, Lord High Admiral, and Lord Great Chamberlain.\textsuperscript{118} In 1540, nearly three years after becoming Earl of Hertford, Edward decided to honor Anne Stanhope and their children by giving them precedence with regard to inheritance. By an act of Parliament, Hertford’s lands and titles were settled on “the heirs male of himself and lady Anne, his wife.”\textsuperscript{119} Although he had already repudiated his first wife, Catherine Fillol, before his second marriage, he had waited five years to confirm Anne in such a position. By the spring of 1540, she had given her husband three sons and two daughters – with only the eldest, Edward, dying in infancy.\textsuperscript{120} She remained with child throughout most of her marriage. As mentioned above, she gave birth to ten children between 1537 and 1550. She maneuvered through court positions with ease, matching her husband’s own political ambitions. Anne Stanhope was now the mother of Edward’s heirs, and, by the standards of the time, she was certainly worthy of the position.

\textsuperscript{116} Plowden, \textit{Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk}, 42-43.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{L&P, Henry VIII}: Vol. 15, 498.
\textsuperscript{118} Beer, “Seymour, Edward,” in \textit{ODNB}.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{L&P, Henry VIII}: Vol. 12 Part 2, 911.
\textsuperscript{120} Warnicke, “Inventing the Wicked Women of Tudor England,” 22.
John Dudley proved himself to be a capable politician and an astute landowner. He attached himself to the Boleyns and their supporters during their rise to power, but managed to avoid becoming implicated in their downfall because of his attachment to Thomas Cromwell, with whom he engaged in multiple land dealings throughout the 1530s. When Jane Guildford’s father died in 1534, he left her cousin, John Guildford, as his principal heir. However, John Dudley pursued an interest in his father-in-law’s estate on his wife’s behalf (Jane’s brother, Richard, had predeceased their father). John managed to obtain a variety of minor offices and appointments in the 1530s, including his father-in-law’s former seat in the House of Commons, and the command of a small contingent during the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. In 1537, Henry VIII appointed him as Vice-Admiral, which was the beginning of a long and successful naval career. Despite Cromwell’s downfall in 1540, John’s real breakthrough came in March 1542, when his maternal uncle, Arthur Plantagenet, Viscount Lisle died. Later that month, the king granted him the title by letters patent. Now married to a viscount, Jane Guildford, like Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, was entitled to a position as a great lady in the queen’s household when Henry VIII remarried for the sixth and final time in July 1543. The king’s last choice was the twice-widowed Catherine Parr, whose political astuteness and religious inclinations proved to be of momentous significance for the women who served her.

121 Loades, “John Dudley,” in ODNB.
CHAPTER TWO. GREAT LADIES OF THE QUEEN’S CHAMBER

The Household of Queen Catherine Parr

Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford’s attendance at Henry VIII and Catherine Parr’s wedding on June 12, 1544 marked them as part of the royal court’s most intimate circle.¹ The new queen was close in age to the three women and shared a similar worldview and interests. By the time Catherine Parr became queen, Anne Stanhope had been at court for at least twenty years, and Catherine Willoughby and Jane Guildford for at least ten. No longer mere ladies-in-waiting, they became great ladies of the queen’s household and part of her inner circle. According to Catherine Parr’s biographer, Susan James, the queen’s closest friends were her sister, Anne Parr, Lady Herbert; her cousin, Maud Parr, Lady Lane; a relation from her first marriage, Elizabeth Oxenbridge, Lady Tyrwhit; and an old friend of her mother, Mary Wotton, Lady Carew. Other members of this inner circle included Joan Champernowne, Lady Denny; Mary Arundell, Countess of Arundel; Anne Calthorpe, Countess of Sussex; Mary Howard, Dowager Countess of Richmond; and Mary Scrope, Lady Kingston. These women shared a bond that was held together by “a combination of blood ties, self-advancement, an interest in scholarly pursuits and a missionary zeal to define and disseminate the tenets of the new religion.”²

The ladies attended the queen constantly – helping her dress, serving her at dinner, accompanying her throughout the court and on visits elsewhere, as well as keeping her company throughout the day. By now experts in court service, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were familiar

² Susan James, Catherine Parr: Henry VIII’s Last Love (Gloucestershire, UK: The History Press, 2008), 127-129.
with “the elaborate rituals which controlled life in the royal household” and “the intricacies of prerogative, pedigree and ceremony.”³ It was Catherine Parr who was, in the beginning, unacquainted with life at court. Her mother, Maud Green, had served Catherine of Aragon and had developed a close personal relationship with Henry’s first queen.⁴ Maud was therefore likely also intimately acquainted with Maria de Salinas, the queen’s Spanish confidante and Catherine Willoughby’s mother. While her mother formed connections at court, Catherine Parr spent the majority of her life in the countryside, and was widowed twice before her royal marriage. It was not until 1543, upon the death of her second husband, that she came to court in the service of Lady Mary.⁵ However, Queen Catherine adapted quickly to court life, for she was “energetic by character and eager to excel in this, the most important role of her life.”⁶ With her network of ladies beside her, she quickly grew comfortable in her position. In February 1544, she entertained the Spanish Don Manriquez de Lara, Duke of Najera. He was impressed with Queen Catherine and her ladies – Catherine, Anne, and Jane included – who “were dressed in different silks, with splendid headdresses.” The queen herself was praised as having “a lively and pleasing appearance,” and for being “a virtuous woman.”⁷ Despite her historical reputation as a mere nursemaid to an ailing, cantankerous king, the thirty-one-year-old Catherine Parr was actually an elegant, vivacious, and – at times – impulsive woman. She enjoyed the trappings of queenship and possessed a keen interest in Continental fashion. Her wardrobe contained sumptuous fabrics in a variety of colors (including her personal favorite, crimson), shoes, hats, fans, mufflers,

³ Ibid., 101.
⁴ National Archives, London: Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/24/153; Maud Parr’s intimacy with Catherine of Aragon is evidenced by the numerous gifts from the queen mentioned in her will, including portraits of the king and queen and multiple jeweled ornaments.
⁵ L&P, Henry VIII: Vol. 18 Part 1, 443; James, Catherine Parr, 77.
⁶ James, Catherine Parr, 107.
⁷ Ibid., 106-107.
watches, and, of course, numerous jewels. Catherine was also accomplished in many of the elite pastimes so common at the royal court, including hunting, riding, music, and dancing. The queen understood that the Tudor monarchy strove to consistently present an image of magnificence and opulence. While the material and cultural benefits of queenship provided her with personal enjoyment, they also served to bolster the authority of the monarchy. Catherine Parr was undoubtedly a confident queen who presided capably over a lavish court.

The royal court underwent significant transformation throughout the sixteenth century. In origin, “the court’ was a highly amorphous entity,” but it was subject to repeated Tudor ordinances that imposed order and economy. The organization of the permanent household of the queen consort was modeled on that of the king. Both were separated into two divisions: the *domus providencie* (the domestic household “below stairs”) and the *domus regie magnificencie* (the household “above stairs” charged with sustaining and displaying the majesty of the monarchy). Those who served in both divisions were distinguished from other general court residents in that they received “bouche of court” and wages, and they were subject to the authority of either the Lord Chamberlain (those “above stairs”) or the Lord Steward (those “below”). The domestic staff serving the king and his wife usually numbered somewhere around five or six hundred individuals. It was in the *domus regie magnificencie* that great ladies, like Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford, served. In 1547, there were at least forty-five women serving in the queen’s chambers – twenty-six ladies, six gentlewomen, five

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chamberers, and seven maids of honor. Each of these women also had their own servants with them at court.\textsuperscript{11}

The Tudor monarchy was inherently personal and, because the monarch, his family, and his advisors lived at court, “England was governed from the court.” Those with political ambitions therefore needed to attend and live at court regularly, particularly those who wished to be a part of its extensive patronage network. Despite his fickle nature, Henry VIII – ever striving to emulate model medieval kingship – could be a generous bestower of gifts and favors. The contest for royal favor created a political environment in which “the main axis of political conflict was between those who controlled [the court], and those who were excluded from office and the fruits of patronage.” Factionalism had existed at the royal court since the days of Henry VI’s reign, and had only increased during that of Edward IV and the many crises of the Wars of the Roses. While Henry VIII was undoubtedly more susceptible to “pressure and manipulation” during the early years of his kingship, factional politics almost always played a role in his decisions. In particular, the 1540s saw the emergence of factions “with a marked ideological context.” The battle over England’s religion therefore shaped the personal and factional politics of the royal court.\textsuperscript{12}

Historians have vigorously debated the extent of Catherine Parr’s political influence over Henry VIII and her role at the royal court. J. K. McConica’s early assertion that, as queen, Catherine was a positive and “decisive” influence on Henry VIII, his family, and the royal court was generally accepted for decades.\textsuperscript{13} In her biography of Catherine Parr, Susan James describes

\textsuperscript{12} Loades, The Tudor Court, 133-166.
the queen as “a committed player of power politics.”\textsuperscript{14} James also sees Catherine as more than “merely a cipher,” but “the first true queen of the new [religious] order.”\textsuperscript{15} However, other historians, such as Maria Dowling, have contested McConica’s assessment.\textsuperscript{16} Dowling contends that Catherine was, rather than the leader of a reformist faction at court, merely “one of the most vulnerable of their number.” This therefore made the queen susceptible to the plots against her and her household in 1546.\textsuperscript{17} Dakota Hamilton’s conclusions in her 1992 dissertation, “The Household of Queen Katherine Parr,” are of particular interest. Hamilton argues that Queen Catherine and the high-ranking women of her household did not exercise any significant influence over political affairs, but that they did contribute greatly to the pace and direction of religious reform.\textsuperscript{18} According to Hamilton, then, Catherine and her ladies “unwittingly became political figures through their religious activities.”\textsuperscript{19} However, to separate political and religious affairs is to neglect a key characteristic of Henrician politics, particularly in the 1540s. An individual’s religious preference was inevitably a political matter and an intentional choice. With the passage of parliamentary acts like the First Act of Supremacy in 1534, the succeeding Treasons Act of that year, as well as the Act of Six Articles in 1539 (officially titled “An Act Abolishing Diversity in Opinions”), Henry VIII and his government made it exceedingly clear that matters of personal faith were concerns of the state. In the Tudor period, the personal was political.

\textsuperscript{14} James, \textit{Catherine Parr}, 11.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{17} Dowling, \textit{Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII}, 67.
\textsuperscript{18} Hamilton, “The Household of Queen Katherine Parr,” 10.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 7.; Italics have been added for emphasis.
Hamilton points out that it was likely the high-ranking women of the queen’s household who were responsible for “the gradual process” of Catherine Parr’s conversion to the reformist cause between 1544 and 1546. This conversion was not simply a matter of personal preference – it was a transformation that directly affected English politics during the last years of Henry’s reign and the reigns of his children. Catherine Parr exercised significant administrative and personal influence over her royal stepchildren. She served as queen regent during her husband’s second military excursion in France between July and September 1544, and it is clear that she expected to serve in this public role again after her husband’s death and her stepson’s accession in 1547. Because of the nature of the Tudor court and its factional politics, as well as the personality of the queen herself, Catherine Parr and her ladies’ embracing of the reformist cause carried significant political implications. While support for further theological reform was essentially illegal under the rule of the inherently-conservative Henry VIII, “nascent Protestantism” found support in the formidable reformist faction at court and its patronage network. As participants in this patronage network, Anne Stanhope, Catherine Willoughby, and Jane Guildford were therefore political actors.

Reform and the Queen’s Household

Catherine, Anne, and Jane entered court service during the earliest years of the English Reformation, which was largely precipitated by Henry VIII’s “Great Matter” – the struggle to annul his first marriage to Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. In 1534, Henry VIII

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20 Ibid., 294-295.
21 James, Catherine Parr, 256.
22 Dowling, Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII, 68.
severed ties with the papacy and declared himself Supreme Head of the Church of England. From that moment, England ceased to be a Catholic kingdom. Yet under Henry it was not a truly Protestant one either. The king attempted for over a decade to keep his subjects in line with his own unique beliefs regarding religious theology and authority. He disapproved of Continental reform and believed those who followed such teachings were heretics. Those who adhered to Catholicism were considered traitors. Henry VIII’s own beliefs were theologically traditional, but he disapproved of anything that seemed to threaten his authority – such as the papacy and monasticism. Henry did attempt to reform some aspects of the Anglican Church; he eradicated much of the visible cult of saints and was responsible for the first authorized edition of the Bible in English. However, his beliefs on transubstantiation, clerical celibacy, and other key theological issues remained the same as when he had been a devoted Roman Catholic. Although his religious beliefs continued to be relatively stable throughout the late 1530s and 1540s, the king was unpredictable in his distribution of favor at court. Both the conservative and reformist factions stood a chance of swinging Henry to their side.24

Determining the pace and timeline of individual conversions during the early English Reformation is a daunting task. However, it is worthwhile to attempt to explain when and how Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford transformed into advocates of reform. In Popular Politics and the English Reformation, Ethan Shagan argues convincingly that the Reformation was a “piecemeal process in which politics and spiritual change were irrevocably intertwined.” The Reformation was not imposed upon a resistant – or even apathetic – population, but rather it was a process of negotiation. Through local agents and collaborators,

24 For a more comprehensive account of the Henrician Reformation and the king’s own beliefs see: Richard Rex, Henry VIII and the English Reformation, 2nd Ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
engagement, and a variety of personal experiences, “the English Reformation was not done to people, it was done with them.” Shagan’s view of a gradual Reformation is particularly useful in examining the events of the 1540s, when Henry VIII had all but stopped the pace of religious change, much to the disappointment of the more committed reformers in his realm. The only accepted religious beliefs in the late 1530s and 1540s were those that fell in line with the king’s own personal brand of faith. However, the diversity of belief and opinion that remained inconspicuously or discreetly tolerated likely encompassed a wide range. Identifying where certain individuals fell along this spectrum of prohibited beliefs and activities is challenging.

Certainly, Catherine, Anne, and Jane had all become advocates of religious reform prior to Henry VIII’s sixth and final marriage in 1543. Catherine Willoughby’s conversion to the reformist cause was perhaps the most surprising. According to an anonymous Spanish chronicler, the Duchess of Suffolk was “a very good Christian” (i.e., a Catholic) while her husband lived, but when the duke died in 1545, “she became one of the greatest heretics in the kingdom.” However, it is clear that Catherine felt comfortable publicly insulting a leader of the conservative faction and her own godfather, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, even before her powerful husband’s death. At a dinner sometime in the early 1540s, the Duke of Suffolk suggested that each lady “choose him whom she loved best, and so place themselves.” Catherine, as hostess, rather than selecting her own husband, brazenly took Gardiner’s hand and said, “forasmuch as she could not sit down with my lord whom she loved best, she had chosen him

whom she loved worst.”28 After Charles Brandon’s death, Catherine’s slights against the bishop only became more blatant. She dressed her dog in clerical robes and named him “Gardiner,” and when the bishop was imprisoned in the Tower under Edward VI, she declared that “it was merry with the lambs, now the wolf was shut up.”29

S. J. Gunn, Charles Brandon’s biographer, argues that Catherine Willoughby did not move in reformist circles at court until after her husband’s death, which likely coincided with “the gradual development of her friendships and beliefs.”30 Yet there are indications that the transformation of her religious identity had already begun prior to the Duke of Suffolk’s death in 1545. The duke’s own religious beliefs remained decidedly ambiguous throughout the religious turmoil of Henry VIII’s later reign. Much of this can be attributed to his age – he was thirty-five years his wife’s senior and a generation older than most of the reformers at court. He tended to work with people regardless of their religious views. For example, his household chaplains included men of both conservative and reformist beliefs. John Parkhurst was the most radical appointment to the duke’s household, and, according to Gunn, “he was far more the duchess’s man than the duke’s.” Parkhurst, the future Bishop of Norwich during Elizabeth I’s reign, followed his erstwhile mistress, Catherine Willoughby, into exile during the Marian persecutions.31 During Henry’s reign, though, he served as the duke’s chaplain and tutor to the Brandon children. He later joined Catherine Parr’s household as her own chaplain – likely through the influence and patronage of the Duchess of Suffolk. Prior to employing Parkhurst, the Duke of Suffolk had hired Pierre Valence – a known critic of the sale of indulgences – as tutor to

**References**

29 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 200.
his children with his previous wife, Mary Tudor. As the duke’s ward at the time, Catherine Willoughby would have also been educated by Valence, who later joined the household of Thomas Cromwell. Additionally, the duke employed Alexander Seton, who preached regularly on the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and Thomas Lawney, a protégé of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, as chaplains in his household.\(^{32}\) While it is unlikely that Catherine Willoughby had much influence over these particular appointments to the Suffolk household, clergymen like Parkhurst, Valence, Seton, and Lawney would have helped lay an early groundwork for the duchess’s conversion to the reformist cause.

While Catherine Willoughby eventually became celebrated by Protestants and maligned by Catholics as a fervent advocate of reform, her early upbringing offered no signs of her eventual religious conversion. Her family was intimately connected with some of the most strident Catholics at Henry VIII’s court. Her mother, Maria de Salinas, who died in 1539, was every bit as devoted to Rome as her mistress, Queen Catherine of Aragon. The Duke and Duchess of Suffolk were close with Maria and often visited her at her estates. As was typical of aristocratic women at the time, Maria’s sway over her daughter remained significant even after her marriage to the duke.\(^{33}\) This influence can be seen in Catherine’s correspondence from the 1530s. In addition to using saints’ days to date her letters, she preferred to use the traditional Catholic closing statement, “Jesu have you in his keeping” – a custom she did not abandon until after her mother’s death.\(^{34}\)


Maria de Salinas’s intimate relationship with Henry VIII’s first wife also created a natural affinity between Catherine Willoughby and Mary Tudor. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the princess bestowed regular gifts on the Duchess of Suffolk and the two played cards together regularly. In February 1536, Catherine Willoughby served as the second mourner at Catherine of Aragon’s funeral, likely commemorating her mother’s friendship with the erstwhile queen, as well as demonstrating her position as wife of a high-ranking peer. Queen Mary Tudor of France, the previous Duchess of Suffolk and Catherine’s erstwhile guardian, had also been a fairly conservative influence. She was a supporter of Catherine of Aragon and her niece – so much so that she and Charles Brandon were politically overshadowed and isolated throughout the early 1530s. When she died in 1533 and Catherine Willoughby stepped into her place as Duchess of Suffolk, Brandon became – out of necessity and self-interest – more responsive to the nascent reformist faction (which at that time included the members of the Boleyn family and the ascendent Thomas Cromwell). The deaths of Queen Mary Tudor and Catherine of Aragon in the 1530s, then, would have also eliminated much of the personal antipathy that Catherine Willoughby, engendered by her family loyalties, had for the Boleyns, their supporters, and their devotion to reform.

By 1543, many of Catherine Willoughby’s older Catholic associations had disappeared. By the time Henry VIII married his sixth and final wife, a great many courtiers who were of a similar age and social status with the Duchess of Suffolk supported religious reform to one extent or another. There was a clear generational difference between courtiers with more traditional, conservative beliefs and those who promoted reform. As a young woman coming into

36 Gunn, Charles Brandon, 115-118.
adulthood in the 1530s and 1540s, it was likely natural that Catherine Willoughby would gravitate towards the younger and, in many ways, more dynamic circles at court.

In addition to her changing social connections, events and circumstances well before the death of her husband clearly paved the way for the Duchess of Suffolk’s conversion. In October 1536, her native Lincolnshire became the setting for the first in a series of insurrections that collectively came to be known as the Pilgrimage of Grace. Between 1536 and 1537, thousands of Catholics in England’s northern counties rose up in armed rebellion against Henry VIII’s religious policies, particularly those concerning the dissolution of the monasteries. The rebels – or “pilgrims” as they called themselves – formed the largest and most threatening insurrection during the Tudor era. As Catherine Willoughby’s husband – and thus a major landowner in Lincolnshire – as well as one of the king’s closest confidantes, Charles Brandon was tasked with leading the effort to raise troops and disperse the rebels of the Lincolnshire Rising. Moreover, the rising further exacerbated the ongoing feud within the Willoughby family initiated by Sir Christopher Willoughby’s inheritance dispute. Most of those family members and servants who supported Sir Christopher’s claims joined the Lincolnshire Rising, while those who backed Maria de Salinas and her daughter (and therefore the Duke of Suffolk) largely did not participate. Therefore, the dispute with Sir Christopher and the Lincolnshire Rising pushed Catherine Willoughby closer into her husband’s network, which – through his loyalty to the Crown and his decision to enforce its policies against the northern rebels – brought her into the orbit of the reformist faction at court.

Once the Duchess of Suffolk had committed herself to religious reform – likely at some point in the late 1530s or early 1540s – she became one of its most enthusiastic supporters. By

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37 L&P, Henry VIII: Vol. 11, 656.
38 Franklin-Harkrider, Women, Reform and Community, 37-38.
1546, she had fully embraced the reformist faction at court. In February of that year, leading
reformers, including William Herbert, John Gates, Anthony Denny, and William Paget,
sponsored her for the payment for her son’s wardship. Her Christian zeal seems to have
influenced Catherine Parr herself, as evidenced by the queen’s letter to Thomas Seymour in
February 1547 (not long after Henry VIII’s death). In it, she explained that she viewed her
marriage to the king as a divine calling. Four years earlier, she had abandoned her own desire to
marry Seymour in order “to follow His will most willingly.” Catherine Willoughby seems to
have encouraged the queen’s interpretation of events, for Catherine Parr ended her letter by
explaining that “as my lady of Suffolk saith, ‘God is a marvelous man’.” The friendship
between the queen and the Duchess of Suffolk endured gossip at court in February 1546
regarding “rumours of a new Queen.” The new imperial ambassador, Francis van der Delft,
wrote to Emperor Charles V that such rumors could be “[attributed] to the sterility of the present
Queen” and that “Madame Suffolk is much talked about and in great favour.” At the time,
Catherine was still a relatively new young widow – Charles Brandon having died in August of
the previous year. However, the ambassador explained that “the King shows no alteration in his
demeanour to the Queen, although she is said to be annoyed at the rumour.” Despite such
courtly drama, the bond between the two women endured. The strength of their friendship is also
evidenced by the fact that Mary Seymour, Catherine Parr’s infant daughter with her fourth and
final husband, was entrusted to the guardianship of the Duchess of Suffolk after her death in
1548 from childbirth complications.

40 “Dowager Queen Katherine to Lord Thomas Seymour [Circa Mid-February] 1547” in Mueller,
Complete Works, 131.
42 James Catherine Parr, 299.
While serving in the household of Catherine Parr, Catherine Willoughby likely became acquainted with Hugh Latimer – one of the most important religious influences in her life. Latimer had been familiar with the queen for some time, likely visiting her home in London in the early 1540s when she was still married to her previous husband, John Neville, Baron Latimer. After his radical religious opinions threatened to implicate him in “the heresy hunt” of the mid-1540s, Latimer took refuge at Catherine Willoughby’s Lincolnshire manor, Grimsthorpe. Within a few short years, then, Latimer had made a significant impression upon the Duchess of Suffolk and her religious views. (Catherine’s later patronage of and friendship with Latimer will be the subject of greater scrutiny in Chapter Four of this work.)

During the early years of her religious conversion and then while serving in the household of Catherine Parr, Catherine Willoughby inevitably became closer with both Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford, as well as their families. By March 1544, Catherine felt familiar enough with Edward Seymour to send him the lavish gift of a horse. In addition to her husband’s own connections at court, her friendship with the Earl of Hertford likely stemmed from her growing closeness with Anne Stanhope. She visited the Countess of Hertford at her home at Sheene on more than one occasion and, when not in residence together at court, the two exchanged letters frequently. She also cultivated a relationship with John and Jane Dudley – by 1542 Viscount and Viscountess Lisle. In November 1545, the Duchess of Suffolk stood as godmother to their daughter, whom they named Catherine. As godmother, Catherine Willoughby

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43 Ibid., 161.
hosted a christening reception for the family and other guests in London. While the three women had certainly associated with the same circles at court for roughly a decade, by the mid-1540s, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were forming a close attachment with one another – one maintained by political, personal, and religious ties.

Unlike Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford’s conversions to the reformist cause likely occurred earlier than the late 1530s. With the exception of Anne’s attachment to Mary Tudor, she and Jane lacked the numerous personal connections to the old religion that had delayed Catherine’s own transformation. Their marriages to Edward Seymour and John Dudley likely had the most significant bearing on their entrances into the reformist faction at court. Unlike Charles Brandon, Seymour and Dudley were openly aligned with the reformers at court. Despite their evident political associations, historians have long debated the sincerity of Seymour and Dudley’s devotion to religious reform. Yet it is unlikely that the two men would have gone to the lengths that they did in order to establish and protect Protestantism during and after the reign of Edward VI if their support was based merely on political ambition and self-preservation. As Lord Protector and Lord President of the Council respectively, Seymour and Dudley presided over regimes that were responsible for some of the most radical religious reform in England’s history.

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In addition to that of their husbands, historians have also inevitably called into question Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford’s religious devotion. While historian Dakota Hamilton does not question the sincerity of Catherine Willoughby’s conversion, she argues that both Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford’s support of religious reform stemmed primarily from political profit and their husbands’ ambitions. Hamilton does concede that women like Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford, as well as Catherine Willoughby, were largely responsible for “the development of Catherine Parr’s religious beliefs.” Like their husbands, Anne and Jane went to considerable lengths to promote religious reform. Both women allowed prominent reformers to educate their children, thereby establishing reformist ideals into the next generation. Their roles in Catherine Parr’s household and their associations at court placed them unequivocally within the reformist camp – a group whose cause did not necessarily seem destined for victory in the mid-1540s. They and their husbands put themselves and their families at great risk through their support of religious reform. For example, in 1539, the Seymours provided Hugh Latimer with protection after his protest against Henry VIII’s more conservative religious policies earned him the king’s ire. By 1547, it was public knowledge that mass was no longer said in the Dudley household, and this was likely a change that had occurred secretly before the old king’s death. Service in Catherine Parr’s household did not always automatically equate with a sympathy for reform, and the couples’ motivations were therefore likely more than simple pragmatism and ambition. For example, the queen had strong personal associations with some of the more conservative ladies at court, including Mary Tudor and Lady Margaret Douglas, the king’s niece.

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49 Ibid., 298.
50 Franklin-Harkrider, Women, Reform and Community, 79-80.
It might have been more politically astute for Anne and Jane to avoid factionalism altogether. Instead, their reformist inclinations were likely the result of a sincere choice based in principle, rather than a politically-motivated decision stemming from simple necessity and circumstance.

The process of conversion during the English Reformation was complex and multifaceted. The experiences of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford demonstrate that a variety of factors were often at play in the spiritual decisions of those living in Tudor England. Nonetheless, personal connections and political expedience did not necessarily negate genuine faith. Religious choice was a serious matter in sixteenth-century England, and the majority of those who supported the steady advance of Protestantism did so out of sincere belief. At the same time, religion was not the only motivating factor in people’s decisions. Personal relationships and political alliances at court were fluid and often formed from more than just religious sympathies. The strength of Anne Stanhope’s attachment to Mary Tudor is a testament to this. While the precise outline of Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s conversion experience can never be determined, it is clear that all three women were devoted reformers by the time they entered Catherine Parr’s household in the early 1540s.

At first, the majority of those at court, regardless of religious predilection, accepted Henry’s new queen. Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador, approved of her warm relationship with the Mary, whom the ambassador supported passionately. The day of the royal marriage, the ambassador wrote, “May God be pleased that this marriage turn out well, and that the King’s favor and affection for the princess, his daughter, continue to increase.” Other conservatives at court – including Thomas Howard, Stephen Gardiner, Thomas Wriothesley, and Richard Rich – also approved of Catherine at first. Although, like Chapuys, they misinterpreted

her kindness to Mary “as a tendency to sympathize with Mary’s religion.” Catherine Parr was, by this time, firmly devoted to religious reform and her household soon became “the royal clubhouse of the new religion.” She held regular sessions in her chambers in order to discuss theological works and listen to sermons by her chaplains which “oftimes touched such abuses as in the Church there were rife.” The ladies of the queen’s household attended these sessions, which “stressed the authority of scripture and attacked abuses in the Catholic Church,” and participated in “a daily regimen that included prayer, scripture study, and theological training.” As they likely already held reformist beliefs before serving the queen, Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford assimilated well into this group of intellectual and devout women.

In May 1543, Parliament passed the Act for the Advancement of the True Religion, which forbade “women, artificers, apprentices, journeymen, serving-men of the rank of yeomen and under, husbandmen and laborers” from reading the Bible. The goal of this act was to prevent “malicious minds” from “[subverting] the true exposition of Scripture.” Henry VIII and his government intended to restrict the majority of Englishmen and women from interpreting and debating religious belief. While a clause added later allowed women of noble birth to read the Bible “to themselves alone and not to others,” the activities that occurred within Catherine Parr’s household still largely flouted the act. Henry VIII was clearly willing to apply these restrictions inconsistently, and the persecution of heresy during his reign was always sporadic. The queen and her ladies therefore took advantage of their privileged positions to study, discuss, and

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53 James, Catherine Parr, 231.
54 Ibid., 230.
56 Franklin-Harkrider, Women, Reform and Community, 49.
57 34 & 35 Henry VIII, c. 1.
propagate ideas about religious reform. As John King argues, Catherine Parr and the women of her household broke with older generations of royal and aristocratic women who had focused their patronage on “medieval literature, works of monastic piety, and scholastic learning for an elite aristocratic readership.” Instead, the younger generation of women engaged in “an ambitious program that fused Bible reading with private theological study” and “the popularization of Protestant humanism.”

58 These women considerably influenced later generations of female patrons, the first of which came of age during Elizabeth I’s reign. Catherine Parr was also a trendsetter in that she was the first queen consort to publish her own theological writings and the first woman to publish in English under her own name. Her first work, Prayers or Meditations, was published in 1545, while she was still married to the king. She wrote the second, The Lamentation of a Sinner, in late 1546 but waited until nearly a year later, after her theologically-conservative royal husband had died, to have it published.

Lamentation supported the view of justification by faith alone, a decidedly Protestant belief. 59 In the title page of the work, Catherine Parr indicated that the work had been “set forth and put in print at the instant desire of the right gracious lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk, and the earnest request of the right honorable lord William Parr, Marquess of Northampton.”

An array of reformist authors also recognized the potential of Catherine Parr and the women of her household as supporters and patrons. In 1545, Nicholas Udall prefaced his English translation of Erasmus’s Paraphrases with a letter to the queen. In it, he expressed his hope that “one day, when his [Henry VIII’s] godly wisdom shall so think expedient, cause the same Paraphrase to be published and set abroad in print, to the same use that your highness [Catherine

58 King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43.
60 Catherine Parr, The Lamentation of a Sinner in Mueller, Complete Works, 443.
Parr] hath meant it – that is to say, to the public commodity and benefit of good English people, now a long time sore thirsting and hungering the sincere and plain knowledge of God’s Word.”

Reformers like Udall were likely hopeful that Henry VIII’s sixth wife would influence the king. Similarly, Sir Anthony Cope, the queen’s Lord Chamberlain, wrote a dedicatory letter to his mistress in the preface of his *A Godly Meditation upon Twenty... Psalms of the Prophet David*, published in 1547. In the letter, Cope explained that he had ruminated over an appropriate New Year’s gift for the queen so that he “might in some part declare my loyal and obedient heart toward you, whose heaped goodness I have so much tasted.” After considering Catherine’s “gracious intent and godly purpose in the reading and study of holy Scripture, and the advancement of the true Word of God,” he decided upon “an exposition of certain Psalms of the noble prophet David, whose harmony is so sweet and pleasant that the ears of the faithful may scantily therewith be fully satisfied.”

Certain authors also recognized the women of the queen’s household as advocates for reform. John Parkhurst, who (as mentioned above) served as chaplain in both the Suffolk and Catherine Parr’s households, wrote two Latin epigrams on Catherine Parr and Catherine Willoughby in 1545:

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Ennobled is England by noble Katherines;  
Know though this: one is a Queen, another a Duchess.  
O blest, thrice blest is England with such jewels;  
Blest thou, too, Parkhurst, in such mistresses of households.  
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The roles of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford as patrons, particularly of religious reform, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. All three

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62 “Sir Anthony Cope’s Dedicatory Letter to Queen Katherine Prefacing His *A Godly Meditation upon Twenty... Psalms of the Prophet David*, New Year’s, 1547,” in Mueller, *Complete Works*, 123.
63 “John Parkhurst’s Two Latin Epigrams on Queen Katherine Parra and Katherine Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk [ca. late 1545],” in Mueller, *Complete Works*, 112.
women had greater opportunities and resources to distribute patronage after Henry VIII’s death and Edward VI’s accession in 1547. However, it is clear that their support for reform and their participation in the patronage network at court began well before the end of the old king’s reign. While their political and religious affiliations had likely been determined before Catherine Parr became queen, all three women strengthened those affiliations during their service in her household. It was also in the final years of Henry VIII’s reign that observers began to note the women’s religious beliefs and political connections.

Catherine Parr and her household played an important role in factional religious conflict. Her network of women was a dynamic force in politics and ecclesiastical matters. The conservative faction at court feared Catherine’s social circles. They believed that women such as the Duchess of Suffolk, the Countess of Hertford, and Viscountess Lisle had “infected” the queen with their views. Their greatest fear was that because Henry VIII cherished his wife, the reformists would be able to convert the king. In January 1547, the day after Henry VIII’s death, the imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys expressed concerns regarding “stirrers of heresy” at court and believed Catherine Parr to be “infected” with “the evils of religious innovation” by Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford in particular. The influence of these three noblewomen with both the first woman at court and their husbands put them in particularly formidable positions. They, the other noblewomen in the queen’s household, and their husbands made the most of this situation.

Scholars are justifiably critical of ambassadorial reports such as those of the prolific Eustace Chapuys. Much of the information contained in his letters amounts to mere gossip and speculation. However, many of Chapuys’s reports and observations can be corroborated or

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confirmed. In the letter mentioned above, written to Mary of Hungary, Chapuys adroitly observed that “the Earl and Admiral” (i.e., Edward Seymour and John Dudley) were Protestants and that they “would drag the whole country into this damnable error.” He also observed that, aside from the Duke of Norfolk, there was “no counteracting influence among the secular nobility” to the reformist faction at court. This was an astute observation of court politics at the time, and, in the days that followed, Chapuys’s prediction became a reality. Edward Seymour, backed by most of the reformist faction at court, emerged as the leader of Edward VI’s government – a government that immediately began transforming England into a firmly Protestant kingdom. When John Dudley emerged as the leader of the young king’s government a few years later, he continued many of his predecessor’s religious policies. Evidently, the ambassador was capable of reporting more than idle or embellished gossip. It is also important to note that contemporaries clearly viewed women of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford’s status as capable of an enormous amount of influence over both their families and political events. In many cases, this perception of influence was just as significant as any tangible power the women actually had. This perception helped to encourage the conservative faction to move first against the reformist women at court, rather than their husbands. It also motivated Chapuys to take note of them as political actors and a threat to the conservative faith.

It is easy to see why the reformers made the ambassador nervous. In addition to Edward Seymour and John Dudley, the ranks of the reformist faction included Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel and Lord Chamberlain; William Parr, Earl of Essex and the queen’s brother; Sir Anthony Denny; and Sir John Gates. Many of these men held positions in the king’s Privy Chamber and had wives who served the queen.

65 Ibid.
Catherine Parr’s brother-in-law, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, was also a powerful ally at court, despite the fact that his political ambition often surpassed his reformist sympathies. Although Charles Brandon was generally neutral both politically and religiously, he also had personal ties to Seymour and Dudley. The Duke of Suffolk was godfather to Seymour’s eldest son. In the 1540s, both Seymour and Dudley each served as Warden-General of the Scottish Marches under the guidance of Charles Brandon as “commander-in-chief.” As mentioned previously, the Duke of Suffolk had knighted both Seymour and Dudley in France in 1523. When Henry VIII invaded France for a second time in 1544, the three men fought alongside one another again. Because Seymour and Dudley were soldiers as well as courtiers, they likely identified with and respected Brandon for his “martial abilities.” Edward Seymour seemed to have had a marked admiration for the duke, writing to him in 1544, “There is no man living under whom I would more gladly spend my life in the King’s service.” Although Brandon remained fairly traditional in his religious beliefs, he recognized the advantages of fostering a friendship with the powerful and influential Earl of Hertford, who was both a fellow military man and brother-in-law to the king.

The conservative faction at court was led by Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester and Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. Two useful supporters, Thomas Wriothesley and Richard Rich, were more concerned with their political careers than with religion. Although they prosecuted heretics with zeal during the last years of Henry VIII’s reign, both would prove amenable to the Protestant reign of Edward VI. The king’s daughter, Mary, was of course a

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66 James, Catherine Parr, 81-82.
68 Gunn, Charles Brandon, 186-189.
69 Ibid., 195.
70 Blatcher, Report on the Manuscripts at Longleat, 104.
steadfast supporter of Catholicism, her mother’s faith, but Edward – the heir – and Elizabeth were being brought up with decidedly reformist tutors. However, the prince was young and it became apparent that the next reign would begin with a minor as monarch. As Henry VIII grew older and increasingly frail in the mid-1540s, a factional conflict for control over the fate of the kingdom became inevitable.

The reformers at court had a distinct advantage – their intimacy with the king. Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope had been brother and sister-in-law to Henry and were still uncle and aunt to his only son. John Dudley’s stepfather, Arthur Plantagenet, the previous Viscount Lisle, was Henry’s uncle. Anthony Denny and his brother-in-law, John Gates, along with being close friends of the king, were in charge of a large portion of the royal finances. Most importantly, these men served in the Privy Chamber and on the king’s military campaigns. They were the sort of men with whom Henry VIII had enjoyed surrounding himself from a young age – interested in active pursuits such as tournaments and war. The king rewarded his jousting companions with political honors. Denny became First Chief Gentleman of the Privy Chamber and Groom of the Stool in 1546 – making him the king’s most influential personal servant. After becoming Viscount Lisle in 1542, Dudley also obtained the position of Lord Admiral a year later. Edward Seymour had become the Earl of Hertford upon the birth of his royal nephew in 1537, and he continued to reap political benefits from his relationship with the king. Dudley and Seymour also served as members of the Privy Council throughout the 1540s.

Many of these reformers had marital counterparts in the queen’s Privy Chamber. Marriage to wealthy and politically significant men undoubtedly gave aristocratic women in

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72 Swensen, “Patronage from the Privy Chamber,” 33.
Tudor England significant opportunities, particularly with regard to the exercise of agency. Such women oversaw large households, directed their children’s education, assisted with the formation of arranged marriages and family alliances, and even occasionally retained property in their own right. Historian Barbara Harris argues that “the tiny number who combined marriage with appointments at court [occupied] the most powerful, socially desirable position open to aristocratic women.” Such women, like Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were able to distribute and control patronage, both formally and informally. This allowed them to exercise influence independent of their husbands. However, many such women – Catherine, Anne, and Jane included – also worked within their marriages in political partnerships to promote a shared agenda. The success of these marriages often affected the women’s scope for political and public action. These shared agendas were often traditional and gender-specific – focusing on the advancement of family members’ individual careers or of the family as a unit. Additionally, many of these couples also worked together for the promotion of a religious agenda by engaging in religious conflict and debate, patronizing religious figures, and supporting the publication of religious works. Finally, women’s personal ambition cannot be disregarded as a motivation for political action. Contemporaries chiefly viewed ambition as a masculine virtue and a feminine vice, so women accused of acting out of political motivation and a desire for personal aggrandizement often ran the risk of garnering a negative public perception both during and after their lifetimes. This subject will be examined at greater length in Chapter Six of this work.

Women like Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were likely motivated by all of the above considerations. All three women worked with their husbands in

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order to advance their own agendas and those of their families. In particular, Anne and Jane’s marriages were harmonious and conducive to the political environment of the Tudor court. While Jane’s match with John Dudley was made at the behest of her father, it is clear that the two were suited to one another personally. As mentioned previously, Jane and John were affectionate with their thirteen children, as well as with one another. The exiled French reformer and poet, Nicolas Bourbon, singled out the Dudleys in a poem from the mid-1530s, referring to “the love and devotion with which you and your noble wife adorn the ties of sacred marriage.” When away on government business, John Dudley used his letters home to colleagues in order to communicate with his wife. In August 1546, while on a peace embassy to France, he asked William Paget, a fellow member of the Privy Council, to communicate his “recommendations” to his wife, and to tell her that he was unable to bring her the promised “goldsmith’s work from Paris,” as he had barely enough money “to bring home myself.” When writing to his son-in-law, Henry Sidney, in July 1552, John explained that business in the north would keep him away from home even longer, adding a warning to “keep this from my wife.” Clearly, Jane preferred that her husband not stray from home for extended periods of time. Jane Guildford suffered from ill health in the late 1540s and early 1550s and, despite his burgeoning political career, John Dudley – first Viscount Lisle and then Earl of Warwick – neglected his duties to tend to his wife. In 1548, rather than returning to the royal court, where he served as Lord Great Chamberlain, he remained with Jane, who “had had her fit again more extreme that she had any time yet.”

Jane Guildford and John Dudley also shared an appreciation for education, as well as religious reform. As mentioned in the previous chapter, their sons and daughters received excellent educations based in Renaissance humanism and science through tutors such as Roger Ascham and Thomas Wilson (who also served as a tutor in the Seymour household). The instruction they received made the Dudley children suitable companions for royalty, as evidenced by the careers of Mary, Ambrose, and Robert. Their upbringing also engendered in them a devotion to the Protestant faith, which served them well during the reign of Elizabeth I. As their mother, Jane Guildford set the standard for the Dudley children’s love of learning. In 1553, she commissioned two scientific treatises from John Dee – mathematician, astronomer, alchemist, occultist, and future advisor to Elizabeth I.

In the dark days of August 1553, following John Dudley’s downfall and arrest, Jane vocally and fervently exploited her political and personal contacts in the hopes of securing a pardon for her husband. In a letter to Anne Preston, Lady Paget, wife of William Paget, Jane requested that her friend “forget me not,” and pass on her plea to Lord Paget, as well as Gertrude Courtenay (née Blount), Marchioness of Exeter, and Susan Clarencius, ladies-in-waiting to the new Catholic queen, Mary I. In the letter, Jane explained that her husband was “the most best gentleman that ever living woman matched withal,” and that “those about him nor about me cannot say the contrary and say truly how good he was to me.” Jane’s appeal was not simply a request to protect her family in the wake of her husband’s political ruin – it was an attempt by a

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79 John Dee references these treatises in *A letter, containing a most briefe discourse apologetical...* (London: Peter Short, 1599), 6: “The true cause, and account of Fluds and Ebbs, written at the request of the right honorable Lady, Lady Jane, Duchesse of Northumberland – anno – 1553.’ and “The Philosophicall and Poeticall Originall Occasions, of the Configurations, and names of the heauenly Asterismes – written at the request of the same Duchesses. Anno. 1553.”
loving wife to save a beloved husband. She clarified that, while she had her children in mind, at that moment she did “not so much care for them as for their father.”\textsuperscript{80} Although Jane failed to save John from the executioner’s block, when she wrote her will a year later, she still remembered “my lord, my dear husband.”\textsuperscript{81}

Anne Stanhope also provided Edward Seymour with a harmonious and loving marriage. This fact is almost completely missing from both contemporary and modern historical works discussing the couple. A. Audrey Locke, a biographer of the Seymour family, argues that it was “by the persuasion of Anne Stanhope” that Edward Seymour excluded his sons from his first marriage from their inheritance.\textsuperscript{82} In her version of the event, Catherine Fillol and her children are wronged through Anne’s vicious scheming. Historians generally portray Anne as a manipulative and overbearing wife. However, contemporary sources do not support this depiction. A closer look at Edward and Anne’s relationship reveals that it was a concordant, loving, and mutually-beneficial marriage. Like Jane Guildford and John Dudley, they agreed on most matters, shared the same religion, helped one another politically, and showed noticeable affection toward one another. Anne was a fierce supporter of her husband and her children. Edward valued his wife’s opinion and she enjoyed considerable influence with him. She did not need to resort to forceful persuasion and it is unlikely that, as suggested by Alison Weir, she ruled “over her weaker husband by the lash of her tongue.”\textsuperscript{83}

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\textsuperscript{81} The National Archives, London: Records of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/37/342.
\textsuperscript{82} A. Audrey Locke, \textit{The Seymour Family: History and Romance} (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1911), 193.
\end{flushright}
In November 1542, Sir Thomas Wriothesley wrote to Edward Seymour, who was then serving as warden of the Scottish marches. As Wriothesley was at court, he sent “letters from ‘my lady’ [Anne]” along with his correspondence. The courtier beseeched the Earl of Hertford to make a speedy answer for “she perceives she will not be merry until she hears from him.”

Throughout that month, Wriothesley’s correspondence with Hertford usually ended with assurances of Anne’s health, and he often included letters from her. John Berwick, the Seymour family’s receiver-general, also relayed such letters and assurances from Anne to her husband. In 1544, when Hertford became Lieutenant-General in the north (another post that took him from court), Anne petitioned Henry VIII’s wife, Catherine Parr, to use her influence with the king to have the earl recalled home. Queen Catherine wrote back, assuring Anne that the earl would come home soon. Unfortunately, by the time he returned to court, the king was preparing for war with France. Hertford accompanied Henry to the siege of Boulogne two months later. There he helped secure the city’s surrender by supposedly bribing the French commander. However, when he was absent, Edward Seymour ensured that his wife was not neglected. He wrote to the Duke of Suffolk in April 1544, expressing gratitude “for your lordship’s kindly message to my wife in my absence.”

Edward Seymour was not always absent from his wife. In May 1539 he ensured that he was there for the birth of his child, despite the fact that the king had sent him to France in order

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85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 1049; 1123.
87 Blatcher, Report on the Manuscripts at Longleat, 90, 91-92, 96, 97, 102.
89 Beer, “Seymour, Edward,” in ODNB.
90 Blatcher, Report on the Manuscripts at Longleat, 103.
to oversee the defense of Calais and Guînes.\textsuperscript{91} This was Anne’s third pregnancy and she gave birth to a boy. The couple no doubt considered this child a blessing, as their only other son, Edward, had died in infancy. They named their new son Edward, and a year later (when Hertford disinherited his children by Catherine Fillol) the child became his father’s heir.\textsuperscript{92} Anne and her husband went on to have ten children together.

Edward Seymour was attentive to his wife’s needs, and he valued her judgment. When she was not serving at court, Anne Stanhope – as a wife and the Countess of Hertford – was mistress of a large household. She took care that the Seymour family’s properties were looked after during her husband’s many absences. In the same letter to the Duke of Suffolk mentioned above, Edward Seymour praised the countess by stating, “My wife begins to bring my grounds and walks at Sheene to greater perfection than I left them in.”\textsuperscript{93} As the mistress of an aristocratic household, Anne would have had more than just her own children under her care. Lady Lisle sought to place her daughter, Catherine, in the Hertfords’ household in 1539. She asked the earl for this honor while he was in Calais that year, but he deferred from giving a definitive response. When he returned to London, he informed Lady Lisle that he had first spoken with his wife – “I have consulted with my wife about your request to have your daughter here.”\textsuperscript{94} At first glance, Hertford’s deferment to his wife’s will seems like the action of a weak husband. However, young Catherine Basset would have been under Anne Stanhope’s direct care in their household, and it was therefore only natural for Hertford to consult his wife first. Lady Lisle had no qualms with how he handled her request and the next month she wrote to thank Hertford and “my Lady” for

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{L&P, Henry VIII:} Vol. 15, 498.
\textsuperscript{93} Blatcher, \textit{Report on the Manuscripts at Longleat}, 104.
\textsuperscript{94} \textit{L&P, Henry VIII:} Vol. 14 Part 1, 762.
their “goodness.” Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope were mutually fond and respectful of one another, working as a team in both political and administrative matters.

The couple found that they suited one another in their religious beliefs as well. Many scholars agree with Jennifer Loach’s assessment that Anne “can be much more positively linked with reformers” than her husband, and she “was widely recognized as a woman of radical religious views.” As with politics, contemporaries and historians assume that Anne manipulated her weak husband’s religious preferences. Edward Seymour, then, was “a man of some piety but little specialized knowledge, whose inclinations were, perhaps as a result of his wife’s influence, towards the radical rather than the conservative end of the spectrum.” However, his religious beliefs cannot be fully attributed to his wife’s “radicalism.” During Henry VIII’s long reign, the couple had inclined toward more progressive reform. Particularly toward the end of the Henrician era, when legislation such as “the repressive Act of Six Articles” threatened further reform, “they had welcomed leading evangelicals to their London house.” As mentioned previously, their children’s tutors were often reformers as well, making “the Seymour household… a nursery of Protestantism and a forum for humanist exchange.” Likewise discussed above, Edward Seymour, ever cautious of his standing during Henry VIII’s capricious reign, endangered his position and his safety by supporting reformers. In 1547, when he became Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England, he used his new position to initiate a regime of radical religious reform. As will be discussed later, Anne also became a major patron of

95 Ibid., 947.
97 Ibid., 47.
reformed religious works. In these ways, “Somerset and his redoubtable duchess had long sustained the evangelical cause.”

There were other reformist couples at court whose stable marriages allowed them to work together as political partners. Joan Champernowne, a fellow lady-in-waiting “known for her looks and learning,” was married to Anthony Denny. Contemporaries considered Champernowne to be “one of the most beautiful women at court as well as one of the most intelligent,” and this blend of positive qualities made her “an indispensable ally for her husband.” She was also the only one of Catherine Parr’s ladies who received a dedication from a religious author before Henry VIII’s death. In 1546, her chaplain, William Hugh, dedicated his Swete Consolation, and the Second Boke of the Troubled Mans Medicine to his mistress. In it, he claimed that Champernowne was a “wife not unworthy of him whom God the maker of all honest marriages, hath given you for your husband.” Champernowne’s brother-in-law, Sir John Gates, was also an influential and reformist courtier, and served as a groom of the Privy Chamber from 1542. His wife, Mary Denny, was sister to Sir Anthony. By 1545, he functioned as his brother-in-law’s deputy, and that same year Gates and Denny were given control over the king’s dry stamp. Gates’s partnership with Denny – one that almost certainly resulted from the former’s marriage – was a formidable one at court. Additionally, like her sister-in-law, Mary Denny served as her husband’s counterpart in Catherine Parr’s household. Building upon these marital alliances, Anthony Denny and John Gates often helped one another, as well as those in

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100 Brigden, New Worlds, Lost Worlds, 184.
101 James, Catherine Parr, 94.
102 Swensen, “Patronage from the Privy Chamber,” 31.
their extended patronage circle.\textsuperscript{104} It was largely through the influence and support of Denny and Gates that both Edward Seymour and, subsequently, John Dudley came to political supremacy during the reign of Edward VI – events which will be discussed further.

Mary Arundell, Countess of Arundel, married Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, in 1545 after her first husband, Robert Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, died three years earlier. Like most of the women in Catherine Parr’s household, Arundell had served in the households of some of Henry’s previous queens, including Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, and Catherine Howard. She had also served briefly in Mary Tudor’s household. The Countess of Arundel was originally thought to have translated the Greek and Latin epigrams of Emperor Severus, but more recent investigations have proven that the translator was instead her stepdaughter, Mary Fitzalan, later Duchess of Norfolk. Regardless of the works’ true authorship, Mary Arundell’s association with their creation is a testament to her intellectual abilities. Like so many women of her age and status, Arundell’s Renaissance education helped lay the groundwork for a commitment to religious reform. Her husband, who served as the king’s Lord Chamberlain, was responsive to the reformist faction, and supported first Edward Seymour and then John Dudley’s political coups during the reign of Edward VI.\textsuperscript{105}

Anne Parr, Lady Herbert, had had a career at the royal court long before her sister became queen. Like her contemporary, Anne Stanhope, she served in the households of all six of Henry VIII’s wives.\textsuperscript{106} In 1538, she married William Herbert, an esquire of the body whom she likely met at court. Like her sister, Anne Parr seems to have had a fondness for dashing and

\textsuperscript{106} Harris, \textit{English Aristocratic Women}, 222.
ambitious soldiers. Similar to Edward Seymour and John Dudley, Herbert had already made a name for himself at court due to his martial abilities. Marriage to a veteran servant in the queens’ households would have been a lucrative opportunity, but the Herbert marriage also seems to have been founded on genuine attraction. Additionally, when his sister-in-law became queen, Herbert found that his interests and those of the Parrs “found common ground for well over thirty years.” While Herbert’s responsiveness to the reformers was likely due more to personal and practical reasons than any genuine religious feeling, Anne Parr and her husband were an influential couple whose support was of great consequence.

As a wealthy heiress married to a man thirty-five years her senior, Catherine Willoughby had a different experience with marriage. There is no evidence that Catherine and Charles’s union was a love match – quite the opposite. As discussed in the previous chapter, Charles likely married his teenaged ward in order to benefit financially. Like so many Tudor noblemen, he also certainly hoped that Catherine’s youth signified her fertility. By 1533, Charles had already lost one son from his former marriage to Mary Tudor. Their second son, Henry Brandon, was only ten years old at the time of his father’s final marriage and died a year later. Charles’s hopes were fulfilled when, after four years of marriage, Catherine gave birth to two sons. There is no doubt that Catherine and Charles’s marriage was very traditional for the aristocratic customs of the time. It was a union that took place for financial and dynastic considerations, and it was made regardless of their significant age difference. Whatever her personal feelings about the match, Catherine embraced the role of Duchess of Suffolk with determination and enthusiasm. The duke often left his young wife at their estates in Lincolnshire, which would have given Catherine a sense of autonomy as the mistress of large households. She would have learned how to fulfill this

107 James, Catherine Parr, 81-82.
role from her former guardian and predecessor, Mary Tudor. Evidence suggests that she enjoyed her time away from court in the early years of their marriage, and she did not seem to be in attendance with much regularity until after the king wed Catherine Parr. Catherine Willoughby communicated confidently with other members of the peerage on behalf of her husband, writing in 1537 to an unknown lady that “my lord my husband desires to be recommended to you and my lord your husband.” Like John Dudley and Edward Seymour, Charles Brandon used intermediaries to communicate with his wife during his many absences, taking care that his family affairs were looked after. In May 1537, he delayed royal business when Catherine and their son fell ill, waiting to depart until their recovery. Charles also consulted with his wife regarding certain matters. When Lady Honor Lisle wrote to the duke – likely regarding a suit concerning one of her daughters – he replied through her servant, John Husee, that he “would consult with [his wife] and give you such an answer as you should be pleased with.”

As Charles Brandon’s wife and Duchess of Suffolk, Catherine Willoughby would have enjoyed a significant amount of influence and independence for a young woman in Tudor England. As a widow, she was given control over lands worth over £600 a year in order to pay her husband’s debts and provide for her younger son. Charles also made Catherine, his “entirely beloved wife,” one of the executors of his will. Both her deceased husband and the other executors clearly had “special trust and confidence” in her abilities. Whatever emotional attachment she may or may not have had to her husband, the marriage gave her the opportunity to protect her inheritance, further aggrandize her family, and – when she chose – secure a

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113 Gunn, Charles Brandon, 208.
coveted position at the royal court. Like most Tudor noblewomen, she did exercise greater autonomy after her husband’s death in 1545. However, there is every indication that Catherine and Charles’s marriage had worked well within its intended purposes.

As wives of leading courtiers and as ladies of the queen’s Privy Chamber, women like Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford had far more access to court patronage than most of their female contemporaries. The ability to distribute and control patronage allowed these women to exercise a large amount of influence independent of their husbands. However, a few were also able to work with their husbands as political partners. Their ability to do so was dependent upon the nature of their marriage and whether or not their beliefs coincided with that of their partners’. Women such as Anne and Jane certainly met these criteria. Both had amicable marriages and husbands with a devotion to religious reform. Catherine and her husband also seem to have had a harmonious relationship. Although the Duke of Suffolk was less interested in reform, his loyalty to the king and desire to remain politically powerful kept him on good terms with the reformers.

Due to less amicable marriages, some reform-minded women associated with Catherine Parr were unable to contribute to court politics. Anne Calthorpe, Countess of Sussex, was unlucky in her marriage. Her husband, Henry Radcliffe, Earl of Sussex, differed from his wife in religion and they did not care for one another personally. Though Anne Calthorpe had access to patronage through the queen and was a fervent supporter of reform, she was unable to work through her husband. This restricted her political influence immensely.

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114 Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 210-211.
115 Ibid., 85; The Earl and Countess of Sussex divorced in 1555. Calthorpe had fled to the Continent two years earlier to escape Mary I’s Catholic reign. Radcliffe stayed and served the new queen, who made him a Knight of the Garter.
Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford, in contrast, were able to exercise a significant amount of influence through their husbands and in the queen’s Privy Chamber. This was in large part due to the personal nature of politics at the Tudor court. While unable to gain a central role in politics themselves, women could still influence policy. Those at court – “where the king interacted with members of the nobility” and “developed the personal relationships that ultimately determined whom he would promote to office” – were in an advantageous position. The Tudor court intermixed the public and private spheres and “distribution of resources and exercise of power took place outside formal institutions.”

Family groups and informal social alliances allowed women to participate in politics and further their own agenda. For women of particularly high rank, such as Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford, patronage was the essential method for political participation. As a great ladies in Catherine Parr’s Privy Chamber, they were able to control access to the queen and petitions often went through those serving in the household. As described previously, the ladies of Jane Seymour’s chambers combined their efforts to obtain a position for one of Lady Lisle’s daughters at court. In 1522, Catherine Parr’s own mother, Maud Parr, successfully petitioned the king on behalf of a Gawain Lancaster of London, who received all of his previously “forfeited goods, chattels, and lands.” At the time, Maud was a member of Catherine of Aragon’s household. Anyone hoping to ask a favor of the queen, whether a young girl or an experienced politician, usually had to cultivate the good graces of members of the household. A similar situation existed in the king’s Privy Chamber. Thus, the ladies in Catherine Parr’s household and their husbands exercised considerable influence.

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117 L&P: Henry VIII: Vol. 3, 2356 (20); Referenced in Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 227.
Although the conservative faction at court had powerful allies, like Mary Tudor, they were not as well-connected or as well-placed as the reformers. Yet the Act of Six Articles, passed in 1539, probably made the conservatives feel more at ease. It was a “draconian straightening of doctrine” that reaffirmed many Catholic beliefs such as transubstantiation and clerical celibacy.\textsuperscript{118} Most importantly, for the conservatives, it had Henry VIII’s full support. Megan Hickerson argues that, despite its rigidity with regard to certain theological points, the Act of Six Articles “failed to usher in widespread persecution.”\textsuperscript{119} For conservatives at court, though, the Act provided them with a way to build a case against the reformers. The real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, in particular, was a hotly-contested point between conservatives and reformers in England. The theologically traditional Henry VIII never denied the real presence – making it a dangerous principle for reformers to refute. However, it is clear that the majority of the reformist faction did contest transubstantiation. Gardiner and his followers, for example, often referred to heretics as sacramentarians.\textsuperscript{120} The issue of clerical celibacy was treacherous as well, for Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, had been secretly married since 1535. The Act of Six Articles destroyed the archbishop’s hopes that clerical marriage would soon be legalized.

Although the conservatives were unaware of Cranmer’s marriage, the Act of Six Articles and the king’s reactionary beliefs gave them the incentive they needed to mount an attack against the archbishop. In 1543, various canons at Canterbury Cathedral complained to the king about Cranmer’s support of heretics. Henry VIII, who was fond of Cranmer’s “easy-going honesty, otherworldliness, compassion and total lack of personal ambition,” told the archbishop of the

\textsuperscript{119} Hickerson, “Negotiating Heresy in Tudor England,” 777.
\textsuperscript{120} \textit{Calendar of State Papers, Spain: Volume 8}, 533.
accusations. The king then appointed Cranmer as head of the commission charged with investigating the accusations – effectively ending the matter.\textsuperscript{121} The conservatives did not give up on their attempts to topple the archbishop, who was one of the most important individuals in the reformist faction. They came closer to having Cranmer arrested in 1545 but, once again, Henry stepped in at the last moment to save his archbishop. When Cranmer arrived in the Privy Council chamber, he showed the king’s ring (a sign of royal favor) to the accusers. It is clear that during both incidents Henry allowed events to play out long enough to humiliate both sides – with Cranmer as the escaped victim and the conservatives as the failed attackers. This was probably an attempt to balance the two factions at court and to keep them aware of the king’s supremacy in politics.\textsuperscript{122} Unable to bring down Cranmer, the conservatives turned to their next targets – the queen and her ladies. Their plot against the women of Catherine Parr’s household also had the potential to destroy those reformers closest to the king, for they would naturally be implicated in their wives’ disgrace.

Maria Dowling argues that the attempted conviction of Catherine Parr and her ladies, who “had little power over the king,” was merely intended to bring down “bigger prey.”\textsuperscript{123} Yet the women were undoubtedly targets themselves, and the imprisonment of Catherine Parr alone could have had a significant impact on the direction of factional politics. Since the days of the king’s marriage to Anne Boleyn, the religious identities of Henry’s wives were of importance to the members of the royal court. The beliefs and actions of the queen’s ladies were therefore also

\textsuperscript{121} John Gough Nichols, \textit{Narratives of the Last Days of the Reformation} (Westminster: The Camden Society, 1859), 252-253; Nichols’ account is almost entirely based on the writings of John Foxe, our main source for the dramatic events at court in 1546.


\textsuperscript{123} Dowling, \textit{Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII}, 67.
likely to carry weight. Because of the nature of Tudor marriage, politics, and religion, Catherine
Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were certainly political actors in their own
right.
On the morning of Christmas Eve 1545, Henry VIII made his last speech to Parliament. He used the opportunity to address the religious divisions within his kingdom. He appealed to his subjects, asking them to halt the aggressive theological and factional battles at court and throughout the realm. The king asked those assembled, “What love and charity is amongst you, when the one calls the other, Heretic and Anabaptist, and he calleth him again Papist, Hypocrite, and Pharisee?” Famously, he remarked that “some be too stiff in their old Mumpsimus, others be too busy and curious, in their new Sumpsimus.” Henry ended with a warning – “Amend these crimes I exhort you, and set forth God’s word, both by true preaching, and good example giving, or else I whom God hath appointed his Vicar, and high minister here, will see these divisions extinct, and these enormities corrected, according to my very duty.” The “true preaching” that Henry VIII called for meant the specific doctrine that he endorsed.

Persecuting heretics was not a chief concern of Henry’s for much of the early 1540s, as he was caught up in a war with France. Prince Edward recognized the court’s preoccupation with the war when he wrote to his father that month, stating that he had not written because, “seeing the King much troubled with warlike affairs, he scrupled to trouble him with childish letters.” The Treaty of Camp in June 1546 took pressure off of English commitment in Boulogne.

Stephen Gardiner, Thomas Howard, Charles Brandon, Edward Seymour, and John Dudley all

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2 Ibid., 865.
3 Ibid., 865-866.
returned from their diplomatic duties abroad. With the war concluded, Henry VIII and his courtiers could now focus on matters at home.

Less than a month after the Treaty of Camp, an intense factional battle began at court. The outcome of this conflict helped determine the course of the next reign. Religious friction had been a feature of Henry VIII’s court since the 1530s, and the events of 1546 resulted in a climactic conclusion. In July of that year, two leaders of the conservative faction, Stephen Gardiner and William Paget, assured Francis van der Delft, the imperial ambassador, that they were most in favor with the king. Gardiner and Paget promised the Catholic ambassador that they would prevent “the Protestants from gaining footing or favor here.” However, less than a year later Van der Delft wrote to Emperor Charles V of his concerns for the future of religion in England – “Four or five months ago great enquiries and prosecutions were carried out against heretics and sacramentarians, but they have now ceased, since the Earl of Hertford [Edward Seymour] and the Lord Admiral [John Dudley] have resided at court.” Between the summer of 1546 and the last months of Henry VIII’s reign, the reformist faction at court defeated the conservatives and laid the groundwork for a Protestant regime under Edward VI.

In the beginning of 1546, Gardiner was away from court as an ambassador to Emperor Charles V. Paget wrote to the bishop about Henry VIII’s speech to Parliament and Gardiner replied, “If the peace and unity may be made at home as the King exhorted, outward peaces need be less cared for.” Gardiner was anxious to continue the war against France, for it necessitated an alliance between England and the Holy Roman Empire. The bishop’s faction maintained a close relationship with the imperial ambassador, for their religious interests often coincided.

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7 Calendar of State Papers, Spain: Volume 8, 533-534.
However, once back in England, Gardiner had no desire to maintain a façade of religious unity at court. For while the bishop was away, his rival, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury had tried to push through further reform. He attempted to abolish some of the more traditional rituals such as the veil over church chancels during Lent, creeping to the cross on Good Friday, and the ringing of church bells on the night of All-Hallows.\(^9\) While Henry was at first amenable to these changes, the king eventually told his archbishop that these innovations were not desirable. Gardiner had made it clear to the king that any further religious change would jeopardize England’s alliance with the Empire.\(^10\)

The conservative faction probably felt secure in their influence with the king. With legislation like the Act of Six Articles, they had an effective monopoly over religious decisions and Henry’s desire to maintain an alliance with Charles V worked to their advantage. In May 1546, Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London sent a list to Henry VIII of those accused of disobeying the king’s heresy laws. The bishop commented that “more… are said to be infected with… offences against the Six Articles, than has been seen within these three or four years.”\(^11\)

Although the conservatives had the Act of Six Articles as a weapon, the reformers at court had been building up an effective social network. Queen Catherine Parr, as a leader of a female reformist network, was an influential force for the conservatives to confront. She had a close relationship with the royal children – most importantly with Prince Edward. They were both interested in scholarly pursuits, and Edward wrote to his “dearest Mother” on a regular basis.\(^12\)

Catherine also occasionally attempted to impact political affairs; for in 1545, Van der Delft

\(^12\) *L&P, Henry VIII*: Vol. 21 Part 2, 360.
wrote to the Emperor that “a Secretary of the Queen of England named Richard Butler is in some part of Germany… to solicit the German princes to form a league with this King.”\textsuperscript{13} As discussed in the previous chapter, Catherine’s household was also a center of theological discussion. In May 1546, the younger Thomas Howard was brought before the Privy Council to answer charges of “his indiscreet meddling in Scripture… [and] also his other talk at large in the Queen’s chamber, and other places of the Court, concerning Scripture.” Although Howard was a younger son of the Duke of Norfolk, he was an outspoken religious reformer and an intimate of the queen. The council asked Howard to provide information regarding the activities within the queen’s household, likely urging him to name particular ladies who served the queen as heretics. While he refused to give “those particulars which the Privy Council would have him confess,” his interrogation signified an increase in government persecutions at court for religious offences.\textsuperscript{14} Beginning in the summer of 1546, the conservatives attempted a coup against the ladies of the queen’s household and then Catherine Parr herself. Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford were therefore caught up in the conspiracy. It is clear that Gardiner and his supporters’ ultimate intent was to have Henry VIII’s sixth wife and her women arrested and executed for heresy. After removing the queen as a threat, and using the convictions of those in her circle, they likely planned to move against her ladies’ husbands.

The first piece of evidence illuminating the plot against the queen came when a young, well-connected gentlewoman named Anne Askew was arrested for heresy. Askew’s brother, Edward, had been in Archbishop Cranmer’s service and her sister, Jane, was married to George

\textsuperscript{13} Calendar of State Papers, Spain: Volume 8, 130.
St. Poll, a lawyer employed by Catherine Willoughby and her husband. Askew’s Lincolnshire upbringing would have also resulted in a personal connection with the Duchess of Suffolk. Moreover, she had ties to many of the women in the queen’s household and to Catherine Parr herself. Educated on humanist principles, Askew avoided the “virtuous domesticity” of so many women of her background. Askew’s husband, Thomas Kyme, a devoted Catholic, had thrown her out of his house in Lincolnshire and she, preferring to keep her maiden name, petitioned for a divorce while traveling south to London. She wrote accounts of her experiences – particularly her multiple incarcerations for preaching publicly and promoting heresy. She came to the authorities’ attention for denying transubstantiation, a belief reaffirmed by the Act of Six Articles. A year prior to her final arrest, the conservative Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London had interrogated her regarding her beliefs. The bishop was unable to find any incriminating evidence and, after she signed a confession of faith, Askew was released.

In June 1546, Anne Askew was arrested for the final time. During this interrogation, leading conservatives at court took an interest in her responses. After she was brought to the Tower, Thomas Wriothesley and Richard Rich soon had her tortured, despite the fact that it was illegal to use the rack on women (especially gentlewomen like Askew). Accompanying


17 Though Edmund Bonner later became famous for his persecution of heretics under Mary I, earning him the nickname “Bloody Bonner,” Megan Hickerson argues persuasively that Bonner did not want to make Anne Askew a martyr. She also asserts that his epithet is unfair, as he was an unenthusiastic persecutor under both Henry VIII and Mary I. The bishop did not take part in Askew’s later interrogation, torture, and execution in 1546; See Megan Hickerson, “Negotiating Heresy in Tudor England: Anne Askew and the Bishop of London,” *Journal of British Studies* vol. 46, no. 4 (2007), 775-776, 781-783.

18 Beilin, “Anne Askew’s Self-Portrait,” 89.
Stephen Gardiner, John Dudley and William Parr visited the prisoner in an attempt to encourage her to recant. Recognizing their shared religious sympathies, Askew addressed Dudley and Parr, saying that “it was a great shame for them to counsel contrary to their knowledge.”\(^{19}\) Clearly, she believed that the two men shared her views on the sacrament, though they were afraid to say so publicly. Throughout her torture, it became apparent that her interrogators were less concerned with information about Askew’s own beliefs than with those of her friends. While torturing Askew, the interrogators asked about her relationship with “my lady of Suffolk, my lady of Sussex, my lady of Hertford, my lady Denny and my lady Fitzwilliam.” They also informed her that the king knew she “could name… a great number of [her] sect.” Askew did admit that both Anne Stanhope and Joan Champernowne had given her monetary aid while she was incarcerated in the Tower, and that Jane Guildford had been among those ladies who had attempted to contact her.\(^{20}\) This revealing confession demonstrates Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford’s devotion to religious reform and to supporting those in their network. It was certainly dangerous to contact Askew or give her any sort of assistance, but both Anne and Jane chose to do so. They perhaps felt that their positions – and that of their husbands – were secure enough to endure association with a heretic.

Female religious networks – particularly alliances and relationships constructed between elite women – provided fundamental support to the growing movement for religious reform in


the early years of the English Reformation.\textsuperscript{21} Askew’s minor admissions during her interrogation and torture indicate her personal connections to multiple women in the queen’s Privy Chamber, including Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford. These networks were often focused around the royal court, but could either expand to or originate in more local settings. For example, it is likely that Anne Askew was already acquainted with the Duchess of Suffolk prior to her arrival in London in the mid-1540s. Her Lincolnshire upbringing and her family connections would have contributed to this. A common function of these female networks, aside from the dissemination of religious works, was an informal system of relief for individuals – usually clergy and theologians – in need. For example, Catherine offered assistance to Nicholas Ridley in the early 1550s when the latter was imprisoned for heresy.\textsuperscript{22} The fact that Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford offered their overtures and support to Anne Askew was not unique, but it is indicative of their involvement in a network of female reformers.

Anne Askew was burnt at the stake with other convicted heretics on July 16, 1546. She refused to seriously implicate anyone at court and suffered for her intransigence; her time on the rack dislocated her joints and she had to be carried to her execution at Smithfield. Askew described her ordeal in gruesome detail:

\begin{quote}
They did put me on the rack, because I confessed no ladies or gentlewomen to be of my opinion, and thereon they kept me a long time; and because I lay still, and did not cry, my lord chancellor [Wriothesely] and Master Rich took pains to rack me with their own hands till I was nigh on dead. Then the lieutenant [of the Tower] caused me to be loosed from the rack. Incontinently, I swooned, and then they recovered me again. After that I sat two long hours reasoning with my lord chancellor upon the bare floor; where he, with many flattering words, persuaded me to leave my opinion. But my Lord God (I thank his everlasting goodness) gave me grace to persevere, and will do, I hope, at the very end.
\end{quote}


Most importantly perhaps, Askew had not specifically mentioned the queen during her interrogation. In addition to Queen Catherine, Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford – with their abundant resources and personal ties at court – were dangerous enemies to the conservatives, with or without their husbands. Yet Stephen Gardiner and the rest of his faction certainly sought to bring about the downfall of some of their male enemies as well.23 Gardiner, Wriothesley, and Rich timed their attack well, as both Edward Seymour and John Dudley were away from court in France during the summer of 1546. Without the presence of their husbands and with the ever-persuadable Henry VIII surrounded by conservatives, Catherine, Anne, and Jane were particularly vulnerable at the time.

The ultimate prize of this factional struggle was political control during the next reign, and the conservatives could not hope for much influence with the young Edward VI unless their opponents were eliminated. Anthony Denny was of vital importance to the Protestant coup in 1547. Denny’s actions, along with many of the other reformers, ensured that Edward VI’s minority regency was firmly in the hands of their faction. With the support of influential men like Anthony Denny and John Dudley, Edward Seymour, the new king’s maternal uncle, emerged as the leader of this coup.

By 1546, Catherine Parr probably felt that her relationship with her husband was secure. She had been his queen for three years, had served as regent, and had helped to heal the rifts between Henry and his daughters. She had succeeded in all she had sought to do and likely believed that the same would be true of her efforts regarding religious reform. Henry VIII, who was intellectually and theologically astute, enjoyed discussing religion with his wife. At first, this

was a pleasant exercise for the king. However, the queen grew bolder during their discussions and began to contradict him. Stephen Gardiner, witness to one of these conversations, realized Henry was growing disenchanted with his wife’s enthusiasm when the king muttered sardonically that it was “a thing much to my comfort, to come in mine old days to be taught by my wife.” The bishop used this opportunity and decided to expose the queen as a heretic. \(^{24}\) After their failure with Anne Askew and the queen’s ladies, the conservatives chose to proceed with an assault against Catherine Parr herself. Henry, wary and mistrustful since Catherine Howard’s discovered infidelities, allowed Gardiner and his supporters to investigate his sixth wife’s beliefs. After the conservatives presented the king with evidence of the queen’s heresy, Henry agreed to draw up a warrant for her arrest.

However, Catherine Parr escaped the fate of Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard by skillfully arguing her way out of the situation. It is not clear how she became aware of the plot against her. According to John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* – more popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs* – the warrant for her arrest “was providentially dropped by accident and found its way into her hands.” Additionally, Thomas Wendy, the king’s reformist physician, took it upon himself to warn her “of that mischief that hanged over her head.” Once aware that she was in danger, Catherine met with Henry privately (something her deceased predecessors had been unable to do). The king “tried to lure Catherine into another compromising religious argument,” but this time she demurred and explained that she was only “a silly poor woman.” In a speech that may have inspired Katherina’s famous dialogue at the end of Shakespeare’s *Taming of the Shrew*, Catherine Parr explained that her husband was the true authority on religion – “supreme

head and governor here in earth, next unto God.” These words greatly appealed to Henry’s sense of supremacy and he immediately forgave her, stating, “Then, perfect friends we are now again, as ever any time heretofore.” Gardiner and the conservatives had been outwitted. When Thomas Wriothesley came to arrest the queen as planned later that week, Henry ordered him away after calling him an “arrant knave,” a “beast,” and a “fool.” Utilizing her own good judgment, as well as the resources and connections of the reformist faction, Catherine Parr had saved herself from almost certain death.

The martyrologist John Foxe, writing years after the events in question, provided the only account detailing this version of Catherine Parr’s near downfall. Modern historians have naturally called his interpretation of the plots of 1546 into question. Yet Foxe claimed to have the eyewitness testimony of “certain of [Catherine Parr’s] ladies and gentlewomen, being yet alive, who were then present about her,” and most scholars remain convinced of the general reliability of the account recorded in his Book of Martyrs. Historian Thomas S. Freeman makes the case that, while Foxe’s account can generally be trusted, Catherine Parr’s “narrowly averted destruction was not part of, much less the culmination of, a co-ordinated series of attacks by Stephen Gardiner in particular, or conservatives in general, against evangelicals.” He instead argues that Henry VIII himself was merely interested in “juggling factions and pitting them against each other,” using “a policy of divide and rule” in order to maintain a balance of power at

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court. Whatever the king’s role in the events of 1546, both the conservative and reformist factions stood to gain or lose much from the potential downfall of yet another queen.

The Protestant Coup

Had Catherine Parr been arrested, the reformist faction at court would have likely suffered a political decline. Catherine, Anne, and Jane may have suffered the same fate as their mistress – as Jane Parker, Viscountess Rochford had when Catherine Howard was executed for adultery and treason. The downfall of the queens’ ladies could have also implicated their powerful husbands. Instead, the failed coup against the queen resulted in the eclipse of the conservative faction at court and, consequently, the ascendancy of the reformers. The tension between the two groups was palpable by the end of 1546, and the reformers did not hesitate to strike against their opponents. During a particularly tense Privy Council meeting, John Dudley, then Viscount Lisle and Lord Admiral, expressed his frustration and disgust by striking Stephen Gardiner in the face. Although Dudley was banished from court for a month, this was a relatively light sentence, and likely a sign of royal favor. Within less than a year, Gardiner himself was exiled from court and excluded from any part in the future Edward VI’s government. The once-powerful Howard family suffered its final blow of Henry VIII’s reign when both the Duke of Norfolk and his son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, were imprisoned for treason. Henry had Surrey executed, but Norfolk escaped with his life when the king died the day of the duke’s planned execution.

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31 Had the king been present at the council meeting during such an altercation, the Admiral’s actions could have constituted a capital offense. See: David Loades, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, 1504-1553 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 82.
With the leading conservatives effectively silenced, the reformers soon consolidated their power. In late 1546, Ambassador Van der Delft observed that the Privy Council was “much inclined to please and entertain the Earl and Admiral” and that “the meetings of the Council are mostly held in the Earl of Hertford’s house.” The reformers, or what historian Anthony Martienssen refers to as “the Hertford faction,” were now clearly the dominant force at court. A key moment came when the king finally accepted that his health was deteriorating and that his death was imminent. He gave Anthony Denny, along with John Gates and William Clerk, control over the royal stamp. This stamp was to be used as a substitute for the royal signature, effectively making Denny and his supporters “the true authority lurking behind the throne.” Henry then decided on the makeup of his son’s regency government by creating a council of sixteen executors to see that his will was carried out after his death. This group included Edward Seymour, Thomas Cranmer, John Dudley, Anthony Denny, and a number of other reformers. Also among the executors were Thomas Wriothesley, Richard Rich, and William Paget – previous conservative allies who were generally willing to go along with the changing political current. Edward Seymour took the initiative by making an alliance with Paget, who had not suffered any political repercussions from his association with Thomas Howard and Stephen Gardiner. The Earl of Hertford realized that Paget was of the utmost importance for interpreting the royal will, for “the distribution of dignities in the new reign was determined solely by what he [Paget] declared had been Henry’s intentions.” While waiting for Henry VIII to take his last breath, the two courtiers hastily agreed to thwart the dying king’s wishes. In exchange for

32 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 6: 534.
33 Anthony Martienssen, Queen Katherine Parr (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1973), 222.
34 Hutchinson, The Last Days of Henry VIII, 152.
creating a Protectorate under his control, Hertford promised “to be guided by his [Paget’s] advice in preference to any other.” By the time Henry had passed away on January 28, 1547, his carefully constructed plan for his son’s minority had already been destroyed. David Loades, John Dudley’s biographer, argues, “The fact that the earl of Hertford and his friends were in political control when the king died was less the result of successful intrigue than of Henry’s own wishes.” Yet the reformist faction had been positioning themselves within the king’s good graces throughout the 1540s. While Henry VIII was always anxious to appear in control and willing to lash out at those closest to him in order to achieve this, he remained impressionable even in his dotage. In the end, he preferred to promote the reformist faction, whose members were connected to him through birth, marriage, and personal interests. Edward Seymour and John Dudley, who were first and foremost soldiers and courtiers, were – like the late Charles Brandon – exactly the kind of men with whom the king preferred to surround himself. Their appeal to an ageing monarch always obsessed with ideas about his own glory cannot be ignored.

Edward Seymour, the new king’s uncle, quickly emerged as the natural leader of the Protestant coup, and the creation of a Protectorate was a masterful achievement on his part. As Seymour’s biographer, A. F. Pollard, explains, “his long and faithful services, his relationship to [Prince] Edward, the success which had attended his military enterprises, and his popularity with the masses, constituted in his own eyes an indefeasible claim to a position at least equal to that enjoyed by John, Duke of Bedford, or Richard, Duke of Gloucester, during the minorities of Henry VI and Edward V.” The majority of those at court agreed and, without struggle, Edward Seymour became Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England. Henry had instructed that the

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36 Ibid., 18.
37 Loades, John Dudley, 87.
38 Ibid., 8.
“said executors, or the most part of them, may lawfully do what they shall think convenient for
the execution of this our will.” Since a majority of the executors appointed by Henry approved
of the Protectorate, the change was technically in accordance with the royal will.

Edward VI’s accession was only the second peaceful transfer of power since the Wars of
the Roses, a conflict ever-present in the minds of the Tudors and their subjects. With this likely
in mind, the new Lord Protector of England decided to halt the execution of his old enemy, the
Duke of Norfolk, so that his nephew’s reign did not begin with bloodshed. Thomas Wriothesley,
the most powerful executor who objected to Edward Seymour’s coup, paid the price by losing
his place in the new government. Edward VI’s regime dismissed him from the Privy Council and
placed him under house arrest. Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, soon ended up in the
Tower for openly disagreeing with the Protestant religious policies of the new king’s reign.

Within a matter of months, Anne Stanhope’s husband had gone from a mere courtier
fighting a factional battle to the most powerful peer in the kingdom. Anne was now the Duchess
of Somerset and possessed more political influence than any other woman in England. This role
suited her, as she had been working quietly to further her husband’s religious and political
agenda. Now that the couple had achieved their aims, however, difficulties emerged that they
had probably not foreseen. Queen Catherine Parr had been, up until this point, Anne’s mistress.
The queen had guided the women of her household on matters of reform and politics, but now
the balance of power had been upset. The ladies’ husbands – Edward Seymour in particular –
were in charge of the government, and Catherine Parr was now a queen dowager. As such, she
was still a member of the royal family and technically ranked higher than the Duchess of

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39 Ibid., 28.
40 Henry VII won the throne of England by defeating Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth Field
in 1485. His son, Henry VIII, had succeeded peacefully in 1509.
However, her political influence was vastly diminished and she had no real role in her stepson’s regime. Having expected to take on the role of royal regent herself, she resented the Duke of Somerset’s position as Lord Protector. Friction between Anne and Catherine, two powerful and headstrong women, was inevitable. Without a queen consort at the side of Edward VI, both women attempted to assert themselves as the first lady at court. Matters became worse when Catherine decided to marry Thomas Seymour with indecent haste, for the younger Seymour brother resented Somerset’s authority. The consequences of this tense situation would have a significant impact on the Protectorate.

In addition to the infighting within the Seymour family and the changing dynamic between Anne Stanhope and Catherine Parr, the events of early 1547 also set the stage for a further schism within the reformist faction. At the same time that Seymour became Duke of Somerset in February, John Dudley became Earl of Warwick and Lord Great Chamberlain. Because of this advancement, Ambassador Van der Delft presciently anticipated a struggle between Edward Seymour and John Dudley. Writing to Mary of Hungary, sister to Emperor Charles V, the ambassador explained:

It is, of course, quite likely that some jealousy or rivalry may arise between the earl of Hertford and the Lord Admiral, because, although they both belong to the same sect they are nevertheless widely different in character: the Lord Admiral [Dudley] being of high courage will not willingly submit to his colleague [Seymour]. He is, moreover, in higher favour both with the people and with the nobles than the earl of Hertford, owing to his liberality and splendour. The Protector, on the other hand, is not so accomplished in this respect, and is indeed looked down upon by everybody as a dry, sour, opinionated man.

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42 James, *Catherine Parr*, 270.
Under Edward VI, those reformers who had concealed their Protestant sympathies emerged into the limelight and reigned supreme. However, with their conservative enemies effectively defeated, the erstwhile members of the reformist faction eventually turned on one another. A combination of personal and political disagreements led to infighting and instability. Furthermore, despite his youth, the new king turned out to be as ruthless as his father, making the stakes every bit as high as they had been during Henry VIII’s reign. Because of their husbands’ positions, Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford were at the heart of these dramatic events. As a high-ranking widow and the confidante of many of those in power, Catherine Willoughby also had a part to play.

**The Mid-Tudor Crisis**

In 1973, historian Whitney Jones labeled the events that occurred throughout the decades of the 1540s and 1550s as “the Mid-Tudor Crisis.” The combination of political upheaval, dynastic infighting, economic decline, and popular unrest during these years certainly produced substantial instability for those living throughout the reigns of Henry VIII’s son and eldest daughter. Despite all of the old king’s obsessive efforts to secure a male heir, his throne passed first to a child and then to two women. His carefully-constructed religious settlement also collapsed as England vacillated between Protestantism and Catholicism.

On January 28, 1547, the nine-year-old Edward VI became king under his maternal uncle’s Protectorate. Six and a half years later, the young king was dead. Edward Seymour, as the victim of a political coup, did not live to see his nephew’s early demise. Instead, John Dudley, who had stepped into Seymour’s place as the leader of Edward VI’s government, was left to deal with a

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succession crisis in 1553. In an attempt to prevent the Catholic Mary Tudor from succeeding to her brother’s throne, Dudley – likely acting on the wishes of the dying Edward VI – proclaimed Lady Jane Grey as the new queen. Jane, seventeen years old at the time, was the granddaughter of Charles Brandon and Mary Tudor, Queen of France, and the therefore a great-granddaughter of Henry VII. However, to Dudley and his supporters, Jane’s most appealing qualities were her devout Protestantism and the fact that she was married to his son, Guildford. Yet Dudley gravely underestimated both Mary Tudor’s tenacity and her popularity amongst the English people. Less than a month after Edward VI’s death, Henry VIII’s eldest daughter entered London in triumph as the first queen regnant of England, and Dudley was quickly executed.47

Although Mary I’s reign began victoriously, she quickly faced challenges relating to the succession and religion. In 1554, she married Philip II of Spain, the son of Charles V and therefore her first cousin once removed. Her choice of a foreign husband was met with resistance both at court and throughout the country. Additionally, Mary took a hard line in her approach to religion, abandoning both the Protestantism of her brother’s reign and her father’s religious settlement. England became a Catholic kingdom once again. Mary’s government persecuted many of those who refused to accept the return to the old faith, particularly high-ranking dissenters. Amongst “Bloody Mary’s” most notable victims were Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury and Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester. Many prominent Protestants consequently fled into exile on the Continent. Had Mary lived longer, her Catholic restoration might have succeeded. However, she died childless in 1558, leaving her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth, as England’s new queen. Elizabeth I went on to rule for nearly forty-five years, yet

47 Mary I is usually credited as the first queen regnant in England’s history. While Empress Matilda fought to secure the throne from her cousin, Stephen, in the twelfth century, she was largely unsuccessful and – crucially – she was never crowned. Jane Grey, known as the “Nine Days Queen” also never had a coronation.
when she acceded to the throne at the age of twenty-five, no one could have predicted such longevity. While the Marian exiles jubilantly returned home, the preceding years of instability and uncertainty cast a shadow over Elizabeth’s early reign.

Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford endured all of the political, economic, and religious turmoil of the 1540s and 1550s. Because of their positions and that of their husbands, they were also principal actors in the midst of the drama of “the Mid-Tudor Crisis.” Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford both exulted in their husband’s political victories and then worked to mitigate the consequences of their respective downfalls. All three Protestant women had to navigate the accession of their erstwhile friend, the Catholic Mary I. While Anne Stanhope remained in England and ostensibly returned to the old faith, Catherine Willoughby joined the Marian exiles. After enduring her beloved husband’s execution and her family’s downfall, Jane Guildford, who also remained in England, died in 1555. The actions of each of these women, and that of their husbands, throughout these years of triumph and then uncertainty solidified their respective historical reputations. Yet before these periods of crisis, each of the three women came into positions of great wealth and influence during the reign of Edward VI.
CHAPTER FOUR. PATRONAGE AND POWER

Religious Patronage

Between 1547 and 1553, Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford each exercised greater authority and influence than ever before. As a dowager duchess, Catherine retained much of her power and wealth without the supervision of her husband. This new freedom, coinciding with the accession of a Protestant monarch, allowed Catherine to come into her own as a Protestant and as a patron. Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford also became duchesses during this period. As the wives of the most powerful men in the kingdom, they were ideal patrons and supporters of the Protestant cause. This section will discuss the ways in which each of the three women used their positions of power during the Edwardian period to further the new religion and to back the careers of Protestant clergymen, writers, and scholars. An examination of all three women offers some insight into the various ways that noblewomen could engage in the Tudor patronage system and in the growth of English Protestantism under Edward VI’s government.

Politics in Tudor England were inherently personal. Despite the growing power and influence of the monarchy and the development of more formal government institutions, the patronage system continued to be an essential aspect of Tudor politics. The distribution of patronage simply changed alongside “the transformation in the relationships between the centre and the periphery of political power.” Originally established in medieval power structures, patronage distribution in the sixteenth century became focused on the court rather than the distinguished aristocratic families in the localities.¹ At its heart, the patronage system was based

on a relationship between patron and client. The patron typically provided support in the way of financial assistance, the bestowal of property, or even political preferment, and the client promised support and loyalty in return. Tudor courtiers used their positions to both receive and distribute patronage, sometimes offering little more than support for their clients’ petitions to the monarch. Patronage became even more essential during the early decades of the Reformation, as aristocrats could use their status and wealth to support Protestant clergymen and their works, providing integral opportunities for the new religion to spread. Additionally, patronage was a vital factor within Renaissance culture, as it was necessary for those seeking an artistic or literary career to obtain a patron.²

Historians have long recognized the importance of patronage within the early modern political system, but have only recently given much attention to women’s involvement in client-patron relationships.³ Traditionally, artistic and literary patronage was already “considered part of women’s sphere.” The Middle Ages saw queens, abbesses, and noblewomen acting as patrons to artists, musicians, writers, poets, printers, and architects.⁴ The literary sphere – particularly religious discourse – allowed early modern women to break socially-prescribed gender roles. Through their authorship and patronage, these women “made possible the rapid production of religious works, which were predominantly Protestant” and they were often able to “insert personal and political statements” into such texts.⁵ Because of the often personal and informal

⁴ Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 167-168.
nature of patronage, women were also central participants in this aspect of the political world. Tudor noblewomen often built networks within their extended families, the local aristocratic community, and the royal court. These networks allowed them to dispense and receive patronage for themselves and their families. An individual’s success in early modern politics was based largely on his or her ability to develop lucrative personal relationships. Like their male counterparts, women were capable of forming necessary attachments in order to engage in the patronage system.

It is important to briefly discuss the various forms of early modern patronage. The most traditional type of patron-client relationship involved the giving and receiving of financial assistance. It could also encompass a more amorphous form of support in the way of political preferment. During the early decades of the English Reformation, literary sponsorship was also an important way for patrons to advocate for their beliefs and for those individuals who shared them. However, even if a financial exchange did not take place, a public demonstration of support and adulation – such as a book dedication – could suggest a sort of client-patron relationship. At the very least, it could indicate an attempt by a potential client to garner favor. It is unlikely that such a demonstration would occur without at least the tacit approval of the would-be patron. As Valerie Schutte argues, “While client-patron relationships cannot always be delineated from book dedications… [they] at least reflect what dedicators thought their dedicatee ought to be reading. Dedications, then, reveal perceptions of their intended recipients and how dedicators sought to influence their dedicatees.” In her work on Mary I, Schutte proves that, for the English queen, “book dedications were an arena in which [she] negotiated patronage, politics, religion, and gender roles.” Through patronage in its various forms, then, queens and

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Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 175, 210-213.
noblewomen – like Catherine, Anne, and Jane – could navigate Tudor power structures, religious change, and their prescribed social inferiority as women.\(^7\)

As a wealthy widow, Catherine Willoughby enjoyed newfound autonomy and freedom of expression during Edward VI’s reign. With the death of both her husband and the old king, the dowager duchess was able to utilize her financial resources to promote the new religious order. Because of her unique circumstances and the depth of her commitment to the new religion, Catherine emerged as one of the most illustrious female figures of the English Reformation. Numerous studies have already examined Catherine’s extensive role as a Protestant patron.\(^8\) This work does not seek to either extend or alter such studies, but instead offers a summation of Catherine’s contributions to the Edwardian and early Elizabethan Reformations as compared to those of her two contemporaries, Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford.

Edward VI’s government under the Somerset Protectorate was responsible for the repeal of Henry VIII’s censorship and treason laws as well as the Act of Six Articles, which laid the groundwork for a boom in English publishing. In the early, zealous years of the new king’s reign, over 250 books were published a year – most containing Protestant propaganda.\(^9\) Catherine Willoughby established a client-patron relationship with the eminent Protestant printer, John Day, who eventually achieved fame in the Elizabethan period as the publisher of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*. Day and his partner, William Serres, included the duchess’s


coat of arms in several of their printed works.¹⁰ Most meaningfully, perhaps, Day and Serres imprinted her insignia on their edition of William Tyndale’s translation of the New Testament.¹¹ This amounted to a direct endorsement by Catherine of the distribution of the Bible in English—a central tenet of Protestantism.

Catherine received fourteen dedications in printed books during her long lifetime, placing her in the company of the “greatest patronesses of the English Renaissance.”¹² The works dedicated to or connected with Catherine provide insight into her role as a patron and her beliefs as a committed Protestant reformer. As mentioned previously, Queen Catherine Parr credited the Duchess of Suffolk as the architect of the publication of her second work, *Lamentation of a Sinner*, printed in late 1547 by Edward Whitchurch, another London-based Protestant publisher.¹³ The work plainly articulated the dowager queen’s belief in sola fide, or justification by faith alone, a conviction that she shared with her friend and former lady-in-waiting. The scholar Nicholas Lesse dedicated his 1548 translation of German theologian Johannes Aepinus’s exposition on the Psalm of David to “the right virtuous and gracious” Duchess of Suffolk. In the work’s preface, Lesse explained that the “common people hath received already many comfortable and spiritual consolations, instructions, and teachings” from Catherine.¹⁴ In 1549, John Day and William Serres also included Catherine Willoughby’s coat of arms in their printing

¹⁴ Nicholas Lesse, trans., *A very fruitful and godly exposition upon the Psalme of David* by Johannes Aepinus (London: John Day, 1548), 2.
of a sermon Hugh Latimer delivered that year before Edward VI. Thomas Some, the editor, dedicated the work to “the right virtuous and gracious Lady Katherine Duchess of Suffolk,” whom he wished “Godly favour and everlasting salvation from God the father through Jesus Christ our merciful Lord.” Thomas Wilson, who served in Catherine’s household as a tutor to her sons, praised her in his 1553 work, *The Arte of Rhetorique*. In it, he celebrated the Brandon family and mourned the passing of the duchess’s sons, Henry and Charles, from the sweating sickness in 1551. He extolled Catherine’s many virtues as a “learned and earnest good patroness, and most helping Lady above all other.” *The Arte of Rhetorique* became one of Wilson’s most notable works and was reprinted seven times by the end of the Elizabethan period. In it, he argued that eloquence was “first given by God, after lost by man, and last repaired by God again,” and that a command of rhetoric was a way of embracing one’s Protestant faith.

Catherine’s patronage of and connection to Protestant texts continued beyond the reign of Edward VI. For example, in 1562, the poet Sir John Harington dedicated his translation of Cicero’s *The Booke of Frendeship* to “the right virtuous, and my singular good lady, Katharine Duchess of Suffolk.” Maintaining his work’s theme on friendship, Harington expressed a strong fondness for the duchess:

> And such your friendly steadfastness declared to the dead, doth ascertain us of your steadfast friendliness toward the living, which many have felt, and divers do prove, and few can want. Of which number your grace hath made me one, that neither least nor seldomest, have tasted of your benefits, both in my trouble and also liberty. Wherefore your grace in my sight is of all other most worthy this small fruit of my prisons labor, as fit patroness to the honor of such a work, and

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16 Thomas Wilson, *The arte of rhetorike for the use of all suche as are studious of eloquence* (London: John Kingston, 1553), 2, 4-5, 201.
17 John Harington spent time as a prisoner in the Tower of London, where he apparently consoled himself with his studies.
That same year, John Day published a collection of Hugh Latimer’s sermons on the Lord’s Prayer that had been delivered before Catherine Willoughby at her Lincolnshire estate in 1553. Augustine Bernher, Latimer’s former clerk and the editor of the collection, dedicated the work to “the right honorable, the lady Katherine, Duchess of Suffolk.” Clearly, Protestant authors and printers throughout the mid-Tudor era recognized Catherine as both a potential wealthy patron and an advocate of the new faith.

Anne Stanhope developed a similar, if not as enduring, reputation as a Protestant patron. In February 1547, Edward Seymour became the Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England. Anne consequently became the Duchess of Somerset and one of the most influential women in the kingdom. This new power, along with her known fondness for reform, made her a natural patron of religious publications. Between 1548 and 1551 she sponsored (either directly or indirectly) eight religious publications – more than any other woman at the time. Although Edward Seymour’s downfall in 1551 and Anne’s subsequent imprisonment in the Tower halted her political and religious career, there is every indication that the Duchess of Somerset would have continued patronizing reformers. Her support extended to famous intellectuals of the Edwardian period, and a number of leading theologians recognized her status as a major patron. In 1549, John Olde dedicated his translation of Erasmus’s *Paraphrases* to “the right excellent

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19 Augustine Bernher, ed. *Certayn Godly Sermons, made vppon the lords prayer, preached by the right reuerende Father, and constant martyre of Christ, Master Hughe Latymer* (London: John Day, 1562), 2.
and most virtuous Lady Anne, Duchess of Somerset.”

Walter Lynne, a Flemish translator and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer’s printer, dedicated two of his works to Anne – *A Briefe Collection*, which included some of Martin Luther’s sermons, in 1549 and *A Briefe Concordance*, which encompassed works by the Swiss reformers, Heinrich Bullinger, Leo Juda, and Konrad Pellikan, in 1550. Lynne referred to himself as the “most bounden and daily orator” of “the right noble and virtuous lady, Lady Anne, duchess of Somerset.” He lauded Anne as “the most gracious patroness and supporter both of good learning and also of godly men learned” and recognized that her “chief and daily study is in the holy Bible.” Lynne also published *A Work of the Predestination of Saints*, written by Nicholas Lesse in 1550. Lesse, who was also a client of Catherine Willoughby, dedicated the work to “the right virtuous Lady Anne, duchess of Somerset,” whom he described as a “faithful mother to all good works.” Two years earlier, Anne had also received a dedication from Lesse in his translation of *The Wyll of Man*. Additional dedications came from William Samuel and Thomas Becon, Protestant scholars who served in the Somerset household. Mildred Cooke, William Cecil’s wife, also devoted a work to Anne Stanhope. In 1550, she translated St. Basil the Great’s sermon on the book of Deuteronomy and wrote that the Duchess of Somerset was her “right good lady and mistress” and she her

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24 Ibid.


“humble servant and debtor.”27 Anne had an amicable relationship with Mildred Cooke and her sister, Anne, both of whom were praised by their contemporaries for their devotion to reform and education. William Cecil worked as the Duke of Somerset’s secretary and Mildred served in the duchess’s household.28

Jennifer Loach, a biographer of Edward VI, argues that “any person in a position of power in the sixteenth century was likely to receive dedications from authors anxious to find patronage, for dedications were both a form of courtesy and a request for patronage.” According to Loach, it was “their position rather than their [the Duke and Duchess of Somerset’s] beliefs that had brought them so many dedications.”29 While this assessment of book dedications is undeniable, the number of dedications that Anne Stanhope received and the fact that every author was Protestant suggests that Loach’s assertion is perhaps misjudged. Anne’s connection to Protestants also extended beyond her patronage of literature. She surrounded herself with intellectual men and women of similar convictions and actively worked to instill the same beliefs in her children. The fact that book dedications to the Duchess of Somerset largely ceased after her family’s political troubles in 1551 likely indicates that Protestant authors no longer viewed her as a source of financial and political support, not that she had abandoned her religious beliefs. Anne did receive Protestant book dedications under Elizabeth I. In 1570, Edward Crane dedicated his translation of The Fortress of Faith to Anne.30 Crane’s dedication followed the same pattern as those given to Anne during the reign of Edward VI – at the height of her influence. He presented his work to “the right honourable and my singular good Lady and

28 Alford, Burghley, 36, 144.
29 Loach, Edward VI, 45.
mistress, Lady Anne Duchess of Somerset her grace.”31 In 1586, a year before Anne’s death, Ephraim Pagitt dedicated his translation of The Book of Ruth to the duchess.32 Pagitt was only eleven years old at this time, but he went on to become a clergyman and a supporter of Presbyterianism. In his dedication of The Book of Ruth, Pagitt thanked Anne Stanhope and a number of other noblewomen for their support. This was Anne’s last act as a patron of religious reform. It is clear that such patronage was important to her and she remained a consistent sponsor of Protestantism and religious reform throughout much of her life.

Despite her prolific patronage of Protestant literature and intellectuals, Anne Stanhope’s contributions to the early English Reformation tend to be eclipsed in modern scholarship by those of other women, such as Catherine Willoughby. However, contemporaries clearly recognized her ability and desire to support religious reform. Anne belonged to the same circles as the Duchess of Suffolk, and likewise devoted much of her life and career to promoting her religious beliefs. Unfortunately, Anne’s notorious image – constructed by historians and scholars through the centuries – overshadows her contributions to the English Reformation. The historical reputations of Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, as well as that of Jane Guildford, will be considered at length in the next chapter.

In addition to their patronage of Protestant literature, the Duchesses of Suffolk and Somerset also furthered the careers of certain reformers by providing them with positions in their households. Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester was chaplain to Edward VI and one of the most prominent Protestant preachers during the Edwardian era. He had been associated with Catherine Willoughby since at least her time of service in Catherine Parr’s household. During the religious

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31 Ibid.
and factional confrontations of the mid-1540s, he had sought refuge at Grimsthorpe, the
duchess’s Lincolnshire estate. Latimer quickly became both Catherine’s protégé and spiritual
mentor – a common sort of relationship that existed between many high-profile Protestants and
European women of noble birth. For example, Jean Calvin frequently corresponded with and
courted a variety of French noblewomen, including Marguerite de Navarre, Jeanne d’Albret, and
Renée de France – all of whom he recognized as well-placed political agents and supporters of
reform.\textsuperscript{33} All evidence indicates that Catherine and Latimer’s affiliation went beyond a simple
client-patron relationship. In one of his final sermons before Edward VI in 1550, Latimer
declared, “Faith is a noble duchess.” This was almost certainly a complimentary nod to his
patron, who was likely in attendance. After his semi-retirement in 1550, the bishop spent most of
his time at Grimsthorpe. Latimer certainly served as a father-like figure to Catherine, and most
scholars credit him as the fundamental influence on the development of the duchess’s religious
beliefs.\textsuperscript{34} The Bishop of Worcester certainly felt secure enough in Catherine’s affections to
occasionally admonish her, even in public. During his Christmas sermon in 1552 – likely
delivered at Grimsthorpe – Latimer compared “Mary the mother of Christ” to “our well-spoken
dames.” He declared that the Virgin “took not in hand to preach: she knew that silence in a
woman is a great virtue.” He then went further, hoping that “all women learn to follow the
[example] of Mary; to leave their talk and vain speaking, and to keep silence. For what was the
cause of the fall of mankind, but the unmeasurable talk of Eve, which took in hand to reason the
matter with the serpent?”\textsuperscript{35} This sort of bluster was likely not meant as a personal insult, but was

\textsuperscript{33} Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, “Calvin’s Letters to Women: The Courting of Ladies in High
\textsuperscript{34} Franklin-Harkrider, \textit{Women, Reform and Community}, 79.
\textsuperscript{35} George Elwes Corrie, ed., \textit{Sermons and Remains of Hugh Latimer, Sometime Bishop of
instead indicative of the era’s religious views on women. The Duchess of Suffolk had likely heard this sort of language before, whatever her feelings on the sermon in the moment. Her relationship with Latimer certainly did not suffer, and he may have officiated at Catherine’s wedding ceremony to her second husband, Richard Bertie, in 1553.36 Years later, at the beginning of Elizabeth I’s reign, Catherine wrote to William Cecil that “she will say to him as her father Latimer was wont to say to her, ‘I will be bold to write to you another time as I hear and what I think; and if not, I shall hold my peace and pray God amend it.’” She then encouraged Cecil to “only seek Him as His elect and chosen vessel ought to do.”37 Clearly, Catherine felt the influence of her mentor Latimer long after his untimely death.

John Foxe, the celebrated martyrologist, also served as a spiritual advisor to Catherine Willoughby. In 1550, he was a member of the duchess’s household at Grimsthorpe, likely serving as a chaplain.38 Foxe later provided a romantic account of the Duchess of Suffolk’s flight from England into exile under the reign of Mary I. As will be discussed at greater length in the next chapter, Foxe was largely responsible for Catherine’s historical reputation as a Protestant heroine. In 1550, Roger Ascham, who tutored her sons in Greek and penmanship, wrote that the Duchess of Suffolk had offered him “large and generous promises.” He also indicated that the younger Charles Brandon favored him and was in his debt for “the elegance of his handwriting.”39 In a letter to Augustine Bernher, Nicholas Ridley asked him to “render her grace [Catherine] hearty thanks,” for “my lady’s grace’s alms, six royals, six shillings, and eight pence.” Ridley, who had served as Bishop of London from 1550 to 1553, was imprisoned at the

time. He became one of the Oxford Martyrs, alongside Thomas Cranmer and the duchess’s beloved Hugh Latimer. Ridley also asked Bernher to read his writings to the Duchess of Suffolk, and that she pass them along to “Mrs. [Anne] Warcup” and “Mistress [Jane] Wilkinson,” two of her female associates.\footnote{Nicholas Ridley, \textit{The Works of Nicholas Ridley, Sometime Lord Bishop of London, Martyr, 1555}, ed. Henry Christmas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1841), 382.}

Catherine also demonstrated her desire to patronize reformist intellectuals when she donated an annuity of nearly £7 to St. John’s College, Cambridge for “certain poor scholars there for ever to be yearly paid unto them.” The college recognized “the good and charitable disposition and virtuous mind” of the Duchess of Suffolk.\footnote{Thomas Baker, \textit{History of the College of St. John the Evangelist, Cambridge}, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1869), 447.} Meaningfully, both of her sons had attended St. John’s before their untimely deaths in 1551. This donation was therefore likely made out of both sentiment and genuine religious devotion.

No longer a lady-in-waiting at the royal court, Catherine became particularly active in the political and religious matters of Lincolnshire, the seat of her family’s estates. Her sponsorship of local clergy, including Henry Holbeach, Bishop of Lincoln, and John Taylor, Dean of Lincoln, allowed for their “industrious ministry and uniform concurrence in wholesome doctrine” to reach a wider audience in the north.\footnote{John Strype, ed. \textit{Ecclesiastical Memorials, Relating Chiefly to Religion, and the Reformation of It, and the Emergencies of the Church of England, Under King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, and Queen Mary I with Large Appendixes, Containing Original Papers, Records, &c}, vol. 2, part 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1822), 83.} In 1548, Robert Geffrey, one of the Duchess of Suffolk’s clients, was, according to the county record, appointed as “curate of Hagworthingham,” a Lincolnshire village and his birthplace. He was previously one of the duchess’s chaplains with a “[pension] of £3 granted by a charter.”\footnote{A. J. Hodgett, ed., \textit{The State of the Ex-Religious and Former Chantry Priests in the Diocese of Lincoln from Returns in the Exchequer, 1547-1574}, vol. 53 (Lincoln: Lincoln Record Society, 1959), 106.} In 1549, Catherine sponsored the appointment of one her former chaplains, Thomas Sharpneyf, to the benefice of Edenham, a parish church in Lincolnshire. The
county record of the promotion describes Sharpneyf as “married” – not uncommon for Protestant clergymen in Edward VI’s reign – and “in the service of the Duchess of Suffolk at £2 [per annum].”\textsuperscript{44} Sharpneyf embraced the reformist fervor of the Edwardian era and removed and destroyed certain of the church’s liturgical objects, such as cruets and the sacring bell.\textsuperscript{45} In total, Catherine used her influence and patronage to promote the appointments of clergymen in sixteen parishes throughout her long lifetime.\textsuperscript{46} In 1550, she also transformed her family’s chantry lands at Spilsby into a grammar school for young men, on the condition that she and her heirs would select the schoolmaster.\textsuperscript{47} The duchess’s authority in the county was such that she was described to the Earl of Rutland as “[having] the rule in Lincolnshire.”\textsuperscript{48} Through her efforts, the reformed faith gradually began to spread throughout the traditionally-conservative county.\textsuperscript{49}

As Duchess of Somerset, Anne Stanhope could similarly support the careers of Protestant clergymen and scholars. Unlike Catherine Willoughby, though, Anne was not an heiress with powerful, ancestral ties to a particular county. Wulfhall, the seat of the Seymour family in Wiltshire, was fairly small and dilapidated. By the early 1550s, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset owned lands and manors in Wiltshire, Hertfordshire, and Somerset, but Anne spent much of her time at Somerset House, Syon House, and Sheen Palace in London. Nevertheless, from her estates, the duchess could promote the interests of her clients and support her patronage network. She provided positions in her household to Thomas Becon, Nicholas Denisot, and William Samuel. Becon and Denisot, as tutors, developed strong relationships with the Seymour

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 117.
\textsuperscript{45} Franklin-Harkrider, \textit{Women, Reform and Community}, 88.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 88-89.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 92.
\textsuperscript{49} Franklin-Harkrider, \textit{Women, Reform and Community}, 92.
children. Denisot helped the three eldest Seymour girls compose their tributary poem to Marguerite de Navarre. Before entering the Seymours’ service, Becon had studied under Hugh Latimer at Cambridge and had been appointed by Archbishop Cranmer as a chaplain at Canterbury Cathedral.\footnote{John N. King, “Protector Somerset, Patron of the English Renaissance,” The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America 70, no. 3 (1976), 309.} Upon entering the duke and duchess’s household in 1547, he wrote a number of religious works, including a Protestant nativity play, \textit{A Newe Dialog betwene thangell of God & the Shepherdes in the Felde}, which was printed in London by John Day.\footnote{Ibid., 310; Thomas Becon, \textit{A Newe Dialog betwene thangell of God & the Shepherdes in the Felde} (London: John Day, 1547).} In addition to dedicating a work to Anne’s daughter Jane Seymour, Becon wrote \textit{The Flower of Godly Prayers} for “the most honourable and virtuous lady Anne, Duchess of Somerset her Grace.”\footnote{Thomas Becon, \textit{Prayers and Other Pieces of Thomas Becon, S. T. P.}, ed. John Ayre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), 3.} He recognized her generosity to him “since I came first to your service,” and wished her “the favour of God, increase of honour, long life, and prosperous health, both of body and soul.”\footnote{Becon, \textit{Prayers and Other Pieces}, 3.} William Samuel, another member of the Somerset household, dedicated \textit{The Abridgement of Goddes Statutes in Myter} to Anne in 1551. He described himself as the duchess’s “most true and faithful servant.”\footnote{William Samuel, \textit{The Abridgement of Goddes Statutes in Myter} (London: Robert Crowley for Robert Soughton, 1551), 2.} Like many women of her position during Edward VI’s reign, Anne Stanhope surrounded herself and her family with reformist scholars. As her husband was the most powerful individual in the kingdom, next to the king, Anne was able to use her influence to help her intellectual friends. They in turn publicly recognized her interest in reform and education. Each adulatory dedication increased her position and renown as a patron of reform. When the German reformer Martin Bucer died while living in Cambridge in 1551, the Duchess of
Somerset worked with the king and Archbishop Cranmer to obtain the books in his library. His manuscripts went to the royal library and the majority of the printed books went to the duchess, with the remainder to the archbishop.55 Clearly, Anne Stanhope actively worked to further the new religion and to present herself as an educated Protestant patron.

In addition to their associations with Protestants in England, both Anne Stanhope and Catherine Willoughby fostered client-patron relationships with clergy and scholars abroad. In a 1555 letter to Conrad Hubert, assistant to Martin Bucer, Miles Coverdale indicated that the Duchess of Suffolk had financial ties to the German reformer.56 And as late as 1573, Johannes Sturm, one of Martin Bucer’s disciples, used Catherine Willoughby’s name to curry favor and financial support for one of his associates, Christopher Lantschadius, with Elizabeth I.57 Sturm had had a friendly relationship with the duchess ever since she had offered monetary aid and protection in England when he was confronted with religious persecution on the Continent.

Continental reformers also recognized Anne Stanhope’s position as a reformer. In 1549, Anne sent John Calvin a ring as a token of her esteem. When Calvin wrote to the duchess’s eldest daughter, Anne Seymour, he asked her to convey his gratitude. He also asked the younger Anne to salute her brother, Edward, and her sisters.58 Calvin evidently had an amicable relationship with the entire Seymour family. That same year, another of Anne’s daughters, Jane Seymour, wrote to Martin Bucer and Paul Fagius, “My mother, thank God, is in good health: she

desires her best respects to you both, and also thanks you for your salutations to her grace.”

Anne Stanhope and Catherine Willoughby’s connections to continental reformers like Bucer and Calvin demonstrates just how far their religious views had come. They were both now firmly Protestant and clearly supportive of the Edwardian regime – headed by Anne’s husband – and its intensive reforms.

In the early 1550s, when Jane Guildford’s husband, now the Duke of Northumberland, replaced Edward Seymour as the leader of the young king’s government, she effectively succeeded Anne Stanhope as the most influential woman in the kingdom. Yet, based on the extant evidence, Jane was not as prolific as either the Duchesses of Somerset or Suffolk in her patronage of religious reform. While the content of the works connected to the Dudley family, such as John Bale’s 1552 *An Expostulation or Complaynte agaynst the Blasphemyes of a Franticke Papyst of Hamshyre*, largely mirrored those attached to the Seymour family, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland did not receive as many dedications or literary tributes. This was partly due to the fact that, by the early 1550s, the boom in Protestant publishing had subsided and the overall number of theological, devotional, and philosophical works printed had appreciably decreased.

Yet like Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford focused much of her attention and what patronage she was capable of bestowing on education, particularly that of her children. As mentioned previously, in 1553, she commissioned two scientific treatises from John Dee. According to John Dudley’s biographer, David Loades, Dee had been acquainted with the

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59 Ibid., 1: 2.
62 John Dee, *A letter, containing a most briefe discourse apologeticall...* (London: Peter Short, 1599), 6
Dudley family through John Cheke and William Cecil, two individuals also connected to Catherine Willoughby and the Seymour family.\textsuperscript{63} Like much of Dee’s life, his religious beliefs are not clear, though the strength of his attachment to Elizabeth I indicates that he was a sympathizer of the new religion. Born in 1527, his thinking was fundamentally a product of the Renaissance. While his first loves were mathematics, astronomy, and occultism, the early modern world did not necessarily believe that the study of religion and “natural philosophy” were in conflict with one another. Dee himself repeatedly assured his readers that the study of the natural world “served religion well and humbly.”\textsuperscript{64} The Dudleys were clearly both interested in the study of the natural world, for the German cartographer, Sebastian Münster, dedicated his 1553 work, \textit{A Treatyse of the Newe India}, “to the right high and mighty prince, the Duke of Northumberland, his grace.”\textsuperscript{65}

Richard Morison, humanist scholar and Edward VI’s English ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire, had evident connections to both the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. It was likely through John Dudley’s intervention that he secured his position as ambassador, and both Morison and his wife, Bridget Hussey, spent time with Jane Guildford and her husband.\textsuperscript{66} While Morison was not a particularly experienced or capable ambassador – his Calvinist zeal was not well received by Charles V – he had already achieved more success as a writer. He attended Oxford in his youth, where he ran in the circles of other reformers, such as Nicholas Udall. He also became associated with Hugh Latimer and Roger Ascham. Morison worked as a

\textsuperscript{65} Sebastian Münster, \textit{A Treatyse of Newe India} (London: S. Mierdman, 1553), 4.
propagandist for Henry VIII after the latter’s break with the Roman Catholic Church, and wrote *A Remedy for Sedition* in response to the Pilgrimage of Grace.\(^67\) While Morison concentrated largely on his political career under Edward VI, his association with the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland indicates that Jane Guildford, like Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, constructed friendships and alliances with leading Protestant scholars.

Like Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford can most obviously be connected to Protestant scholars through her choice in her children’s tutors. For example, the exiled French reformer, Nicholas Bourbon, instructed her eldest son, Henry.\(^68\) Bourbon, an erstwhile protégé of Anne Boleyn, had been associated with the Dudleys since at least the mid-1530s. In 1538, he had encouraged Jane and her husband to “continue to follow the banners of Christ.”\(^69\) The Dudley children had also been childhood companions to Edward VI during his father’s reign. They had likely shared some of the prince’s tutors, whose ranks included the likes of John Cheke and Roger Ascham – both of whom were connected to Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope’s own children.\(^70\) While little information exists regarding the details of Jane’s household as Duchess of Northumberland, the available evidence indicates that she and her husband likely continued to employ and patronize Protestant scholars in the early 1550s. Jane’s political contributions to her husband’s role as the leader of Edward VI’s government can more

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\(^{67}\) Loades, *John Dudley*, 164-165, 203.


be more clearly delineated. Like Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford used her newfound influence to promote her own interests and, by the same token, those of her family.

Political Patronage

The significance of patronage to the Tudor political system meant that noblewomen, who constructed important networks made up of family members, neighbors, and clients, played a vital part. Traditionally “private” roles, such as that of wife and mother, could be viewed as careers in their own right. Barbara Harris has made the strong case that female networks contributed just as much to a family’s standing and political power as those constructed by males. 71 The political actions of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford between 1547 and 1553 – particularly their participation in patronage networks – reveal the nature of Edwardian politics and statecraft. This section discusses the ways in which each of the three women used their positions of power to promote their own interests and, correspondingly, those of their family and friends.

Unlike Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford, Catherine Willoughby was a widow during Edward VI’s reign. While she was no longer married to a man with the king’s ear, she nevertheless occupied one of the most socially desirable positions to which a woman could aspire in the early modern era. 72 As an heiress in her own right, the Duchess of Suffolk also commanded a significant amount of political influence in her native Lincolnshire. Catherine used this authority to influence the selection of many of the county’s religious officials. She also transformed her household into a center for the propagation of reform. As a major regional

72 Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 127; Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender, 94.
landowner, Catherine and her household affected more than just the religious makeup of Lincolnshire. The estates of the nobility and gentry functioned as major employers and centers of patronage, in much the same way as the royal court on a national level. Great landowners also shaped the direction of regional and national politics. As mistresses of great households, aristocratic women therefore assumed important political roles. As both an heiress and widowed duchess, Catherine Willoughby employed many Lincolnshire men and women, influenced local and parliamentary elections, and constructed a vast regional patronage network. The Duchess of Suffolk’s assistance or support was an invaluable asset. For example, she relentlessly supported her distant cousin, William Naunton, who was involved in a dispute concerning the profits of a royal office. Naunton had served in the late Duke of Suffolk’s household and was likely a member of the duchess’s extended Lincolnshire family. Throughout 1550, she bombarded the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, as well as the duke’s secretary and her friend William Cecil, concerning Naunton’s suit. By the end of that year, the matter had been resolved to Catherine and Naunton’s satisfaction.

In addition to their authority and responsibility as the mistresses of great households, aristocratic women like Catherine Willoughby could usually find political significance in their roles as mothers. They participated actively in the arrangement of their children’s marriages. As in so many other instances, these women usually collaborated with their husbands during these negotiations. However, it is clear that aristocratic fathers did not always have the final say in finding suitable spouses for their children. As mothers, aristocratic women had an emotional, financial, and political stake in the marriage market. Marrying their children into the right

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74 Ibid., 278-280.
75 SP, Edward VI: 10/11, f. 9.
families could enhance parents’ own patronage networks – an objective for both fathers and mothers. Even queens took an active role in their children’s arranged marriages, which usually involved high-stakes diplomatic negotiations. Henry VIII’s first two queens, Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn, took part in the discussions concerning their daughters’ potential marriages. Catherine of Aragon publicly demonstrated her preference for an imperial alliance for her daughter in 1517, when she personally welcomed the ambassador of her nephew, Emperor Charles V, and received him in her chambers “as if he had been a sovereign.” She did not show the same courtesy to the ambassadors of Francis I when a French match was in the offing a year later. Similarly, in the 1530s, Anne Boleyn made no secret of the fact that she preferred a French match for her own daughter. Catherine and Anne’s respective involvements in such geopolitical maneuvering indicates that Tudor society expected mothers in general, but perhaps queens in particular, to voice an opinion and even take an active role in the arrangement of their children’s marriages. Their input in such talks could also provide an important contribution, as they often drew from their own networks in order to find and pursue a match that they deemed suitable. If an aristocratic mother was a widow, she generally had an even greater involvement in the arrangement of her children’s marriages. For example, after prolonged negotiations with Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, the widowed Margaret Pole, Countess of Salisbury paid an enormous sum for her daughter, Ursula, to wed his son and heir, Henry. An aristocratic

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mother’s ability to control her child’s financial and marital arrangements was often contingent on her ability to purchase his or her wardship.  

In May 1546, Catherine Willoughby successfully petitioned for and purchased the wardship of her elder son, Henry, the new Duke of Suffolk for £1,500 (only about £500 less than the cost of her own wardship seventeen years earlier). As a twenty-seven-year-old widow, Catherine needed others to stand surety for her payment. Most of the men who agreed to do so were known reformers at court, both in the final years of Henry VIII’s reign and during that of Edward VI. As discussed in the previous chapter, Sir John Gates, Sir William Herbert, and Sir Anthony Denny were all members of the reformist faction in the 1540s. Two of the other guarantors were also prominent reformers. Sir Ralph Sadler was a protégé of Thomas Cromwell, whose downfall he survived. Sadler flourished under both Henry VIII and Edward VI, and he supported John Dudley’s bid to place the Protestant Jane Grey on the throne in 1553. Sir Philip Hoby served as the English ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire and likewise supported Jane Grey over the Catholic Mary Tudor. Catherine’s association with such men in the final days of Henry VIII’s reign indicates that she was part of a Protestant network at court – and that she could count on the men and women of this network for support.  

After securing Henry’s wardship, Catherine took a close interest in both of her sons’ upbringing after her husband’s death. For a time, she left Henry at court as a companion to Edward VI. The young duke shared the king’s tutors, as had both the Seymour and Dudley children during the old king’s reign. Charles Brandon the younger remained in his mother’s
household at Grimsthorpe. Like any good aristocratic parent, Catherine surely planned to use her sons’ marriages to secure important political alliances. Aristocratic parents had two related goals when determining their children’s marriages – to ensure their children’s financial security and social position and to enhance the family’s status. The Duchess of Suffolk would not have been an exception. In May 1549, Catherine wrote to William Cecil that “Warwick [John Dudley], for better show of his friendship, wished Somerset [Edward Seymour] to have my son for his daughter.” She was likely referring to a potential arranged match between her elder son, Henry, and Seymour’s eldest daughter, Anne. This would have been a natural alliance, as Henry was himself a duke and Anne was the daughter of the most powerful nobleman in England. As the young Anne Seymour was Anne Stanhope’s daughter, it is probable that the Duchesses of Somerset and Suffolk were closely involved in these potential negotiations. However, Catherine was hesitant to pursue the match, perhaps because Edward Seymour’s position as Lord Protector was already tenuous. By October of that year, he was ousted from his seat in government and imprisoned in the Tower. Perhaps indicating her understanding of the political climate, Catherine Willoughby explained to Cecil, “I trust the friendship between my lord Somerset and me has such good assurance simply by our good wills that we need not do anything rashly to make the world believe better of our friendship, or for one of us to think well of the other.” Both Henry and Anne were still young – fourteen and eleven respectively – and she therefore wrote:

I cannot tell what unkindness one of us might show the other than to bring our children into so miserable a state as not to choose by their own liking. I have said this for his daughter as well as my son. I know none that I wish my son rather than her, but I do not wish that she should be constrained by her friends to have him whom she might not like… Although both might feel bound to their parents’ pleasures, the loss of their free choice is enough to break the greatest love.

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83 Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 43-44.
84 SP, Edward VI: 10/10, f. 10.
While most historians have taken Catherine’s words as an “explicit condemnation of arranged marriage,” it does not necessarily indicate that she was against the practice as a whole.\textsuperscript{85} Most Tudor aristocrats believed that both parties needed to enter a marriage willingly – or at least provide formal consent. Most mothers and fathers were reluctant to force sons, or even daughters, into matches against their will.\textsuperscript{86} When she purchased her son’s wardship, Catherine Willoughby also gained the right to arrange the young duke’s marriage. With this responsibility on her shoulders, she would have understood the necessity of using marriage as a political and social tool. The fact that she was involved in such negotiations with the Seymour family, with the apparent participation of both John Dudley and William Cecil, also indicates that she was firmly entrenched within a political network of leading Protestants at court.

As mentioned above, the duchess sent both of her sons to study at St. John’s College, Cambridge. To be closer to Henry and Charles, she purchased a cottage in Kingston, a small village a few miles from the university.\textsuperscript{87} Many of Catherine’s most illustrious Protestant contacts had attended St. John’s, including William Cecil, John Cheke, and Roger Ascham.\textsuperscript{88} It was at Cambridge when, in July 1551, both the sixteen-year-old Charles and the fourteen-year-old Henry contracted the sweating sickness and died. The sweating sickness was a mysterious disease that struck England repeatedly in the early Tudor period. Henry VIII’s elder brother, Prince Arthur, had likely died of the sweat in 1502. In his \textit{A Boke or Counseill against the Disease Commonly Called the Sweate or Sweatyng Sicknesse}, the celebrated physician, John

\textsuperscript{85} Harris, \textit{English Aristocratic Women}, 58.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 59; Diana O’Hara, \textit{Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 6-7; Wiesner-Hanks, \textit{Women and Gender}, 75-76.
\textsuperscript{87} Catherine began writing to William Cecil from Kingston in March 1549, not long after her sons began studying at St. John’s: SP, Edward VI: 10/10, f. 3.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 78.
Caius, wrote that it killed its victims quickly and indiscriminately. The sweat “immediately killed some in opening their windows, some in playing with children in their street doors, some in one hour, many in two it destroyed, and at the longest, to them that merrily dined, it gave a sorrowful supper.”

Caius explained that those “noble in birth” were not exempt from the sweat. He remembered the Brandon boys as having “grave sobriety, singular wisdom, and great learning” and declared that “few hath been seen like of their age.” Unsurprisingly, Catherine’s grief after losing both of her children was considerable. In his influential work, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800, Lawrence Stone argued that premodern parents, and aristocratic parents in particular, were aloof and dispassionate caregivers. He states that the high infant mortality rates “made it folly to invest too much emotional capital in such ephemeral beings.”

In many ways, Stone’s arguments were persuasive. Tudor parents – particularly aristocratic ones – were often distant figures in their children’s lives. Corporal punishment was also commonplace. Catherine Willoughby herself paid for “birch for rods” in 1562 to be used on her own children. Yet since the publication of Stone’s work, historians of women and the family have largely disproved this thesis. They have instead found that aristocratic mothers did create an emotional bond with their children, and that this was actually an early modern expectation of “good mothering.” Such women naturally exhibited genuine grief when their children died. Catherine demonstrated this reality after the loss of her sons, and, like the

89 John Caius, A Boke or Counseill against the Disease Commonly Called the Sweate or Sweatyng Sickness (London: Richard Grafton, 1552), 10.
90 Ibid., 9.
93 See, for example: Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 99-126; Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 56-57.
Protestant she was, she embraced her faith for comfort and guidance. Two months after their deaths, she wrote to her friend, William Cecil:

I give God thanks, good Master Cecil for all His benefits which it hath please him to heap upon me; and truly I take this last (and to the first sight most sharp and bitter) punishment not for the least of His benefits, inasmuch as I have never been so well taught by any other before to know His power, His love and mercy, mine own weakness and that wretched state without Him I should endure here. And to ascertain you that I have received great comfort in Him, I would gladly do it by talk and sight of you. But as I must confess myself no better than flesh, so I am not well able with quiet to behold my very friends without some part of these vile dregs of Adam to seem sorry for that whereof I know I rather ought to rejoice. Yet notwithstanding I would not spare my sorrow so much but I would gladly endure it were it not for other causes that moveth me so to do, which I leave unwritten at this time.

Catherine ended her letter by thanking Cecil for his “lasting friendship” and declaring, “I betake you to Him that both can and I trust will govern you to His glory and your best contentation.”

Cecil, a fellow Lincolnshire resident, was Catherine Willoughby’s contemporary and lifelong friend, as well as one of her most important political connections. Cecil, who was more than capable of weathering the ongoing vicissitudes of service to the Tudor monarchy, was also a client of the Seymour and Dudley families. As mentioned previously, Cecil worked as Edward Seymour’s personal secretary and his wife served in Anne Stanhope’s household. Despite being imprisoned in the Tower after the Duke of Somerset’s downfall, Cecil was eventually appointed as the king’s principal secretary once John Dudley assumed the reins of power. Like the Seymours and the Dudleys – and unlike Catherine Willoughby – Cecil sometimes allowed politics to overshadow his religious beliefs. His Protestant faith was more practical than that of the duchess, and this caused some friction between the two in later years – particularly after Cecil became Elizabeth I’s chief advisor. However, this did not diminish their

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94 SP, Edward VI: 10/13, f. 107.
lifelong attachment. Throughout the political turmoil at the heart of Edward VI’s government, Cecil remained a client of the Duchess of Suffolk. In many instances, Cecil was responsible for keeping Catherine informed about events at court. As the Duke of Somerset’s personal secretary, Cecil was certainly a natural intermediary between Catherine and the Seymour family. She wrote to him throughout the Edwardian era, and frequently referenced the content of letters he had sent to her. These letters often concerned Catherine’s more mundane petitions and requests to the Lord Protector, such as financial suits and entreaties for her clients. However, they also often discussed the more dramatic events involving court intrigue. In March 1549, she wrote to him regarding “the matter between the council and my lord [Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset].” By this point, Seymour’s control of his nephew’s government was slipping, and Catherine expressed concern for her friend’s husband. She wrote, “I never feared so much that wicked tongues should harm him by sowing suspicion against him in the council... I would adventure anything for him, but if I come and am unable to help I would harm him.”

As Edward Seymour’s wife, Anne Stanhope’s influence also extended beyond religious patronage. Her relationship with her husband and her access to court patronage made her a politician in her own right. As with any figure of authority at the Tudor court, Anne’s actions gained her both friends and enemies. Her friendship with Princess Mary endured into Edward VI’s reign, despite the fact that Mary remained a devout Catholic and disapproved of the government’s religious policies. At the end of January 1547, Mary sent Anne a “ring of gold

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96 For example, Catherine wrote to Cecil continually in 1549, the year of Edward Seymour’s fall from power and the loss of his Protectorate: SP, Edward VI: 10/8, f. 61; 10/9, f. 115; 10/10 f. 3, 9, 10, 19, 55, 60, 62, 72, 80, 82, 92; 10/11, 6, 14.

97 SP, Edward VI: 10/10, f. 3.
with a diamond in it.”98 This gesture was probably in recognition of Anne’s new position as wife of the Lord Protector, for that April Mary wrote to Anne asking for assistance. Princess Mary asked Anne to speak with her husband about a “suit concerning Richard Wood, who was my mother’s servant when you were one of her Grace’s maids.”99 Mary also asked that “George Brickhouse, who was an officer of my mother’s wardrobe” be made a Knight of Windsor.100 It is clear that the princess had looked to Anne for political assistance previously, for she thanked the duchess “with all my heart for your earnest gentleness towards me in all my suits hitherto, reckoning myself out of doubt of the continuance of the same.”101 Anne did not disappoint Mary, for in December the princess wrote to the Duke of Somerset, thanking him for “his attention to her requests.”102

Dorothy Wingfield, a member of Anne of Cleves’s household, wrote to Anne in 1547 asking the duchess to speak with her husband so that “no sale or grant be made… of the lands of the late Priory of Woodbridge, Suffolk.”103 Both Dorothy and Princess Mary realized that Anne Stanhope had considerable influence with her husband. This influence fed the rumors that Anne’s sway over Edward Seymour was often malicious. However, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset’s marriage was, by all accounts, amicable and politically effective. Anne did not have to resort to nagging or bullying for her husband to respect her input. The duchess did not always successfully satisfy requests, and this made many petitioners angry. Some even suggested that she was responsible for failed appeals. In October 1550, Catherine Willoughby herself wrote to

98 Madden, Privy Purse Expenses, 200.
100 Ibid., 51-52.
101 Ibid., 51.
103 Ibid.
William Cecil of her annoyance that the Duke of Somerset had dealt unfairly with her cousin, William Naunton. Catherine explained that she “blames his Grace’s Lady for it.” However, a mere month later, the Duchess of Suffolk was appeased, for her cousin had resolved his issue with the Duke of Somerset. Catherine Willoughby’s closeness with the Duke and Duchess of Somerset is evident, for that same year she wrote to Cecil that she “much desires a match between Somerset’s daughter and her son.” Her comment to Cecil about Anne was almost certainly the result of temporary frustration, rather than indicative of any enmity between the two duchesses.

Anne was also close to Mary Hill and Elizabeth Carkeke – the wives of John Cheke and Thomas Smith, respectively. Cheke and Smith were both scholars and politicians who came to prominence in the Edwardian era. John Cheke had also been one of Edward VI’s tutors during Henry VIII’s reign. In 1549, he wrote asking the duchess to pardon his wife for her “misbehavior towards your Grace.” In the letter, Cheke wished to smooth over some offence Mary had committed, for he explained that he was “the most sorry” and that he was “desiring of pardon where forgiveness is plentiful.” He wrote, “My most humble request therefore is that your Grace’s gentleness overcome my wife’s faults.” He then thanked Anne for her “favourable goodness and good mind towards him” and for “her protection and patronage.” He professed that “her Grace’s singular favour towards him” was “one of his chief comforts in his diligent service of the King’s Majesty.” Similarly, in 1547 Thomas Smith found it necessary to vindicate himself “against many slanders which were told the Duchess” with regard to his religious fervor.

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104 Ibid., 30.
105 Ibid., 31.
106 Ibid., 27.
John Strype, who recorded both accounts, referred to Anne as an “imperious and ill-natured woman.” It may be that his assessment of her came from his aversion of the situations – in which men such as Cheke and Smith had to explain themselves to a woman. Nevertheless, the Duchess of Somerset and her husband were in positions that commanded deference from their social inferiors. Individuals who lived in Tudor England were obsessed with maintaining the social order, which they believed was ordained by God. It is unlikely, therefore, that Cheke and Smith would have baulked at humbling themselves before the wife of the most powerful man in England. Rather than serving as indicators of Anne Stanhope’s character, the incidents merely demonstrate the power and influence that the duchess possessed as a noblewoman, a politician, and a patron of reform.

By the end of 1549, Edward Seymour began to feel the strain of power. Among his critics was Francis van der Delft, the imperial ambassador to Edward VI’s court. Van der Delft wrote to Emperor Charles V of a conversation with William Paget, “I considered him [Paget] personally to blame for all the evil that had befallen this kingdom, since he had been the principal instrument in setting us up a Protector who would certainly never do any good.” Paget responded to the ambassador’s accusations by explaining that Somerset “has a bad wife.” He hoped that this excuse would take some of the pressure off of himself and the Lord Protector. The ambassador responded “that that amounted to a confession of his [Somerset’s] unworthiness,

110 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 9: 429.
111 Ibid.
since he allowed himself to be ruled by his wife.\textsuperscript{112} It is clear that Paget’s statement about Anne Stanhope was merely a hasty excuse for the mistakes of Somerset’s regime. Less than a year earlier, Paget had written an unpublished critique of the Lord Protector. In this letter, he did not mention the Duchess of Somerset.\textsuperscript{113} Paget hoped to keep the internal tensions of the Somerset regime from the imperial ambassador and he consequently allowed Anne Stanhope to take the blame.

Francis van der Delft also complained in 1549 of the Duke of Somerset’s “fancy in innovating in religious matters at his wife’s instigation.”\textsuperscript{114} Since the ambassador believed Anne Stanhope ruled her husband and was responsible for the duke’s poor decisions, he assumed that the duchess was also behind the regime’s Protestant policies (of which van der Delft disapproved). There is no doubt that, by the 1540s, Anne had become a firm adherent of Protestantism. Edward Seymour, though, was also an ardent supporter of reform. One instance in particular demonstrates that the Duke of Somerset’s devotion to reform occasionally even surpassed that of the duchess. In late 1548, Somerset explained to the court that the traditional custom of giving New Year’s gifts was to be abandoned. The duke had a difficult time enforcing the change, for many of the women at court ignored the prohibition. Anne Stanhope and her ladies all gave Edward VI gifts that year, perhaps, as David Starkey surmises, “out of kindness for the lonely little boy who was their king.”\textsuperscript{115}

Despite the fact that for two years Anne Stanhope and Edward Seymour enjoyed more power and influence than ever before, they began to suffer repeated misfortune from 1549 until

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain}, 9: 447.
the Duke of Somerset’s death in 1552. By the end of 1549, political factions at court threatened Somerset’s position as Lord Protector. Somerset had military troubles in both Scotland and France, and he faced multiple popular rebellions in England as a result of his religious and economic policies. He also alienated many at court by refusing to follow the advice of his fellow counselors. Somerset even began using the royal “we” after becoming Lord Protector, a habit that irritated his former friends.\footnote{Retha Warnicke, “Inventing the Wicked Women of Tudor England: Alice More, Anne Boleyn, and Anne Stanhope,” \textit{Quidditas} 20 (1999), 22.} John Dudley, Earl of Warwick – previously Somerset’s closest political partner – engineered the duke’s arrest in October 1549. As a result, Edward Seymour gave up the position of Lord Protector, and Dudley became the leader of Edward VI’s government.

Anne Stanhope realized the danger threatening her husband and showed noticeable concern and anxiety before his arrest. Francis van der Delft reported on October 8 that the Duke of Somerset “sent his wife off to her house, and she went out weeping.” The ambassador explained that the duchess was sorrowful because she had been “very badly handled in words by the courtiers and peasants, who put all this trouble down to her.”\footnote{Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 9: 457.} Once again, because of Paget’s comment earlier that year, van der Delft blamed Somerset’s faults on his wife. John Dudley did not believe that Anne was to blame. While he had Edward Seymour sent to the Tower, the Duchess of Somerset was allowed to remain at her brother’s house.\footnote{Ibid., 462.} Although she still had her freedom, Anne had every reason to feel disheartened, for the political troubles of the Seymour family were just beginning.

While the Seymours endured political turmoil in the early 1550s, the Dudleys saw their fortunes rise accordingly. Jane Guildford both contributed to and benefited from her husband’s
swift rise to power. After Henry VIII’s death, Jane Guildford maintained her relationship with her former mistress, Catherine Parr. When the dowager queen’s new husband, Thomas Seymour, wrote to the Lord Protector in September 1547, he asked his brother to communicate to John Dudley, then Earl of Warwick, that “my Lady is also merry.”\textsuperscript{119} Clearly, the two women still saw much of one another – likely at court or on visits to one another’s estates. John Dudley may have been safeguarding his interests by maintaining a relationship with the Protector’s brother, and his wife’s personal ties to Catherine Parr would have helped make this connection possible. In 1548, an unknown writer sent a letter to John Thynne, Edward Seymour’s steward, and remarked, “Has this afternoon been with my Lady Warwick [Jane Guildford], whose advise in any wise is that he should submit himself. Sir Ralph Vane’s advice and that of all his friends is after the same sort.”\textsuperscript{120} While we do not know the identity of the sender, the full letter indicates that he was an individual with affairs concerning the Privy Council, and that he was just as willing to consult Jane Guildford, the wife of one of the Council’s members, as a politician like Vane. As Duchess of Northumberland, Jane also exchanged portraits as tokens with Elisabeth Brooke, Marchioness of Northampton and second wife of William Parr, the dowager queen’s brother.\textsuperscript{121} After Anne Stanhope’s imprisonment, Elisabeth Brooke was the second woman at court behind Jane Guildford, and it is clear that the two women developed a close working relationship. Elisabeth had married William Parr, the dowager queen’s brother, after he divorced his first wife, Anne Bourchier. The two had lived openly in adultery for some time, as both Henry VIII and Lord Protector Edward Seymour had denied Parr his divorce. However, after his rise to power, John

\textsuperscript{119} Beer, \textit{Northumberland}, 73.
\textsuperscript{120} Edward Salisbury, et al., eds. \textit{Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire}, Part I (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode for Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1883), 57.
\textsuperscript{121} Susan James, \textit{The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603: Women as Consumers, Patrons and Painters} (New York: Routledge, 2016), 63.
Dudley secured an annulment for his friend and ally in 1551. Consequently, William Parr and his new wife supported Dudley’s political schemes, including his decision to deny Mary Tudor the throne in 1553. The marchioness was likely the one to propose the fateful marriage between Northumberland’s son, Guildford Dudley, and Jane Grey. After Mary took the throne, she ordered William Parr to return to his first wife and Elisabeth returned to her father’s household in disgrace. William and Elisabeth were finally reunited permanently in 1558, upon the accession of Elizabeth I.122

Politicians also recognized Jane’s utility as wife to the most powerful man in England. Both Thomas Gresham, a financier who later founded the Royal Exchange in London, and Richard Morison, the English ambassador to the Holy Roman Empire, asked Jane to intercede with her husband on their behalf.123 According to the imperial ambassador, Jehan Scheyfve, Gresham was John Dudley’s “thorough-going partisan” and owed his position as Edward VI’s financial agent in Antwerp to the Duke of Northumberland.124 In 1553, Morison thanked John Dudley for “the kindness of himself and the Duchess to his wife” after his visit to the royal court.125 Wives could help facilitate political relationships like these, particularly through their friendships with and connections to other women. Clearly, Jane had accommodated and perhaps even befriended Richard Morison’s wife, Bridget Hussey, daughter of John Hussey, Baron

Hussey of Sleaford. These aristocratic female connections, while seemingly perfunctory and routine, could cement significant personal and political relationships between families.

Because Jane Guildford died in 1555, decades before Catherine Willoughby and Anne Stanhope, her will provides an adequate snapshot of her political and personal connections during the mid-Tudor era. Although Jane wrote the will in her own hand during the reign of the Catholic Mary I and therefore avoided any outright Protestant declarations, the maintenance of her reformist faith can be gleaned from certain statements and the bequests of some of her goods. Scholars have largely focused on Jane’s will as evidence that she was anxious to save her family and ingratiate herself with the new Catholic order, but there are also signs that the Duchess of Northumberland maintained important ties to not-so-clandestine Protestants during the early years of Mary’s reign.126 Importantly, through many of her bequests, we can see her concern for her patronage network, which still included many individuals to whom she had been connected prior to her husband’s downfall and execution.

Like most noblewomen, Jane focused much of her generosity on her natal and marital kin.127 Above all, she was concerned that her will would have her “debts paid, and [her] children and servants considered.” She bequeathed much of her lands, movable goods, and money to her surviving adult children – Ambrose, Henry, Robert, Catherine, and Mary. She also left gowns to her three daughters-in-law – Elizabeth, Margaret, and Amy.128 The Duke and Duchess of Northumberland were strategic in their choices in wives for their sons, and the resulting marital alliances demonstrate their commitment to securing both their family’s own power and a

127 Harris, English Aristocratic Women, 175.
Protestant regime. They negotiated their son Henry’s marriage to Margaret Audley, daughter and heiress of Baron Thomas Audley, Lord Chancellor to Henry VIII. Audley, who died in 1544, had been an ally of Thomas Cromwell.129 Amy Robsart, the wife of Jane’s son Robert, was raised in a Protestant household as the heiress of a prosperous Norfolk gentry family.130 The Dudleys’ sons-in-law were no less well connected. In 1551, their daughter Mary wed Sir Henry Sidney, a childhood companion of the young king and a member of his Privy Chamber. While Sidney acquiesced to Mary I’s rule and prospered as a result, he had been an intimate of Edward VI and also flourished under the Protestant reign of Elizabeth I.131 In 1553, their daughter Catherine married Henry Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon, another boyhood companion of Edward VI. The Earl of Huntingdon supported his father-in-law’s attempt to place Jane Grey on the throne. He was imprisoned in the Tower for his opposition to Mary I, but both he and his wife soon reconciled themselves to the new Catholic queen.132 Jane Guildford also left her cousin, Mary Browne, “a gown of wrought velvet.”133 Mary was the wife of the Protestant Lord John Grey, who had supported John Dudley’s bid to place his niece, Jane Grey, on the throne. Grey also participated in Wyatt’s Rebellion in 1554, for which he was imprisoned and sentenced to death—though he escaped execution. Despite Grey’s disgrace, Mary Browne retained some standing at court through her brother, Anthony, Viscount Montagu.134 Altogether, the majority of the Dudley family and their marital allies had backed a Protestant succession in 1553. However, after the

132 Ibid., 275.
133 PROB 11/37/342.
Duke of Northumberland’s downfall and execution, all of them – including Jane Guildford – resigned themselves to the reality of a Catholic regime. Yet Jane’s actions after her husband’s death in 1553 do not negate her standing as a Protestant partisan and patron. This subject will receive more attention in Chapter Six.

In her will, Jane Guildford left a gown to her sister-in-law, Elizabeth Plantagenet, “Lady Jobson.” Elizabeth and her husband, Francis Jobson, also received “hangings of her own bed-chamber.”¹35 The Jobsons were clients of the Duke of Northumberland, and Francis Jobson attempted to hold the Palace of Westminster for Jane Grey in 1553. He was imprisoned and subsequently disgraced under Mary I.¹36 Jane also remembered an “Elizabeth, Daughter of the Lord Cobham,” who was likely Elisabeth Brooke, the former Marchioness of Northampton.¹37 Jane Guildford’s bequest to Elisabeth demonstrates that, despite the precariousness of her family’s position, she had not forsaken all Protestant ties at court. Unlike many of the Duke of Northumberland’s former friends and allies, Elisabeth Brooke never fully reconciled herself to Mary I and she later became a close confidant of Elizabeth I. Yet even those friends and clients of the Dudley family who did make their peace with a Catholic regime managed to flourish under Elizabeth I – an indication that their willingness to toe the line in 1553 was simply out of self-preservation rather than any lack of Protestant devotion.

Like Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford did not confine her patronage network to the royal court’s Protestant circles. In fact, most Tudor aristocrats used whatever personal connections were at their disposal – Catholic or Protestant – to ride out the vicissitudes of “the Mid-Tudor Crisis.” Even prior to their family’s political troubles, the Dudleys had established meaningful

¹35 PROB 11/37/342.
¹36 Loades, John Dudley, 222, 275.
¹37 PROB 11/37/342.
connections with Emperor Charles V and his diplomats in England. John Dudley’s first
diplomatic assignment was to accompany Sir Thomas Wyatt on his mission to Spain. This was
likely the beginning of a friendly relationship with the Spanish.\textsuperscript{138} Prior to the religious conflict
of the mid-1540s, the former imperial ambassador Eustace Chapuys had struck up a friendship
with the Dudleys. In January 1539, he indicated that both John and Jane were helping to keep
him informed of important events at court.\textsuperscript{139} In the mid-1530s, when the Dudleys baptized their
son, Guildford, they named Diego Mendoza, a Spanish diplomat and writer, as a godfather.\textsuperscript{140} In
her will, Jane left Mendoza, whom she referred to as “Lord Dondagoe Damondesay, that is
beyond the sea,” a valuable “book clock” in return for “the great friendship he hath showed her,
in making her so many friends about the King’s Majesty [Philip II of Spain].”\textsuperscript{141} Scholars have
usually pointed to Jane Guildford’s bequests to Spaniards in her will as a last-ditch attempt to
solicit their support in the survival of her family. While she was most certainly concerned with
preserving her children’s lives and livelihoods, this was also clearly a connection that she had
facilitated well before Edward VI’s reign and had preserved during and after the Jane Grey coup
and her husband’s downfall. Religion was perhaps the most important element of an individual’s
identity in the sixteenth century, but it did not necessarily dictate all of the decisions they made
or the relationships they formed.

Toward the end of her will, Jane Guildford declared that she had “not loved to be very
bold afore women.”\textsuperscript{142} This self-depiction was typical of sixteenth-century women, who often
overemphasized their feminine humility and weakness. In reality, Jane’s political clout saved her

\textsuperscript{138} Loades, \textit{John Dudley}, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{L&P, Henry VIII}: Vol. 14 Part 1, 37.
\textsuperscript{140} Richard Davey, \textit{The Nine Days’ Queen: Lady Jane Grey and Her Times} (London: Methuen &
Co., 1909), 263.
\textsuperscript{141} PROB 11/37/342.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
family in the fallout of the crisis of 1553. At the same time, Anne Stanhope was taking similar steps to preserve the Seymour family. Catherine, Anne, and Jane were unflinching advocates of their faith, their families, and their friends. The actions these women took in order to achieve their goals made them public figures. Their roles as politicians and patrons, and the contemporary public perception of these women in such roles, also helped to originate the construction of Catherine, Anne, and Jane’s enduring historical reputations.
CHAPTER FIVE. THE INTOLERABLE WIFE, THE WICKED MOTHER-IN-LAW, AND THE PROTESTANT HEROINE

Stereotyping Early Modern Women

All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman.
Ecclesiastes 25:19

Thomas Becon, the scholar and reformer associated with Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford, included the words above in his musings on the relationship between husbands and wives. He then continued, “The wrath of a woman is dishonor and great confusion… Of the woman came the beginning of sin; and through her all we are dead.” Finally, he stated his hope that women should “show themselves to be such as profess godliness, and also garnish the doctrine of our Savior Christ Jesu through their good works, and glorify the most glorious name of the Lord our God.”¹ The majority of people living in sixteenth-century England would have agreed with Becon’s pronouncements. As the descendants of Eve – whose weakness caused “the fall of man” – women were believed to be both inherently disposed and especially vulnerable to sin. Their only chance for redemption was to live a life of Christian piety.

While attitudes and opinions about women varied some, early modern authors generally agreed that women were inferior to men, and this was reflected in the religious, legal, and social systems of the period.² This belief was also reflected in discussions about women. As Becon’s sentiments reveal, sixteenth-century writers often felt that women were either “good” or “bad,” rarely allowing for any middle ground. Over the centuries, these ideas about women have

² Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 17.
influenced – in both evident and subtle ways – the representations of many female historical figures.

In her examination of six “infamous” or “wicked” Tudor women, Retha Warnicke has provided a foundational study on the subject of historical misrepresentation. Warnicke argues, “Modern studies have usually condemned [women] for flouting the submissiveness authorities demanded… even though… the experiences of women did not necessarily meet the standards outlined in prescriptive literature.”

She argues that the women highlighted in her work “deserve special consideration because scholars have cited evidence either from mostly unreliable archival evidence or polemical works to denigrate them.” Gossip, rumor, and hearsay are particularly problematic, especially when taken from ostensibly reliable sources like ambassadorial reports. Yet this sort of evidence forms the basis of many historical accounts involving those at the innermost circles of the Tudor court and government. Lindsay Kaplan affirms that “defamation posed a serious problem for the individual at all levels of early modern society,” for “it is impossible to control what people say and how this will be interpreted.” Yet sixteenth-century men and women were concerned with slights against their reputations. Warnicke argues that women “were especially vulnerable because both elite and popular culture viewed them as morally inferior.” Men could even exploit this, occasionally “striking at male rivals by defaming their wives.” While they rarely contribute accurate factual information about people or events, allegations, rumor, and gossip form an important part of the historical record. Jan Vansina writes, “Rumor is the process by which a collective historical consciousness is built.”

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4 Ibid., 2.
of the narratives surrounding historical figures therefore provide an indispensable framework—
“A tradition based on rumor tells more about the mentality of the time of the happening than
about the events themselves.” There were clearly a variety of forces at work that reinforced
restrictive ideals, judgments, and stereotypes about women. Any investigation of a female
historical figure must bear in mind these considerations.

Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford, and Catherine Willoughby have each acquired a
particular historical reputation based more in myth than reality. Anne and Jane—whose husbands
acquired significant political power during Edward VI’s reign—fell prey to both contemporary
and later criticism of their perceived use of power and influence. Anne emerged as the
“intolerable wife” who was responsible for the execution of her brother-in-law as well as the
downfall of her own husband. Jane was categorized as the “wicked mother-in-law” of the
innocent Lady Jane Grey, whose nine-day reign her husband helped to engineer. While Anne and
Jane were largely condemned for their actions in the mid-1550s, Catherine emerged as a
“Protestant heroine” because of her decision to flee England during Mary I’s Catholic reign. This
chapter will examine the origins and impact of these stereotypes, which have persisted in
common patterns within historical and literary accounts through the centuries, and reframe them
within their historical contexts. For organizational purposes, each section will assess each
woman’s image in turn, rather than attempting a fully chronological interpretation of events.

Anne Stanhope: The Intolerable Wife

On March 20, 1549, Sir Thomas Seymour, Baron Sudeley and Lord Admiral of England,
approached the site of his execution on Tower Hill in London. He stood accused of thirty-three
separate counts of treason, including plotting the abduction of the king, attempting to overthrow

the government, bribery, and extortion. He made no confession of his guilt before baring his neck to the executioner. With two blows of the axe, his head was severed from his body – both of which were buried within the grounds of the Tower. Edward VI commented briefly on the day’s events, stating in his chronicle, “the Lord Sudeley, Admiral of England, was condemned to death and died the March ensuing.” This much the young king, aged eleven in the spring of 1549, had to say regarding the execution of his uncle.

It was Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset – and Sudeley’s elder brother – who signed the execution warrant, albeit with an unsteady hand. Yet contemporaries and historians take much of the blame for Sudeley’s execution away from Edward Seymour and place it on his wife, Anne Stanhope, who supposedly persuaded her husband to execute his own brother. Sixteenth-century Protestant writers attempted to exculpate the Duke of Somerset from the crime of fratricide, for his administration had initiated the radical religious reform that characterized Edward VI’s reign. Rather than slander the reputation of “the Good Duke,” they chose instead to accuse his wife of instigating the brothers’ feud. Other writers were less inclined to portray the duke in a positive light. They preferred to associate Somerset’s decision to execute his brother with weakness, and they identified the family drama of early 1549 as the beginning of his own downfall. The root of this discord was – yet again – the Duchess of Somerset.

Allowing wives to take the blame for the misdeeds of their husbands was nothing new for sixteenth-century observers. When Henry VIII had Thomas More executed in 1535, many contemporaries chose to blame his queen, Anne Boleyn. Rather than believe the king would

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10 Ibid., 198.
willingly kill his old mentor and friend, critics of Anne chose to view her as the architect of
More’s demise.\textsuperscript{11} Many also believed Anne to be the sole reason for Henry’s break with the
Roman Catholic Church in 1534. After her own execution in 1536, less than a year after Thomas
More’s death, many hopeful Catholics expected the king to renew his relationship with the
papacy.\textsuperscript{12} Needless to say, Henry VIII did not return to Rome and, by the end of 1536, the radical
campaign for the dissolution of England’s monasteries had begun. Decades earlier, Henry’s own
grandmother, Elizabeth Woodville, was accused of pressuring her husband, Edward IV, to
execute his brother, George, Duke of Clarence. Edward IV’s biographer, Charles Ross, argues
rightly that the Edward “alone must bear responsibility for his brother’s execution.”\textsuperscript{13} The same
is certainly true of Edward Seymour and his own brother’s judicially-ordered death.
Nevertheless, Anne Stanhope’s alleged complicity in Sudeley’s execution formed the basis of
her infamous reputation among contemporaries and this image has persisted in modern
scholarship on the period.

The trouble began in the spring of 1547, when the widowed Catherine Parr married
Thomas Seymour in a secret ceremony mere months after the death of Henry VIII.\textsuperscript{14} Sudeley
delayed making his new marriage public, knowing that both Edward VI and the Duke of
Somerset would disapprove. The couple therefore decided to petition the Duke and Duchess of
Somerset for approval first, as if their marriage had not yet transpired. Sudeley spoke with Anne
Stanhope in March, probably asking her to intercede with her husband on his behalf. He wrote to

\textsuperscript{11} Eric Ives, \textit{The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn} (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 201.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 362.
\textsuperscript{13} Charles Ross, \textit{Edward IV} (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1974), 243-244.
\textsuperscript{14} Catherine Parr and Thomas Seymour were writing to one another as husband and wife in April
\textit{Katherine Parr: Complete Works and Correspondence} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011),
132-133; Susan James, \textit{Catherine Parr: Henry VIII’s Last Love} (Gloucestshire, UK: History Press,
2008), 269.
Catherine Parr, “My lady of Somerset told me on Friday night that she would to Sheen at the next day, and at her return on Tuesday… she would see your highness…. I pray, if ye see yourself in good credit with her, to desire her grace to be my good lady. And if I see myself in more favor than you, I shall make the like request for you.”

However, by May of that year, the duchess and queen dowager still had not spoken. It is clear that Anne Stanhope was hesitant to help the couple, for she disapproved of the match. Sudeley was reluctant to speak to his elder brother directly, knowing that the Duke of Somerset also objected to the marriage. Catherine Parr wrote to her new husband, “I gather by your letter… ye are in some fear how to frame my lord your brother to speak in your favor.” Sudeley also attempted to enlist the help of the queen’s stepdaughter, Princess Mary. However, the princess was quick to make her displeasure known, writing to him, “I perceive strange news concerning a suit you have in hand to the Queen for marriage. For the sooner obtaining whereof, you seem to think that my letters might do you pleasure.” Mary refused to speak with the Duke of Somerset or Edward VI, for she did not want “to be a meddler in this matter, considering whose wife her grace was of late.” She ended her letter to Sudeley by subtly chastising her stepmother – “If the remembrance of the King’s majesty, my father… will not suffer her to grant your suit, I am nothing able to persuade her to forget the loss of him, who is as yet very ripe in mine own remembrance.”

Although Thomas Seymour wrote to Catherine Parr in May 1547 that he believed he had the “good will” of her

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18 “Princess Mary’s Letter to Lord Thomas Seymour, June 4, 1547,” in Mueller, Complete Works, 146.
friend, Catherine Willoughby, “touching my desire of you,” it must have been apparent that their marriage was unpopular with many at court.¹⁹

This tension surrounding the newly-married couple coincided with the growing hostility between the brothers Edward and Thomas Seymour over court politics. As his older brother rose to the highest position in the kingdom, Thomas Seymour expected to rise accordingly. The younger Seymour did gain titles – he became, in addition to Baron Sudeley, a Knight of the Garter and Lord Admiral of England (a title he took from John Dudley). He also obtained membership in the new king’s Privy Council. However, Sudeley seems to have maintained feelings of resentment toward his brother, who had frequently eclipsed him in politics.²⁰ His marriage to the queen dowager later that year perhaps offered him a chance to bolster his own position at court and to assert more control over his nephew’s government. Both Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope therefore had every reason to feel threatened by this marriage.

The duke and duchess’s disapproval angered Catherine Parr, who seems to have possessed genuine romantic feelings for her new husband. Her indignation increased when Somerset failed to hand over some of the dower lands from her royal marriage. He also refused to return to her the majority of the queen’s royal jewels, including her wedding ring, arguing that they belonged to the state and were not her personal possessions.²¹ Queen Catherine’s disillusionment with the duke and duchess is evident as early as February 1547, when she wrote to Sudeley about her petition to the duke regarding her dower lands, “My lord your brother hath deferred answer concerning such requests as I made to him till his coming hither… This is not his first promise I have received of his coming, and yet unperformed. I think my lady [Anne]

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²⁰ James, Catherine Parr, 269-270.
²¹ Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, 85.
hath taught him that lesson, for it is her custom to promise many comings to her friends, and to perform none.” Catherine Parr clearly expected Anne Stanhope, who had been a lady of her household only a month earlier, to intercede with Edward Seymour on her behalf. She may not have anticipated that Anne, now the Lord Protector’s wife, would support her husband instead. Although Catherine Parr, Anne Stanhope, and Edward Seymour had worked together to further reform at court, their alliance now shattered. Catherine’s failure to acquire any real political responsibility over her nephew’s government, Somerset’s mishandling of her dower lands, and the duke and duchess’s refusal to accept her new marriage caused the queen dowager to act uncharacteristically reckless.

By May 1547, Catherine Parr was finally able to speak with the Duke of Somerset. The conversation probably concerned her property suits as well as her new marriage. Somerset stood his ground concerning her land and jewels and seems to have told her of his displeasure with regard to her marriage. She wrote to Sudeley soon after, “My lord, this shall be to advertise to you that my lord your brother hath this afternoon a little made me warm. It was fortunate we were so much distant, for I suppose else I should have bitten him. What cause have they to fear [you] having such a wife? …Tomorrow, or else upon Saturday afternoon about three o’clock, I will see the King: where I intend to utter my choler to my lord your brother, if you shall not give me advice to the contrary.” By the end of June, Edward VI had finally granted his permission for his stepmother’s new marriage, though he was unaware that it had already taken place

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23 “Dowager Queen Katherine to Lord Thomas Seymour, [late May] 1547,” in Mueller, Complete Works, 140-141.
months before. Catherine Parr had succeeded in marrying her husband of choice, but she still nursed resentment toward the Duke and Duchess of Somerset.

On August 30, 1548, the queen dowager gave birth to her only child, a daughter she named Mary Seymour. Perhaps in an attempt to ease the tension with his brother, Somerset wrote to Sudeley congratulating him “on the safe delivery of the Queen of so pretty a daughter.” Less than a month earlier, Anne Stanhope gave birth to another son and expressed her hope that Queen Catherine would soon have a boy as well. It seems as though the Duke and Duchess of Somerset hoped that the family quarrel was over. However, a few days after Mary Seymour’s birth, Catherine Parr died from childbed – or puerperal – fever.

The queen dowager’s absence did not ease the tension between the Seymour brothers and Sudeley continued to plot the subversion of his brother’s position. He disobeyed orders from the king and council repeatedly, neglected his duties, and opposed government measures. He attempted to foment revolt among the nobles and began assembling men and weapons. His ruthless ambition became apparent even before Catherine Parr’s death, when Princess Elizabeth came under the care of her stepmother and Baron Sudeley in their household at Chelsea. The lively and charming teenager attracted the inappropriate attentions of her stepmother’s husband. Sudeley acted in an indecent manner toward “the next-but-one heiress” by appearing before her “bare-legged and clad only in a short night-gown,” by “flinging back Elizabeth’s bed curtains,” and by “entering the girl’s room before she was fully dressed, patting her ‘upon the back or the

24 James, Catherine Parr, 275.
26 Ibid., 9.
28 Jennifer Loach, Edward VI (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 56.
buttocks familiarly’.”\textsuperscript{29} After his wife’s death, he even entertained the idea of marrying Elizabeth.\textsuperscript{30}

Anne Stanhope took a particular interest in the matter between Thomas Seymour and Princess Elizabeth. She personally rebuked Katherine Ashley, Elizabeth’s governess, for allowing the princess to go “in a night barge upon the Thames [with Thomas Seymour], and for other light parts.”\textsuperscript{31} The Duchess of Somerset told Kat Ashley that “she was not worthy to have the governance of a King’s daughter” and accused her of bearing “too much affection to my Lord Admiral.”\textsuperscript{32} Anne realized quickly that her brother-in-law was a liability for the Seymour family, and she believed that it was her responsibility to chastise those involved with the scandal at Chelsea. Elizabeth’s honor was at stake and the duchess stepped in to regulate the situation. Within a matter of weeks, she – or perhaps the Duke of Somerset himself – sent the princess away to Hatfield House.

It is not difficult to assess the objective behind Sudeley’s actions. Unable to obtain any political power over his royal nephew, he attempted to bring Elizabeth under his influence. He sought to place himself above his brother through both marriage and subversion. Particularly after Catherine Parr’s death, Edward VI’s council viewed Sudeley’s actions as devious and questioned those involved, including Princess Elizabeth.\textsuperscript{33} The possibility of a marriage between Thomas Seymour and Elizabeth was offensive to the Duke of Somerset and Edward VI’s government. When rumors and suspicions arose that Sudeley planned to kidnap his royal nephew

\textsuperscript{29} Antonia Fraser, \textit{The Wives of Henry VIII} (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 1992), 404.
\textsuperscript{30} Loach, \textit{Edward VI}, 56.
\textsuperscript{31} Samuel Haynes, ed., \textit{A Collection of State Papers, Relating to Affairs in the Reigns of King Henry VIII, King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth from the Year 1542 to 1570. Left By William Cecil Lord Burghley} (London: William Bowyer, 1740), 96.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 96, 100.
in his bid for power, Somerset and the Privy Council were forced to react. In January 1549, Sudeley was caught attempting to enter the king’s apartments in Hampton Court. Shortly after, the council had imprisoned Sudeley in the Tower and that March he met his end on the executioner’s block. It was no small thing for Edward Seymour to participate in, and give final approval for, his brother’s death, and at the time many contemporaries believed that Somerset’s wife was responsible for Sudeley’s execution.

Anne Stanhope was associated with the “fratricide” almost immediately. On April 19, 1549, Hugh Latimer included a vilification of Thomas Seymour in his sermon before Edward VI. Latimer made no secret of his hatred for the king’s deceased uncle, crying, “He was a covetous man, an horrible covetous man. I would there were no more in England! He was an ambitious man. I would there were no more in England! He was a seditious man, a contemner of common prayer. I would there were no more in England! He is gone. I would he had left none behind him!” In his 1550 Lenten sermon before the king, Latimer found it necessary to address the rumor and suspicion surrounding his slander of Sudeley the previous year – “Oh, what a great matter is made of it and what ado, and what great fault is found with me for speaking that I did of the Lord Admiral.” Latimer’s subsequent words give evidence to Anne’s alleged association with the fratricide – “There be some that think and say that I was hired to it and that my Lady of Somerset’s Grace hired me to it and that I was her feed man and had money of her to speak it.” Rumor had spread charging Anne with an obstinate and fierce hatred of her brother-in-law. This supposed animosity, a result of her precedence quarrel with Catherine Parr, caused her to force

36 Ibid., 143.
37 Ibid.
her husband’s hand in the trial against his own brother. Now, in a sermon before Edward VI and the court, she was using her reformist client, Hugh Latimer, to further deprecate Thomas Seymour’s reputation. Latimer firmly and emphatically denied such an insinuation and declared, “Well, so God help me, and as I shall answer in my conscience, in my remembrance I never talked with Her Grace touching that man in my life, nor never gave she me anything in her life for any such purpose. And therefore they are to blame that speak so of me.” Yet some contemporaries still took up the rumors of Anne’s alleged culpability with regard to Thomas Seymour’s demise, and this stigma has persisted (with few exceptions) into the twenty-first century.

In 1550, an anonymous Spanish chronicler was the first to take up the rumors about Anne Stanhope and her role in Thomas Seymour’s downfall. According to the chronicler, the root of the Seymour brothers’ discord was the precedence quarrel between Anne and Catherine Parr – a conflict that he exaggerates. Since Anne’s “husband ruled the kingdom,” she believed that “she ought to be more considered than the Queen, and claimed to take precedence of her.” The chronicler even provides an example of this quarrel, writing, “when they usually went to the chapel of the palace to hear matins, the Protector’s wife came and thrust herself forward, and sat in the Queen’s place.” Anne Stanhope’s boldness brought about the death of the queen dowager, who, when she “saw the small consideration in which she was held,” so “great was her chagrin

38 Ibid.
39 RETHA WARNICKE has carefully examined the sources and validity of Anne Stanhope’s notorious historical reputation. See: RETHA WARNICKE, WICKED WOMEN OF TUDOR ENGLAND: QUEENS, ARISTOCRATS, COMMONERS (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 77-104. Rather than recounting Warnicke’s exhaustive analysis, this section will focus on the major historical works that perpetuate Anne’s negative image, attempting to provide a more complete consideration of her image in modern scholarship.
40 Martin A. Sharp Hume, trans. CHRONICLE OF HENRY VIII OF ENGLAND. BEING A CONTEMPORARY RECORD OF SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS OF THE REIGNS OF HENRY VIII AND EDWARD VI. WRITTEN IN SPANISH BY AN UNKNOWN HAND (London: George Bell and Sons, 1889), 156.
that she fell ill, and in a short time died.” No mention is made of Catherine’s daughter or of her complicated delivery. The chronicler also argues that the women’s precedence quarrel initiated the Seymour brothers’ dispute and “from that hour the Protector bore great animosity towards his brother, and resolved to ruin him.” When the Duke of Somerset finally had his brother arrested, “he certainly would have been spared if it had not been for the wife of the Protector, who pressed the matter forward.” The villain of the chronicler’s story is obvious – Anne Stanhope’s pride, envy, and ambition directly caused the death of both Queen Catherine and Baron Sudeley. The chronicler’s desire to tell a compelling story based on court rumors, as his inclination to associate women with sin (a tendency shared by many of his contemporaries), and his probable Catholic bias created the root of Anne’s negative image.

*The Rise and Growth of the Anglican Schism*, written by Nicholas Sander in 1585, was the first major contemporary work to pick up on the Spanish chronicler’s fabricated tale. Sander asserts that the squabble between Catherine Parr and Anne Stanhope provides the basis for the enmity between the Seymour brothers:

> Between her [Catherine Parr] and the wife of the protector there sprung a quarrel about precedence, and this quarrel was not confined to the wives, it passed on to the husbands. And as the rivalry grew from day to day, and as the protector’s wife gave her husband no rest, matters came at last to this: the protector, who, though he ruled the king, was yet ruled by his wife, must put his brother to death, that he might satisfy his ambition without let or hindrance.

Sander claims that, though the Duke of Somerset might have been inclined to mercy, his nagging wife urged him repeatedly to have his brother executed. Sander’s account presents a negative view of Edward Seymour as well as his wife. While Anne is a pestering and arrogant wife, the

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41 Ibid., 160-161
42 Ibid., 164.
Duke of Somerset is a spineless, cowardly husband. As a Catholic polemicist, Sander sought to slander the duke and duchess, as both were known supporters of religious reform throughout their lives. He had every motivation to characterize them harshly.

In contrast, in John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, Edward Seymour is “the worthy Lord Edward.”44 As the Duke of Somerset headed his royal nephew’s government, which was responsible for some of the most radical religious reform in English history, Foxe required a way to exculpate the duke. The Book of Martyrs is unsurprisingly full of biblical imagery, and in his story of the Seymour brothers, Foxe claims that “the subtle old serpent, always envying man’s felicity, through slanderous tongues sought to sow matter, first of discord between them; then of suspicion; and last of all, extreme hatred.”45 The inherent sin and weakness of women serves as the serpent’s instrument for the destruction of the brother’s goodwill, and Stanhope is clearly the cause of the brother’s misfortune:

Now it happened… that there fell a displeasure betwixt the said queen [Catherine Parr] and the duchess of Somerset, and thereupon also, in the behalf of their wives, displeasure and grudge began between the brethren… First, to the lord admiral’s charge it was laid, that he purposed to destroy the young king, and translate the crown unto himself; and for the same being attainted and condemned, he did suffer at Tower-hill the twentieth of March, 1549. As many there were, who reported that the duchess of Somerset had wrought his death; so many more there were, who misdoubting the long standing of the lord protector in his state and dignity, thought and affirmed no less, but that the fall of the one brother, would be the ruin of the other.46

In his desire to excuse Somerset from the crime of fratricide, Foxe characterizes Anne Stanhope as the architect of Sudeley’s death. Although Anne was just as committed to reform as her

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45 Foxe, Acts and Monuments, 6: 283.
46 Ibid.
husband, Foxe’s desire to portray Somerset as innocent causes him to portray the duchess as both culpable and malicious.

John Hayward’s work, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth*, published in 1630, provides one of the most disdainful estimations of Anne Stanhope’s role in Sudeley’s demise. Hayward simply builds on Sander and Foxe’s stories and his writing exhibits misogynistic tendencies characteristic of the early modern era:

The Duke had taken to wife Anne Stanhope a woman for many imperfections intolerable, but for pride monstrous, [a vice since her time familiar to some others of her family and name] she was exceeding both subtle and violent in accomplishing her ends, for which she spurned over all respects both of conscience and of shame. This woman did bear such invincible hate, first against the Queen Dowager for light causes and woman’s quarrels, especially for that she had precedency of place before her, being wife to the greatest Peer in the land, then to the Lord Sudeley for her sake. That albeit the Queen Dowager died by childbirth, yet would not her malice either die or decrease.\(^\text{47}\)

After Catherine Parr’s death, Anne persisted in her malevolence and spurred her husband to accept the demise of his own brother:

Her persuasions she cunningly intermixed with tears, affirming that she would depart from him, as willingly rather to hear both of his disgraces and dangers, than either to see the one or participate of the other. The Duke embracing this woman’s counsel (a woman’s counsel indeed and nothing the better) yielded both to the advice and devise for the destruction of his brother.\(^\text{48}\)

Hayward’s account solidified Anne’s image as an imperious, intolerable, and malicious woman. J. G. Nichols attests, “no one, certainly, was ever more grossly slandered than was Anne Duchess of Somerset by Hayward.”\(^\text{49}\)

Barrett L. Beer, the modern editor of Hayward’s work, explains that


\(^{48}\) Ibid., 98-99.

“Hayward’s condemnation of women goes far beyond his profound dislike of the duchess.”

Prone to misogynistic judgments, Hayward clearly disapproved of Anne Stanhope.

The nineteenth-century historian Agnes Strickland discusses the dispute between Anne Stanhope and Catherine Parr in her seminal work, *Lives of the Queens of England*. Strickland’s account draws directly from previous versions – “Somerset is supposed to have been excited to this injurious treatment of the widow of his royal master, and benefactor, Henry VIII, by the malice of his duchess, who had always borne envious ill-will against Katharine Parr.”

In addition to forcing her husband to kill his own brother, Anne is responsible for the duke’s mishandling of the dowager queen’s property. Anne had borne a hatred for Queen Catherine from her days as a lady-in-waiting. Using the anonymous Spanish chronicler, as well as Sander, Foxe, and Hayward, as her guides, Strickland thoroughly disapproves of Anne Stanhope. The idea of a willful and malicious wife seems to have appalled Strickland, who viewed Anne with a Victorian mindset.

Strickland’s biographies of Tudor royal women remain some of the most enduring historical portraits in English scholarship. *Lives of the Queens of England* and *Lives of the Tudor Princesses*, both researched and written with the help of Agnes’s sister, Elizabeth Strickland, provided Victorians with a vibrant and romantic representation of these female historical figures. Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford, and Catherine Willoughby all feature prominently in certain chapters of both of these works. Scholars have already assessed the Strickland sisters’ works and their place within nineteenth-century historiography. As Rohan Maitzen demonstrates, Agnes Strickland “brings together two lines: the feminine and the historical, to depict a new kind of

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50 Hayward, *The Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth*, 19.
historical heroine.” Women biographers like the Strickland sisters legitimized “their scholarly projects by the parallels or overlap between women’s history and social history, while minimizing their challenge to the patriarchy by showing that their subjects contributed to history in acceptably feminine ways.”

As with every work of historical scholarship, Strickland’s biographies were therefore products of a particular place and time. Strickland’s biographies have influenced twentieth- and twenty-first-century perceptions of certain Tudor women, including Catherine, Anne, and Jane. While Strickland strove to provide “a narrative, composed of facts drawn from contemporaneous authorities… as little blended with comment as possible,” she inevitably evaluated her subjects from the perspective of her own nineteenth-century values.

In many cases, the historical figures’ tales offered moral lessons to the audience. Strickland’s depiction of Tudor women has provided a persistent and decidedly Victorian foundation to the modern understanding of certain sixteenth-century women.

The Strickland sisters protested that their attitude towards history was “Facts not Opinions,” but as Victorians, they believed that history served an educational function, and that historical lessons illustrated moral law. And of course, Victorians, particularly those of the middle class (like Strickland), held restrictive attitudes about women’s roles. The ideal woman was a wife and mother, and her Christian duty was to produce and raise children. This middle-class ideal informed the separate spheres ideology and the cult of domesticity. Those women who did not fit into such prescribed roles – economically, socially, or morally – were often

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52 Rohan Maitzen, “‘This Feminine Preserve’: Historical Biographies by Victorian Women,” *Victorian Studies* 38, no. 3 (Spring 1995), 380-381.


chastised.\textsuperscript{55} The Victorians thus viewed Anne Stanhope as outspoken, domineering, and vengeful, and a woman who had stepped outside her domestic sphere.

These negative stereotypes dominate modern historical assessments of Anne Stanhope’s life and character. They draw directly, and often literally, from the hostile contemporary sources discussed above. Alison Weir, for example, paraphrases Hayward when she characterizes Stanhope as “an intolerable woman whose pride was monstrous, a termagant who exercised much influence over her weaker husband by the lash of her tongue.”\textsuperscript{56} According to Weir, “Somerset himself was a mild and rational man and, although he would be much displeased to learn of his brother’s marriage, he would in time have come to accept it with good grace had it not been for his wife, who never ceased urging him to punish the couple for their temerity.”\textsuperscript{57} Similarly, Susan James describes Anne as an “arrogant and unreasonable” woman whose “sudden elevation as wife of the lord protector seems to have gone to her head,” and William Seymour dismisses her as “proud, haughty, interfering, jealous and ambitious” – all of the qualities considered deplorable in a sixteenth-century woman.\textsuperscript{58} Seymour also argues that Anne was a “domineering woman, with a passion for precedence and an overwhelming interest in personal aggrandizement,” whose “evil influence can be traced in many of [Thomas Seymour’s] subsequent misfortunes.”\textsuperscript{59} Samuel Rhea Gammon, a biographer of William Paget, concludes in his estimation of Anne that “every indication of her disposition is unfavorable.”\textsuperscript{60}


\textsuperscript{56} Weir, \textit{The Six Wives of Henry VIII}, 540.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{58} James, \textit{Catherine Parr}, 272-273; Seymour, \textit{Ordeal by Ambition}, 318.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 221.

The difficulty with these accounts is that they misrepresent Anne’s character, life, and influence. The Duke and Duchess of Somerset had a harmonious marriage that suited both of them personally and politically. Other contemporary sources do not support the stories put forth by John Hayward, Nicolas Sander, John Foxe, and others. By keeping in mind a more balanced portrayal of Anne’s relationship with her husband, as well as the atmosphere of early modern politics, the circumstances surrounding Thomas Seymour’s execution can be better understood. As Warnicke notes, the dispute between Anne and Catherine Parr, which probably began with a disagreement over the queen’s jewels, “was more significant than a mere contest between the two ladies for their control… it was a dispute about whether these valuable gems belonged to the crown, and therefore, should be worn by the duchess as wife of the lord protector.” The Duke of Somerset confiscated Catherine Parr’s jewels upon Henry VIII’s death, as the king had left his last wife out of his will. Whatever claim Queen Catherine may have had to the jewels she forfeited with her hasty marriage to Thomas Seymour. Her decision to marry below her station complicated the dilemma of court precedence. For, had the jewels been Catherine’s private property, they would have become Sudeley’s personal possessions as well. The grasping Sudeley was aware of this, and he “continued to campaign for them after his wife’s death.” As Somerset spent the majority of his time as Lord Protector struggling against his brother’s deceit and cupidity, his desire to establish his wife’s position over that of Catherine Parr is understandable. Anne also had more tangible political power after Henry VIII’s death than her former mistress. Although she may not have been above Catherine Parr with regard to court protocol, her influence after 1547 far surpassed that of the queen dowager. Both couples were essentially able

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62 Ibid.
to function as political partnerships. Edward Seymour realized that his wife’s position enhanced his own. As Lord Protector, his control required assertion.

There is also much evidence which reveals that the nature of Anne Stanhope and Catherine Parr’s disputes over precedence and jewels were much exaggerated. Since Catherine remained in mourning up until her final marriage to Sudeley; because she was “not expected to participate in public events while she remained at court during the first few weeks after Henry’s death, a struggle for precedence between the two ladies could not easily have taken place.”

Henry VIII’s funeral and Edward VI’s coronation were the two greatest public events between Henry’s death in 1547 and Catherine’s own death in 1548. Neither the queen dowager nor the duchess attended either event. Moreover, it was not until 1549 that Anne and her brother, Sir Michael Stanhope, went through the royal stores and jewel house at Westminster Palace. As this was after Catherine Parr’s death, the only other person with any claim to them was Thomas Seymour – who had a dubious claim at best.

If the dispute between Anne Stanhope and Catherine Parr was both exaggerated and misinterpreted, then it could not have had a great impact on the Seymour brothers’ conflict and Sudeley’s eventual downfall. Somerset’s decision to allow the execution of his brother was almost certainly his own – and that of the council’s. Sudeley acted brazenly by organizing a coup against the Lord Protector and plotting to kidnap his royal nephew. Sudeley’s jealousy of his elder brother’s position caused him to act rashly and he paid the ultimate price. Somerset did not need excessive persuasion from his wife to order the execution – they both believed that Sudeley’s removal was necessary for their survival. In this, as in most else, Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope were in agreement.

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63 Ibid., 29.
64 Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580, 14.
Edward VI’s government also felt threatened by Sudeley’s behavior toward Princess Elizabeth, an heir to the throne. As mentioned above, Anne Stanhope stepped in personally to deal with this debacle. The “blistering lecture” that she gave Kat Ashley, at first glance, seems to reinforce Anne’s imperious image. However, on closer inspection, Anne emerges as the voice of reason. Not only did Sudeley’s actions threaten the honor of Princess Elizabeth, they threatened the position and dignity of the Seymour family. Anne’s “suspicions that Elizabeth was being given too much freedom were soon confirmed,” as rumors abounded that Catherine Parr “seemed to condone Seymour’s behavior toward” her stepdaughter.

Catherine, as queen consort, had been a defender of Protestantism in England and a model of reform. However, after 1547 her personal life overtook her commitment to religion and tarnished her reputation – particularly since the gossip surrounding her marriage made its way to court. Anne Stanhope’s anger at Elizabeth’s treatment while under the care of her brother and sister-in-law is understandable, since they threatened the stability of both her family and faith. Despite her various disputes with Thomas Seymour and Catherine Parr, Anne “briefly sheltered [Catherine’s] infant” when her sister-in-law died in childbirth. As mentioned in the previous chapter, she also assumed the dowager queen’s sponsorship of John Olde’s translation of Erasmus’s Paraphrases. Anne Stanhope maintained her devotion to her family and religious reform, as well as to her own political career. Her friend and fellow former lady-in-waiting, Jane Guildford, acted with the same aims and earned a similar negative historical reputation.

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65 James, Catherine Parr, 281.
66 Ibid., 282.
On July 6, 1553, between eight and nine o’clock in the evening, the fifteen-year-old Edward VI drew his last, labored breath. According to John Foxe, he died in the arms of Sir Henry Sidney, a chief gentleman of the Privy Chamber and John Dudley’s son-in-law. Foxe records the king’s last prayer as including the appeal, “O my Lord God, defend this realm from papistry, and maintain thy true religion; that I and my people may praise thy holy name, for thy Son Jesus Christ’s sake!” His final words were purportedly, “I am faint; Lord have mercy upon me, and take my spirit.”

The young king had been fighting an illness that began with a feverish cold since February of that year. Historians are still uncertain about the cause of Edward’s death. Based on the symptoms, many agree that consumption (or tuberculosis) was to blame. His biographer, Jennifer Loach, points out that all accounts of his last days “mention fever, and suggest that the king was coughing up infected matter that had a foul smell.” Loach argues that this instead indicates “a chronic infectious disease in the chest” or, in other words “a suppurating pulmonary infection” that developed into “acute bilateral bronchopneumonia.” Some contemporaries commented that Edward had been poisoned, and that John Dudley, Duke of

69 The repeated use of certain names in Tudor England creates the potential for some confusion in this section. Jane Guildford Dudley shared her first name with her daughter-in-law, the ill-fated Lady Jane Grey (who also became Jane Dudley upon her marriage). To complicate the issue further, Jane’s maiden name, Guildford, was also her son’s first name – the same son who married Jane Grey. To avoid some confusion, this dissertation, wherever possible, refers to the “Nine Days Queen” as simply Lady Jane Grey and her mother-in-law as Jane Guildford, Duchess of Northumberland. Guildford Dudley is identified by his full name where necessary.


Northumberland was most likely culprit. As Loach rightly argues, “it was a rare royal death in the sixteenth century that was not accompanied by such rumors, which should surely all be discounted.” She draws attention to the fact that Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Richmond, Henry VIII’s illegitimate son, was also rumored to have died of poison in 1536. When Catherine of Aragon died earlier that year, the embalmer found her heart to be “quite black and hideous,” leading to similar rumors. Some contemporaries believed that Anne Boleyn, who was executed the same year and who had actually predeceased Fitzroy, was to blame for both of their deaths. While she certainly stood to gain from the deaths of both her predecessor and the king’s only son, motive does not inevitably indicate guilt. As with the deaths of Catherine of Aragon and Henry Fitzroy, there is no evidence to indicate foul play in the passing of the young king in 1553. Furthermore, unlike Anne Boleyn, John Dudley lacked motivation. Edward’s illness began in the winter, and Dudley would have been acting against his own interests had he poisoned the king prior to June of that year, when his daughter-in-law became poised to inherit the throne in her own right.

In April 1553, Edward VI, likely recognizing the severity of his illness, had composed a document titled “My Deuise [Device] for the Succession.” In the “Devise,” written in the king’s own hand, he disinherited his illegitimate sisters, Mary and Elizabeth, in favor of his legitimate cousins through his paternal aunt, Mary Tudor, Queen of France:

For lack of issue of my body: to the Lady Frances [Grey née Brandon]’s heirs male; for lack of such issue to the Lady Jane [Grey]’s heirs male; to the Lady Katherine [Grey]’s heirs male; to the Lady Mary [Grey]’s heirs male; to the heirs male of the daughters which she [Frances] shall have hereafter; then to the Lady Margaret [Clifford]’s heirs male; for lack of such issue, to the heirs male of the

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75 Loach, *Edward VI*, 162.
76 J. S. Brewer, R. S. Brodie, and James Gairdner, eds., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII*: Volume 10, 141.
Lady Jane’s daughters and so forth till you come to Lady Margaret’s daughter’s heirs male.\textsuperscript{77}

In \textit{Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery}, Eric Ives provides a revealing analysis of Edward’s “Devise.” Ives identifies that there were four versions of the document, each edited with the king’s supervision.\textsuperscript{78} The final version, completed in June, altered the line “the Lady Jane’s heirs male” to “the Lady Jane \textit{and} her heirs male.” This modification essentially transformed Jane Grey “from the potential mother of a king into the heir presumptive.”\textsuperscript{79} The “Devise” dramatically changed the fortunes of the Grey family and, by extension, those of the Dudley family, as Lady Jane had married the Dudleys’ son, Guildford, in May of that year.\textsuperscript{80} In a dramatic series of events, then, Jane Guildford, Duchess of Northumberland, stood poised to be the future grandmother of the heir to England’s throne.

Unlike Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford’s notorious image has been tempered by her evident virtues as a loyal wife and mother. While she certainly seems to have worked in unison with her husband in much the same manner as Anne Stanhope, Jane did not receive quite the same amount of opprobrium from either contemporaries or later writers. Yet even the most circumspect Tudor courtier and politician could expect a certain amount of criticism, warranted or otherwise. Writing to William Cecil in July 1548, John Dudley indicated that he was “being slandered,” yet “he and his wife take all that comes.”\textsuperscript{81} Jane was privy to her husband’s political business and he clearly viewed her as a partner in many respects. John Dudley’s statement also

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\textsuperscript{78} Ives, \textit{Lady Jane Grey}, 137-149.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 145.; Italics have been added for emphasis.
\textsuperscript{80} Royall Tyler, ed., \textit{Calendar of State Papers, Spain}, 11: 46.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI}, 52.
\end{flushright}
indicates that, even before his ascent to power a year later, the Dudleys felt that they were already the victims of gossip and defamation.

During and after the dramatic events of 1553, John Dudley earned his own, enduring “black legend.” Almost immediately upon assuming power in 1552, his image was transformed into that of a self-serving, ambitious, and ruthless politician. Unsurprisingly, many of the commentators contributing to this interpretation were Catholic and supportive of Mary I. For example, the imperial ambassador, Jehan Scheyfve, wrote to Charles V in May 1553 that Dudley “and his party” sought to “deprive the Lady Mary of the succession to the crown” and that they would “resort to arms against her, with the excuse of religion.” Scheyfve went as far as to claim that Dudley may even “find it expedient to get rid of his own wife and marry the said [Princess] Elizabeth himself, and claim the crown for the house of Warwick as descendants of the House of Lancaster.”

Robert Wingfield, a Catholic historian who knew the queen personally, wrote soon after in his *Vita Mariae Angliae Reginae (The Life of Queen Mary of England)* that Dudley had committed “execrable, not to say intolerable crimes.” These offences included controlling the young king and misgoverning the kingdom. Throughout the centuries, historians have generally accepted Dudley’s image as an ambitious, self-serving, and ruthless opportunist. Writing in the early twentieth century, A. F. Pollard maintained, “No minister had rendered himself more odious to the nation at large; and his overbearing temper did not endear him to his colleagues… He had committed so many crimes and made so many enemies that he was only safe so long as he misdirected the government and prevented the administration of justice.” Pollard further

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82 *Calendar of State Papers, Spain*, 11: 46.
claimed that he plotted “to secure the throne for his family” and his own “despotic power.”

However, later historians have approached their own assessments of Dudley’s character and career with more caution. Eric Ives has provided the most persuasive argument in favor of exorcising the Duke of Northumberland’s negative historical reputation. He contends, “Conspiracy theories and Machiavellian plots make good copy, but the detachment of four centuries should make us pause before we completely swallow the black tale of Dudley’s ambition.” According to Ives, Dudley’s undesirable image was rooted in his suppression of Kett’s Rebellion in 1549 and his overthrow of Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset that same year. The unpopularity of the government’s economic policies after 1549 and Seymour’s execution on “trumped-up charges” in 1552 provided “the final seal on the black legend.”

Contemporaries at the time needed little convincing that the Duke of Northumberland had orchestrated the events of 1553 in order to maintain his own personal hold on the reins of government. Ives instead argues that Dudley was motivated, first and foremost, by a desire to serve his monarch, a principle that had guided him throughout his entire career – “obedience to the king was absolute... it gave him his identity.” Ives instead sees Edward VI himself as the driving force behind the bid to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne in place of his own half-sister, Mary Tudor. Furthermore, the king was acting out of a desire to secure a legitimate and male succession, rather than simply trying to prevent a Catholic queen. Nevertheless, John

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86 Ibid., 109.
87 Ibid., 119-122.
88 Ibid., 137-139.
Dudley and his family became the scapegoats of the enterprise once it failed in July and August 1553.

Like her husband’s own historical record, most of the negative depictions of Jane Guildford’s character or actions only appeared after the failed bid to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. The origins of the Duchess of Northumberland’s reputation as a sort of “wicked mother-in-law” lie in an oft-quoted letter written ostensibly by Lady Jane Grey to Mary I in 1553, not long after the latter’s accession to the throne. In it, Lady Jane sought to explain the events of her short reign to her cousin. While historians usually refer to the document as a “letter,” it in fact seems to be a summary of Jane Grey’s words written down for the queen and lacks, according to the edited work in which it appears, “address, subscription, [and] signature.” Ives concludes that a document like this did exist and can be corroborated by Mary I’s remarks to the imperial ambassador indicating that she received such a letter. Yet the statement was written down and translated by “hostile Catholic sources,” beginning with Giovanni Francesco Commendone—a Italian cardinal and papal nuncio who met with Mary I in 1553 regarding England’s return to Rome. Even if the statement was comprised primarily of Jane Grey’s own words, it must be read with care, as she was clearly (and understandably) attempting to exonerate herself and those closest to her. Lady Jane begins the statement:

Although my fault be such that, but for the goodness and clemency of the queen [Mary I], I can have no hope of finding pardon, nor in craving forgiveness, having given ear to those who at that time appeared, not only to myself, but also to a great part of this realm, to be wise, and now have manifested themselves the contrary, not only to my and their great detriment, but with the common disgrace and blame of all, thy having with such shameful boldness made so blamable and dishonorable an attempt to give to others that which was not theirs…

90 Ives, Lady Jane Grey, 18-19.
91 Wood, Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies, 3: 274.
She continued in this manner, declaring, “I can still on many grounds conceive hope of your infinite clemency, it being known that the error imputed to me has not been altogether caused by myself.” The “Nine Days Queen” lay much of the blame for the coup that briefly placed her on the throne with both the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland. She reserved particular ire for her mother-in-law, who allegedly bullied her, broke promises to her, and – most astonishingly – attempted to poison her. Her displeasure with the duchess seems to have stemmed from a dispute regarding Lady Jane’s residence leading up to Edward VI’s death:

For when it was publicly reported that there was no more hope of the king’s life, as the duchess of Northumberland had before promised that I should remain in the house with my mother, so she, having understood this soon after from her husband, who was the first that told it to me, did not wish me to leave my house, saying to me that if God should have willed to call the king [Edward VI] to His mercy, of whose life there was no longer any hope, it would be needful for me to go immediately to the Tower, I being made by his majesty heir of his realm. Which words being spoken to me thus unexpectedly, put me in great perturbation, and greatly disturbed my mind, as yet soon after they oppressed me much more. But I, nevertheless, making little account of these words, delayed not to go from my mother… So that the duchess of Northumberland was angry with me and with the duchess my mother, saying that, if she had resolved to keep me in the house, she should have kept her son, my husband, near her, to whom she thought I would certainly have gone, and she would have been free from the charge of me.

The antipathy between the Duchess of Northumberland and Lady Jane Grey evidently intensified when the young queen resisted her husband’s elevation to the rank of king consort:

But afterwards I sent for the earls of Arundel and Pembroke, and said to them that, if the crown belonged to me, I should be content to make my husband a duke, but would never consent to make him king. Which resolution of mine gave his mother (this my opinion being related to her) great cause for anger and disdain, so that she, being very angry with me and greatly displeased, persuaded her son not to sleep with me any longer as he was wont to do, affirming to me moreover that he did not wish in any wise to be a duke but a king… And this in truth was I deceived by the duke and the council, and ill-treated by my husband his mother. Moreover (as Sir John Gates had confessed) he (the duke) was the first to persuade king Edward to make me his heir. As to the rest, for my part, I know not what the council may have determined to do, but I know for certain that,

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92 Ibid.
twice during this time, poison was given to me, first in the house of the duchess of Northumberland, and afterwards here in the Tower, as I have the best and most certain testimony, besides that since that time all my hair has fallen off. 93

In this version of events, John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland was the sole motivation behind the coup surrounding Jane Grey, and the Duchess of Northumberland his overeager accomplice. Ostensibly, the Dudleys’ main ambition was to ensure that their son – and, eventually, their grandson – would rule as king. There are a variety of difficulties with the account presented in this statement, handed down from Italian Catholic sources. First and foremost, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how much of the account consists of Jane Grey’s own words. Even if one is to accept the statement’s authenticity, it of course reads as an attempt to exonerate herself, her husband, and her own immediate family at the expense of those individuals whom Mary I was already intent upon punishing – the Duke of Northumberland and his closest supporters. Finally, as discussed above, the representation of John Dudley as queenmaker, while appealingly dramatic, is not borne out by the contemporary evidence or his record prior to 1553.

Lady Jane Grey’s claim that she was being poisoned by her own mother-in-law is perhaps the most astonishing portion of the statement. As specified above, poison was a common accusation that sixteenth-century individuals made against their enemies – particularly after a sudden death in the royal family. Yet the Dudleys would have had little motivation to poison Edward VI, let alone their own daughter-in-law. Without a child born to Guildford Dudley and Jane Grey, the Dudley family would not have benefited from the young queen’s untimely death. And if, as the statement claims, the Duchess of Northumberland had persuaded her son to abstain from his young wife’s bed, then the possibility of a Dudley heir was even more remote. It seems

instead that Jane Guildford agreed with her friend, Catherine Willoughby, about progressing deliberately when orchestrating the marriage of adolescents. Lady Jane Grey was only fifteen or sixteen at the time of her marriage and Guildford Dudley was likely only a year or two older. While this was certainly old enough in the eyes of contemporaries for an aristocratic marriage to be consummated, some parents believed that young couples needed time to mature and become familiar with one another. And despite the economic and social concerns involved in the arrangement of marriages amongst members of the nobility, most sixteenth-century aristocratic children married in their early twenties.94 In May 1553, Jehan Scheyfve remarked that the marriage between Lady Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley “is not yet to be consummated, because of their tender age.” He then added that they were nevertheless “fast bound per verba de presenti according to the customs of the country.”95 While the couple was living together in London by early July, this seems to have been a recent development. Scheyfve’s earlier observation, corroborated with Jane Grey’s accounting of the Duchess of Northumberland’s behavior in the Tower, perhaps indicates that the Dudleys were protective of their son and were disposed to proceed cautiously.96 Certainly, if the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland were desperate for a Dudley heir to the throne, as is often asserted, they would have wasted no time in encouraging their son to consummate his marriage. Yet they did not seem eager for their son and daughter-in-law to live together as husband and wife until the latter was queen and the necessity of an heir became more urgent. Based on the evidence we have indicating that Jane Guildford and her

husband were affectionate and devoted parents, it seems more likely that they were willing to balance the interests of the couple with the political requirements of the moment.

Guildford Dudley does seem to have coveted the title of king. Informing Charles V immediately following the events of July 1553, the imperial ambassadors wrote that Jane Guildford, her son, and Lady Jane Grey – whom they styled “Lady Jane of Suffolk” – were detained in the Tower following Mary’s triumph against the Duke of Northumberland and that they were receiving “sour treatment, somewhat different from that meted out to them during their eight days’ reign.” The ambassadors went on to report, “Guildford [Dudley] tried to induce his wife to cede her right to the Crown to him, so that he might not only be consort and administrator, but king in person, intending to have himself confirmed as such by Parliament.” Despite the fact that Lady Jane Grey denied her husband this honor, he “had himself addressed as ‘Your Grace’ and ‘Your Excellency’, sat at the head of the Council board, and was served alone.” They then gleefully informed the emperor that Guildford Dudley was now being served by the Tower jailor, who “stands in the stead of his captain of the guard.” Yet it cannot have been a surprise to anyone who supported Jane Grey’s queenship, including Edward VI himself, that her husband expected to share her title and authority. When Mary I married her cousin, Philip II of Spain, Parliament affirmed that he was to enjoy all of his wife’s titles and honors – as King of England – during her lifetime. Official documents were to be dated with both of their names, Parliament was to be called under their joint authority, and any English coins minted during their reign were to display both monarchs. Of course, Mary’s foreign marriage was largely unpopular and the negotiations for the match became a major catalyst for Wyatt’s

97 Calendar of State Papers, England and Spain, 11: 120.
98 1 Mary Sess. 3, c. 2.
Rebellion in early 1554.\textsuperscript{99} Upon her own accession to the throne, Mary’s sister, Elizabeth I, professed to her first Parliament that it would be “inconsiderate folly to draw upon myself the cares which might proceed of marriage.” She then declared, “I am already bound unto an husband, which is the kingdom of England and that may suffice you.”\textsuperscript{100} Elizabeth famously never married. It is probable that she witnessed the struggles of her female predecessors with regard to their own marriages and chose to eschew the burden of a husband. While the role of a king consort was largely undefined in the mid-sixteenth century, few expected that the husband of a queen regnant would have no political function. Married women had fewer rights and less independence than their single and widowed counterparts, largely due to the legal doctrine of coverture. English common law legally merged wives’ identities with those of their husbands. The legal and social subjection of wives was also supported by sixteenth-century religious authorities, who repeatedly referenced the biblical duty of married women to submit to the will of their husbands.\textsuperscript{101} While the actions of Guildford Dudley and his mother undoubtedly exasperated Jane Grey and her supporters, their expectations aligned with contemporary beliefs about the nature of marriage – royal or otherwise.

Because Lady Jane Grey’s complicated statement is the document that most closely resembles “the only first-hand evidence we have about Jane accepting the crown,” historians have tended to reference it without scrutiny and it forms the basis of most scholarly and fictional accounts.\textsuperscript{102} Each generation has, with good reason, viewed Lady Jane Grey as an innocent

\textsuperscript{100} A transcript of this speech can be found in the online appendices of Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe, 3\textsuperscript{rd} ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), see “Original Sources: Chapter 8,” 4-6.
\textsuperscript{102} Ives, Lady Jane Grey, 18.
victim of the events of 1553-1554. Anti-Catholic sentiment in the centuries following the Tudor era helped solidify Lady Jane’s image as a Protestant martyr. In the years immediately after her death, many Protestant writers expressed sympathy for the “Nine Days Queen.” Writing to Lady Jane’s uncle, Lord John Grey, from Geneva nine months after her execution, Jean Calvin avowed that she was “a lady whose example is worthy of everlasting remembrance, to… whom it was given, even in death itself, to commit [her] triumphant [soul] into the hands and faithful keeping of God.”¹⁰³ John Foxe described her as “a virtuous lady.” He viewed Lady Jane and her husband as “two innocents… for they did but ignorantly accept that, which the others had willingly devised, and, by open proclamation, consented to take from others, and give to them.”¹⁰⁴

Despite this Protestant sympathy for the “Nine Days Queen” who died on the orders of her Catholic cousin, John Dudley often still emerged as an ambitious schemer who rightfully paid the price with his head. In the 1694 play, The Innocent Usurper or the Death of the Lady Jane Grey, playwright John Banks depicted Lady Jane as a victim trapped between the intolerant Mary I and the ruthless John Dudley. In the play, the Duke of Northumberland refers to Mary as a “fierce bigot” who would “blast and turn to ruin in a day” the Reformation. Yet the character of Lady Jane declares that disinheriting her cousin is “a horrid act that is not in the power of Hell to do.” For his part, John Dudley’s ambition is to “light [his] torch at Tudor’s short liv’d flame, till Dudley’s name shall blaze in England’s crown, as long, and fear’d, as proud Plantagenet’s.”¹⁰⁵ Banks’s play was originally written in the mid-1680s, prior to the triumph of the Glorious Revolution. When it was eventually staged a decade later, William III and Mary II banned the performance, despite its anti-Catholic sentiment, likely because it also condemned any disruption

¹⁰³ Robinson, Original Letters, 2: 716.
¹⁰⁵ John Banks, The Innocent Usurper or the Death of the Lady Jane Grey (London: R. Bentley, 1694), 4, 6, 16.
to divine-right succession. Fictional accounts were not alone in their depiction of John Dudley as an ambitious queenmaker. Thomas Wilkins’s 1792 biography, titled The History of Jane Grey, Queen of England: With a Defence of Her Claim to the Crown, unsurprisingly portrayed Lady Jane as a young woman of “youth, beauty, learning, and innocence” who was offered up as a sacrifice to “power, bigotry, ignorance, and injustice.” Wilkins paints John Dudley as the sole architect of the coup to place Lady Jane on the throne, for though he was “possessed of power little inferior to kings, his desires were unsatisfied, and he conceived schemes more elevated than had ever entered into the mind of any subject; he wished that the kingdom should be governed by his descendants, and that future monarchs should deduce their origin from him.” Despite Wilkins’s disapproval of Dudley’s motivations, he pronounced that Jane Grey’s claim to the throne was superior to that of her Catholic cousin, as she was from “unquestioned” descent, “she was neither foreign born, nor did she profess a different religion to that established by act of parliament.”

Prior to the nineteenth century, Jane Guildford makes few appearances in such scholarly accounts and fictional depictions of the Jane Grey coup, which tended to focus instead on her husband, son, the Grey family, and Mary I as the main actors of the ensuing drama. In 1846, Mary Anne Everett Wood published a transcript of the Italian letter in her work, Letters of Royal and Illustrious Ladies of Great Britain, providing a focus for a renewed interest in the Duchess of Northumberland’s participation in the events of 1553. Additionally, in the Victorian era, an increasing number of women writers began to focus their attention on female historical figures.

106 Ives, Lady Jane Grey, 290.
108 Ibid., 37-38.
109 Ibid., 65.
As Rohan Maitzen argues, these female historical biographies “vigorously [asserted] a feminine presence in history.” At the same time, these scholarly works also functioned as “conduct books” – participating in “the codification and dissemination of [Victorian middle-class] values.”¹¹¹ Victorian historical biographies produced enduring, and often distinctly romanticized, images of famous historical women. Yet these female authors also provided an essential “woman’s angle” to their accounts. While renowned male historians, like Thomas Babington Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle often critiqued their methods, arguing that they “tended to reduce great personages to subordination and great events to incidents,” women biographers also gave new space to historical figures and details hitherto ignored.¹¹²

As discussed above, Agnes Strickland was perhaps the most prominent of these biographers. In the 1860s, she took up the story of Jane Grey in her *Lives of the Tudor and Stuart Princesses*. For Strickland, Lady Jane was “without exception the most noble character of the royal Tudor lineage. She was adorned with every virtue that is lovely in domestic life, while her piety, learning, and courage qualified her to give luster to a crown.”¹¹³ In Strickland’s estimation, Jane Grey was the perfect example of femininity and Christian virtue – in short, she was the ideal Victorian woman. And while she was the helpless victim throughout the events of 1553, the Dudleys were merely ambitious. She describes Jane Guildford as the “heiress and granddaughter to the Lady Guildford who was governess to the Princess Mary Tudor,” remarking that “it was not a little singular that the granddaughter [Lady Jane Grey], who represented the Queen of France, and the descendant of her governess [Guildford Dudley], should afterwards marry.”¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 85.
Furthermore, she claims that John Dudley, when “seeking a princess of the royal family of England as a mate for his youngest boy,” originally intended to wed his son to Lady Margaret Clifford – Jane Grey’s cousin. Strickland depicted the Dudleys as ruthless social climbers. Nevertheless, she describes Guildford Dudley as “the handsomest of a handsome family” and “the pride and darling of his aspiring sire.”115 This did not stop Lady Jane from developing “a deep dislike to her husband’s father and mother. Northumberland she dreaded and distrusted; his wife she abhorred.”116

In her account of Lady Jane Grey’s short reign, Strickland quotes freely from the Italian letter, despite questioning the validity of some segments. For example, she describes Jane’s speech after learning of her accession to the throne as an improbable and “pompous oration put into her mouth.”117 Yet her description of Guildford Dudley’s appeal to assume the title of king, which she refers to as “a violent manifestation of the boyish ambition of her husband,” follows the Catholic account closely. According to Strickland, Lady Jane, who only agreed to “bear the weight of the crown regnant” because of “the duty she owed to her religion,” did not approve of her husband “assuming any share of that regality.” The overbearing Duchess of Northumberland then advised her son to “forsake his wife’s chamber” and then “insulted Lady Jane in the coarsest terms.” Strickland does admit that the Dudleys could not have poisoned their daughter-in-law, as “she was their peg to hang the crown upon.” Yet she adds that “her insolent mother-in-law could not afford to gratify her spite by murdering her.” Clearly, according to Strickland, if the Duchess of Northumberland had not poisoned Lady Jane, she had at least wanted to.118 As with her assessment of Anne Stanhope, Strickland plainly outlines her disapproval of Jane Guildford.

115 Ibid., 86.
116 Ibid., 88.
117 Ibid., 91.
118 Ibid., 95-96.
Ambitious, spiteful, and interfering, Strickland’s version of the Duchess of Northumberland is the perfect foil to the virtuous and ill-treated Lady Jane Grey.

Likely influenced by Agnes Strickland’s interpretation of events, Victorian dramatic portrayals of the events surrounding Jane Grey’s short reign began to include Jane Guildford as an active participant. Mrs. Frederick Prideaux published *The Nine Days’ Queen: A Dramatic Poem* in 1869 – one year after the publication of Strickland’s *Lives of the Tudor and Stuart Princesses*. Like Strickland, Prideaux characterizes the Duchess of Northumberland as a contemptuous and ruthless woman. For example, a scene occurs between Jane Guildford, Jane Grey, and Frances Brandon, in which Lady Jane asks her mother, “Pray you, let me stay with you, dear mother, a little longer.” The Duchess of Northumberland replies harshly, “If my son were wise, he’d let you stay for ever, as for that. You have contemned him before all the court… You sicken me with your fine nonsense.”119 Another scene depicts the usual confrontation between Lady Jane Grey and her mother-in-law over Guildford Dudley’s position. Upon hearing that her son was to be denied the title of king, the Duchess of Northumberland declares, “My son not the king, and you the Queen? For shame! If he had thought that such a scurvy trick were possible, the Duke [of Northumberland] had never lent his princely strength to underprop the weakness of your cause.” Lady Jane replies, “Madam, content you: the crown upon my head is but a shadow: his would be but the shadow of a shade.” The duchess then retorts, “A Queen – forsooth! – such poor and pitiful thoughts” and threatens her, crying, “Your cause hangs on his breath; and if you thwart him now, slighting his son, your husband, you’re undone.” Jane Guildford’s fury is not reserved merely for her daughter-in-law, for she names her own son a

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“fool and dullard.” In Prideaux’s work, the character of the Duchess of Northumberland is overbearing and offensive to those around her, but she is also very much a political actor and her husband’s partner. Earlier in the production, Prideaux imagines a scene in which the duchess attends the dying Edward VI. The king soon wearyes of her attentions, and when she refers to her son, Guildford Dudley, as “your cousin,” he cries, “‘Cousin’ again, ‘tis cozening in good earnest.” Before exiting, the duchess muses, “What can this mean? Something has angered him against the Duke.” The audience is then led to believe that she departs in order to notify her husband. While Jane Guildford’s political agency is obvious – Prideaux accurately depicts her as part of the group that informed Lady Jane Grey of Edward VI’s death and her own accession to the throne – the Victorian audience is meant to view this as a flaw and the Duchess of Northumberland is clearly one of the villains in the production.

Agnes Strickland was not the only biographer to depict Jane Guildford as Lady Jane’s wicked mother-in-law. Ida Ashworth Taylor, an early twentieth-century novelist and biographer, wrote *Lady Jane Grey and Her Times* in 1908. Although Taylor was a converted Catholic, she still found the devoutly-Protestant Lady Jane to be a sympathetic figure – “the most guiltless of traitors.” Following Strickland’s lead, Taylor depicted the Duchess of Northumberland as an ambitious, petulant, and vengeful woman. She “treated Lady Jane… very ill” and “stirred up Guildford [Dudley] to do the like.” One year later, Richard Davey, a novelist, playwright, and biographer, wrote *The Nine Days’ Queen*. Davey outrageously dramatizes his account of the conflict between Lady Jane and the Duchess of Northumberland. He introduces John Dudley as

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120 Ibid, 123-126.
121 Ibid., 44.
123 Ibid., 222.
“a rat in the dark, waiting his opportunity” and Jane Guildford as “a very beautiful woman” who “contrived to absorb [her husband’s] affections so completely that his domestic life was remarkably respectable.” Despite her numerous “good qualities,” Davey indicates that “she was cordially disliked by Lady Jane Grey, whom she treated with consistent harshness.”\textsuperscript{124} Strickland’s influence on Davey is clear, as he picks up the anecdote about Jane Guildford’s grandmother serving as governess of Mary Tudor, Queen of France: “Thus the great-grandson of the governess and the granddaughter of the royal pupil eventually became man and wife.”\textsuperscript{125} According to Davey, not long after Lady Jane Grey was proclaimed queen, Jane Guildford – “the ambitious parent” – and her “docile son” burst into the young woman’s chamber “whilst she was still seated at her toilet.” The duchess then “vituperated her daughter-in-law, using coarse and violent language” before taking her son “by the hand and [drawing] him out of the room, saying ‘she would not leave him with an ungrateful wife’.”\textsuperscript{126} The common theme in these biographies is clear – the Dudleys orchestrated the coup in 1553 for their own ambitious ends and Jane Guildford, whom even Richard Davey acknowledges as “eminently respectable,” made the poor Lady Grey Jane miserable during her short reign.\textsuperscript{127}

Whatever the truth behind the contents of the Italian letter, it has become the basis for most modern accounts of the coup to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne and has influenced almost all depictions of Jane Guildford and her relationship with her ill-fated daughter-in-law. Alison Plowden writes that the Duchess of Northumberland initiated a conflict between the Dudley and Grey families over Lady Jane’s chosen residence. When Edward VI was close to

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  \item \textsuperscript{124} Richard Davey, \textit{The Nine Days’ Queen: Lady Jane Grey and Her Times} (London: Methuen & Co., 1909), 192.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 231.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid., 260-261.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid., 237.
\end{itemize}
death, it was Jane Guildford who informed Lady Jane Grey of the situation and her imminent need to move to the Tower. Lady Jane “put [this] down to boasting and an excuse to separate her from her mother [Frances Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk],” with whom the Duchess of Northumberland “did not get on.” This resulted in a “furious quarrel.”¹²⁸ During Lady Jane’s “nine-day reign,” the Duchess of Northumberland was the driving force behind the efforts to name Guildford Dudley as king consort. Plowden maintains that Jane Guildford and her son “launched an all-out assault on their victim – he whining that he didn’t want to be a duke, he wanted to be King; she scolding like a fishwife.”¹²⁹ Paul F. M. Zahl views Lady Jane Grey as an “unhappy straitened child under the thumb of mother and father” – her father, Henry Grey, and father-in-law, John Dudley, as well as her mother, Frances Brandon, and, of course, mother-in-law, Jane Guildford. The Dudleys, Zahl contends, saw Lady Jane as “solely a means to an end.”¹³⁰ Similarly, Alison Weir alleges that Lady Jane professed, upon hearing of Edward VI’s death and her own accession, “The crown is not my right. It pleases me not. Mary is the rightful heir.” Her protestations – greatly exaggerated – “did no good,” for the Greys and the Dudleys “forced her to do their will.” Weir even goes as far as to say that Lady Jane was beaten in order to obtain her submission.¹³¹ Even Eric Ives, whose assessment of John Dudley is judicious, states that Guildford Dudley “remained very much under his mother’s thumb.”¹³²

The Italian letter – particularly its later publication in 1846 by Mary Anne Everett Wood – formed the basis of most assessments of Jane Guildford’s character and her

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¹²⁹ Ibid., 93.
actions during the summer of 1553. However, the letter also provides a revealing look at just how involved Jane was in her husband’s political schemes. The Duchess of Northumberland was at the center of the events of 1553, and perhaps even more of an influential actor than the “Nine Days Queen” herself. Many authors have chosen to focus on debating her personality and her relationship with Lady Jane Grey, and therefore most depictions of Jane Guildford devolve into moral judgments. Yet there were few heroes or villains in the story of Jane Grey’s short reign. The individuals involved – including Jane Guildford and her husband – acted for their own benefit, in the interests of their families, and (in many cases) according to the dictates of their faith.

Regardless of his motivation, John Dudley’s decision to back Jane Grey’s claim to the throne inextricably tied the fate of his family to the success or failure of the venture. Jane Guildford was keenly aware of the significance of the potential failure of her daughter-in-law’s accession. According to the imperial ambassadors reporting on events in England in July 1553, when Princess Mary proclaimed herself the rightful queen, the Duchess of Northumberland “began to lament and weep.” In response to Mary Tudor’s challenge, Jane Grey’s council commanded the queen’s father, Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk “to go and bring in the Lady Mary.” Fatefully, of course, it was John Dudley who eventually left London to confront Henry VIII’s eldest daughter and her supporters. Within a few weeks, the Duke of Northumberland had been executed and his wife was left scrambling to protect her family from further retribution. After six years of living under Protestant rule, Jane Guildford and her coreligionists had to come to terms with the restoration of Catholicism in England.

133 Calendar of State Papers, England and Spain, 11: 82.
Catherine Willoughby: The Protestant Heroine

On a cold February day in 1555, a ship landed in the Netherlands carrying Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk; her husband, Richard Bertie; her young daughter, Susan; and “the meanest of her servants.” According to John Foxe’s account of the events, the duchess arrived on safer shores only after a harrowing journey. Catherine had, without the knowledge of most of her household, left London in the dead of night in the guise of “a mean merchant’s wife.” The small group suffered multiple mishaps – losing their way to the harbor, narrowly evading discovery, leaving behind a trunk and a milk pot with milk for the duchess’s daughter, and watching helplessly as their ship was blown off course. Representatives from the queen’s council, hard on their heels, arrived at Catherine’s house the next day to “[take] an inventory of her goods, besides further order devised for search and watch to apprehend and stay her.” Upon finally landing across the Channel, Catherine and her female servants “were appareled like the women of the Netherlands with hoods” and she and her husband made their way to safety in Cleves.134 With her journey into exile, Catherine both escaped the clutches of the zealously-Catholic Mary I and firmly established her own reputation as a Protestant heroine.

John Foxe emphasized throughout his tale that Catherine Willoughby was in immediate danger of arrest and possible death. By February 1555, Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley had been executed in the aftermath of Wyatt’s Rebellion. Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer were both imprisoned and condemned to death for heresy – within a year of Catherine’s flight both men were executed. As the widowed Duchess of Suffolk, Catherine had made no secret of her religious beliefs after the death of Henry VIII and was closely associated with Edward Seymour, John Dudley, and their supporters during Edward VI’s reign. She had also made a dangerous

enemy out of her own godfather, Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. Mary I had released 
Gardiner from the Tower, along with Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and other conservative 
supporters. The queen restored Gardiner to his bishopric and made him Lord Chancellor. 
According to Foxe, Gardiner called Richard Bertie to London in early 1554 so that he could 
interrogate him regarding his religious beliefs and those of his wife. The bishop believed the 
Duchess of Suffolk to be “one of his ancient enemies” and therefore, in Foxe’s estimation, 
“devised… a holy practice of revenge.” In their interview, the bishop asked Bertie, “I pray you, 
if I may ask the question of my lady your wife, is she now as ready to set up the mass, as she was 
lately to pull it down?” Bertie responded:

   Touching the setting up of mass, which she learned not only by strong persuasions 
of divers excellent learned men, but by universal consent and order whole six 
years past, inwardly to abhor, if she should outwardly allow, she should both to 
Christ show herself a false Christian, and to her prince a masking subject. You 
know, my lord, one by judgment reformed, is more worth than a thousand 
transformed temporizers. To force a confession of religion by mouth, contrary to 
that in the heart, worketh damnation, where salvation is pretended.

Gardiner went on, “But now, she is to return from a new to an ancient religion: wherein, when 
she made me her gossip, she was as earnest as any.” He then implored Bertie to convince his 
wife to renounce her Protestant faith, saying it would “be a marvelous grief to the prince of 
Spain, and to all the nobility that shall come with him, when they shall find but two noble 
personages of the Spanish race within this land, the queen, and my lady your wife: and one of 
them gone from the faith.”135 Instead of capitulating and abandoning their Protestant beliefs, both 
Bertie and Catherine, knowing that “extremity might follow,” decided to “pass the seas” – or flee 
into exile on the Continent.

135 Ibid., 569-571.
While John Foxe’s tale of Catherine Willoughby’s sensational expedition is engaging, it is unlikely that she was in mortal danger in 1555, nor would she necessarily have been at any point during Mary’s reign. While the queen and her government did execute some prominent individuals, Mary usually preferred to pardon all but the most intractable Protestants (such as Hugh Latimer), those she hated for personal reasons (such as Thomas Cranmer), or those who posed a political threat to her rule (such as Jane Grey). She willingly forgave most of the nobility – particularly aristocratic women with whom she had had former friendships (including both Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford). It is unlikely that Mary would have acted against Catherine Willoughby – the daughter of her mother’s only Spanish confidante – unless the duchess gave her little choice. Catherine lingered in England for over eighteen months after the queen’s accession and kept a relatively low profile. She remained secluded at her Lincolnshire estates and gave birth to her daughter in early 1554. During those months under the new Catholic regime, the duchess and her husband made thorough preparations for their relocation abroad. And, as Melissa Franklin-Harkrider points out, these plans were not surreptitious. Catherine informed many of her associates of her intentions, initiated a public sale of the furniture from Grimsthorpe, and arranged for her estates to be administered by a trusted servant. If the Marian government had wanted to stop Catherine from escaping abroad, it would not have been difficult to detain her prior to her departure. On the contrary, it seems that Mary and her advisors allowed the Duchess of Suffolk and her family to leave the country, and perhaps – as David Baldwin argues – they even “felt more relief than frustration.”


Catherine Willoughby’s decision to flee into exile was likely due to a combination of factors. Many of her friends and acquaintances also made the journey into exile, including scholars like John Foxe, Thomas Becon, John Cheke, Miles Coverdale, as well as other prominent Tudor women like Catherine Carey, Lady Knollys (Princess Elizabeth’s maternal cousin). As Franklin-Harkrider demonstrates, Catherine Willoughby and her fellow exiles’ “responses to religious change” were “complex” and “shaped by myriad kinship and patronage relationships.” Catherine’s decision to flee England was not made based purely on her own religious fervor, but the result of negotiation and coordination with both her family and her patronage network. By 1555, Catherine’s social and economic position had changed. While she retained the honorific title of Dowager Duchess of Suffolk – a title she shared with her stepdaughter, Frances Grey (née Brandon) – the loss of her sons, Henry and Charles, meant that she no longer had a dukedom to safeguard. While her children with Richard Bertie would receive her own Willoughby lands and titles, at the time of her departure, only her one-year-old daughter, Susan, stood to inherit. While Catherine may not have had reason to fear for her life, apprehension about the possibility of persecution and maltreatment may have contributed to her decision. Certainly, she was unenthusiastic about the new queen’s swift return to Catholicism and likely wanted to avoid the hypocrisy of public conformity again.

Catherine’s deliberate and public decision to travel into exile, along with her unhurried preparations for the journey, indicate that John Foxe’s conviction that the Marian government was out for the duchess’s blood is exaggerated. Because his Acts and Monuments, first published

139 Franklin-Harkrider, Women, Reform and Community, 6, 104.
in 1563, is a martyrology and explicitly intended to glorify English Protestants and dramatize their suffering, his take on Catherine Willoughby’s plight must naturally be read with caution. Yet an assessment of the durability and impact of Foxe’s story is more important than any discussion of its plausibility. The *Book of Martyrs* was a bestseller and Catherine’s story, which received its own chapter in the work, made her an immediate Protestant heroine.

In the late sixteenth century, Thomas Deloney produced a ballad titled *The Most Rare and Excellent History of the Dutchesse of Suffolkes Calamity*. Deloney specified that the ballad was “to the tune of Queene Dido.” The intended comparison between Dido and Catherine is evident. The legendary queen Dido was forced to flee her native city of Tyre in order to escape her brother’s tyrannical rule. Leaving with a band of loyal followers, she sailed to the coast of Africa, where she founded the prosperous city of Carthage. The tyranny from which Catherine was fleeing was obvious to Deloney – under Mary I’s reign, “Smithfield was then with faggots fill’d, and many places more besides.” The Duchess of Suffolk, “whose life likewise the tyrant sought,” sensed the danger and therefore “with her nurse, husband, and child, in poor array,” fled from London. Their escape was divinely-ordained, for “God provided so that day, that they took ship and sail’d away.” Deloney followed the general tone and order of events from Foxe’s account. In both versions, Catherine and her family endured a multitude of disasters, including traveling on foot in inclement weather, being threatened by a mob and pursued by Catholic forces, nearly misplacing their daughter, losing their money and horses to thieves, and begging for shelter. Eventually, the Duchess of Suffolk – “a Princess of great blood,” according to Deloney – found sanctuary in Poland. The ballad ends with the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign and the glorious return of Protestant exiles like Catherine:

For when Queen Mary was [deceased]  
the Duchess home return’d again,
Who was of sorry quite released,
by Queen Elizabeth’s happy reign,
Whose godly life and piety,
We all may praise continually.  

Both Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* and Deloney’s ballad were widely read in early Stuart England, and therefore had a significant impact on the development of Catherine Willoughby’s historical reputation as a Protestant heroine. Thomas Drue’s 1631 play, *The Life of the Duchess of Suffolk*, closely follows both accounts. Richard Dutton and Steven Galbraith argue that *The Book of Martyrs* and *The Dutchesse of Suffolkes Calamatie*, as well as Drue’s play are “tragicomic histories.” In all three works, Catherine and her family narrowly averted capture or death thanks in large part to divine intervention, creating a “breathless cycle of impending disaster and miraculous escape.” Drue’s debt to Deloney is obvious in the play. For example, both works mention “Bloody Bonner” as one of Catherine Willoughby’s chief enemies in England, despite the fact that there is no evidence of Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London having any interaction with the Duchess of Suffolk. Both works also depict the beginning of Elizabeth’s reign as Catherine’s salvation. In the play, the duchess is welcomed back by the Protestant queen and her advisors with open arms as “her highness’s nearest and most dearest subject” and Richard Bertie is offered the post of “Chief Secretary of State.” In reality, Catherine Willoughby was disappointed with Elizabeth I’s religious moderation even before her return from exile, and her friend, William Cecil – not her husband – became the queen’s new Secretary. Yet just as Deloney ended his play praising the Virgin Queen’s reign, Catherine’s

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final lines in Drue’s play read as: “Through the [city] to Whitehall to her grace, that I may see my loving sovereign’s face.”¹⁴⁴ In both works, Elizabeth is England’s liberator. Drue was likely even more eager to draw associations between Elizabeth’s early reign and her restoration of Protestantism with his own time. Catherine Willoughby’s situation as an exile for her faith closely mirrored the troubles of James I’s daughter, Elizabeth, and her Protestant husband, Frederick V, Elector Palatine, who were forced by the Catholic troops of the Holy Roman Emperor to flee Bohemia into exile. With the ensuing Thirty Years’ War well underway by the 1630s, the play’s allusion to the trials of James’s daughter, named after her godmother, Elizabeth I, was evident.¹⁴⁵

The tale of Catherine Willoughby’s adventures as a Protestant exile under Mary I and her exultant return to England therefore served as a medium through which Protestant authors in the Elizabethan and Stuart eras could praise the Protestant establishment. The Book of Martyrs and the works that followed it also transformed her into a Protestant heroine – one who represented the danger, suffering, and eventual triumph of others who endured the Marian regime. Nineteenth-century authors continued to view the Duchess of Suffolk through this lens. For example, in her history of the Bertie family, Lady Georgina Bertie wrote that the Duchess was a “persecuted lady” and that “so great [did] her danger become, that it was no longer possible to make open preparations for departure, without calling on her head the lurking malice of her enemy; and she had no chance but in secrecy and silence.”¹⁴⁶ Lady Georgina views the Bertie family as worthy of its family crest – “the palm or date-tree, the emblem not only of victory, but

¹⁴⁴ Drue, The Duchess of Suffolk, 159.
of virtue.” She also considers Catherine and her husband, who suffered danger and exile “for conscience sake,” as representative of these qualities.147

Despite Catherine Willoughby’s established reputation as a Protestant heroine, nineteenth-century historian Agnes Strickland wrote critically of the Duchess of Suffolk. She maintained that Catherine had a “worldly spirit and sordid temper.”148 Strickland’s condemnation seems to have stemmed from Catherine’s management of the wardship of Catherine Parr’s orphaned daughter, Mary Seymour. After the death of her mother, the queen dowager, and the execution of her father, Thomas Seymour, the infant Mary passed first from the care of her aunt and uncle, the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, at Sion, to the Duchess of Suffolk at Grimsthorpe. Catherine Willoughby seems not to have relished taking charge of her former mistress’s baby, particularly when the pension promised by Edward Seymour never arrived. The infant was the daughter of a former queen, and her household was therefore expensive to maintain. The Duchess of Suffolk wrote to William Cecil in August 1548 to protest “what a very beggar I am.” One of the main causes of this poverty was that “the queen’s child hath lain, and yet doth lie, at my house, with her company about her, wholly at my charges.” She then complained that Anne Stanhope, “my lady Somerset,” had promised on behalf of her husband “certain nursery plate should be delivered with the child,” as well as “plate and stuff as was there in the nursery.” Nonetheless, it seems that assistance from the Lord Protector was not forthcoming.149 While Strickland does not hesitate to denigrate Edward Seymour and Anne Stanhope once again as Mary’s “rapacious uncle Somerset and his pitiless wife,” she does not excuse Catherine Willoughby from blame. She sees the infant Mary as “a helpless burden” thrown “on the

147 Ibid., vi.
149 The British Library, Lansdowne MS 2/17: 17
sufferance of a forgetful friend.” Later, she also refers to the duchess as “heartless,” for she “grudged a shelter and food to [Catherine Parr’s] only child.”

Agnes Strickland was also less impressed with Catherine Willoughby’s flight into exile during Mary’s reign, and attributed her actions to personal, rather than spiritual, motivations. She writes, “This lady is placed as a victim in the martyrologies (!) but there is something suppressed in that statement, since ladies, who were farther from the ancient church than ever the duchess of Suffolk was… were in offices about the queen’s person… the inference is reasonable, that love, not religion, was the cause of her quarrel with queen Mary.” She argues that Catherine “was in disgrace with the queen, for marrying Master [Bertie], a man too inferior for her estate.”

This explanation is dubious, as widowed noblewomen sometimes remarried beneath their rank. While contemporaries did sometimes view such women’s choice of spouse as “imprudent if not positively disgraceful,” it is unlikely that such disapproval would have been enough to compel Catherine into exile. As will be discussed in the next chapter, Anne Stanhope made the same choice after her own husband’s death. Marrying such men allowed widows to retain much of their social and economic independence. As with her assessment of Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford, Agnes Strickland’s views on Catherine Willoughby were informed by her Victorian worldview. The Duchess of Suffolk’s lack of Christian charity with regard to the orphaned child of her friend and former mistress, combined with her brazen decision to marry beneath her noble status, meant that Catherine fell short of Victorian standards for the ideal woman.

In the twentieth century, Catherine Willoughby’s life received treatment in two historical biographies. In the lengthy *A Woman of the Tudor Age*, published in 1930, Lady Cecilie Goff writes that the duchess “did not shrink from asserting her own religious principles, regardless of

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151 Ibid., 5: 282.
the consequences.”¹⁵² Evelyn Read’s My Lady Suffolk, published in 1963, examined Catherine’s life from a romanticized perspective. In her assessment of the duchess’s personality and character, Read writes, “In an age when women were expected to be seen and not heard, Catherine was seen for her beauty and heard for her intelligence and wit, her spiritual integrity and zeal. What she believed in she stood up and worked for, but she would accept nothing simply because it was the custom.”¹⁵³ Like those authors before her, Read takes up Foxe’s story of Catherine’s flight into exile and embellishes the details:

Smithfield, where heretics were burned, was not very far from the Barbican, and when there was an execution, the heavy air was leaden with smoke, a grim reminder to Catherine of the fate that might be in wait for her… At thirty-four years of age, Catherine of Suffolk, who had never in her life considered the consequences of anything she might do or say, was undergoing the most rigid self-discipline. Her very life depended upon how she withstood this test…

Catherine Willoughby had, of course, lived through the threat of persecution during the last years of Henry VIII’s reign. Additionally, as discussed previously, it is doubtful that her life was in real danger during Mary I’s reign.

Five Women of the English Reformation, written in 2001 by the Episcopal priest, Paul F. M. Zahl, assesses the lives and religious legacies of five Protestant Englishwomen: Anne Boleyn, Anne Askew, Catherine Parr, Jane Grey, and Catherine Willoughby. Zahl explains that his work “is not a biographical survey,” but rather a “theological perspective.” The book spends most of its time venerating the five women. Zahl expounds early on, “A Christian of any time and place will find herself or himself to be a soul mate with each of these women within the impasses in which they found themselves.”¹⁵⁴ With regard to Catherine Willoughby, Zahl unsurprisingly

¹⁵² Lady Cecilie Goff, A Woman of the Tudor Age (London, John Murray, 1930), 328.
¹⁵⁴ Zahl, Five Women of the English, 6, 8.
writes that her “hour of glory came during her incredible adventures in Holland, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania, to which she fled to escape the agents of Mary.”\textsuperscript{155} Zahl provides a meticulous accounting of the same story told in the \textit{Book of Martyrs} – complete with foul weather, lost servants, and Catholic soldiers. Catherine and her husband were “truly without name or language or protection or friend.” They finally arrived in Poland, according to Zahl, “somewhat under the conditions in which Brigham Young finally got to the Salt Lake.”\textsuperscript{156} Although he depicts Catherine as a cantankerous Puritan during the Elizabethan era, Zahl sees the duchess’s life as inextricably connected with the cause of Protestantism in England. He writes, “[Catherine’s story] ends, within history ‘after the flesh’, in 1688 with the formal triumph of Protestantism in England.”\textsuperscript{157}

Modern historians are in fairly unanimous agreement about Catherine’s role as a Protestant heroine and as a female exemplar. Alison Plowden writes of the Duchess of Suffolk:

A great lady, a great character and ‘a valiant spirit’, her influence, patronage and tireless devotion to the cause of the gospel had made an important contribution to the early growth and development of English Protestantism. Although no trained scholar herself, her piety and her forceful personality combined to give her a place among the leaders of those zealously evangelical, fearsomely erudite ladies who were such a vital feature of that period of social and intellectual ferment.\textsuperscript{158}

Robert Hutchinson describes the Duchess of Suffolk as “lively and irrepressible,” as well as “mischievous.”\textsuperscript{159} For Antonia Fraser, she is “something of a tigress.”\textsuperscript{160} William Seymour, the Seymour family biographer, pronounces her “shrewd and thoroughly likeable.”\textsuperscript{161} Catherine

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\item\textsuperscript{155} Ib\textit{id.}, 75.
\item\textsuperscript{156} Ib\textit{id.}, 81-83.
\item\textsuperscript{157} Ib\textit{id.}, 90.
\item\textsuperscript{158} Plowden, \textit{Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk}, 185.
\item\textsuperscript{159} Robert Hutchinson, \textit{The Last Days of Henry VIII: Conspiracies, Treason and Heresy at the Court of the Dying Tyrant} (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005), 166.
\item\textsuperscript{160} Fraser, \textit{The Wives of Henry VIII}, 378.
\item\textsuperscript{161} Seymour, \textit{Ordeal by Ambition}, 338.
\end{enumerate}
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Parr’s biographer, Susan James, compares the Duchess of Suffolk to Henry VIII’s sixth queen, finding both women to have “romantic natures,” “hard-headed yet passionate temperament[s],” and “a lively sense of humor and a strong streak of no nonsense practicality.” Of course, both women also shared a “mutual commitment to the new religion.”

Another biographer of the queen, Linda Porter, depicts Catherine as a “zealous” reformer, who was “attractive, outspoken and opinionated.” In her examination of nine “women of action” in Tudor England, Pearl Hogrefe portrays the duchess as “a vigorous individualist,” who “proved her integrity when she refused to compromise but risked property and life in exile.” Leanda de Lisle’s assessment of Catherine Willoughby is even more effusive – “Blonde, blue-eyed, and charming when she wished to be, Katherine Suffolk was one of the most remarkable women of her time. Her temper and caustic wit were legendary… In the superficial world of the court, her contemporaries found her unusual directness and honesty both unnerving and attractive. She said what she thought, and what she thought was usually interesting and sometimes shocking.”

Catherine Willoughby’s most recent biographer, David Baldwin, acknowledges the general reverence for the Duchess of Suffolk, pointing out, “Foxe’s account of her sufferings for the Protestant cause and the adulatory opinions of her expressed by some of her co-religionists all need to be used with caution.” The most thorough examination of Catherine Willoughby’s experience as a Marian exile, Melissa Franklin-Harkrider’s *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England*, focuses on the duchess’s kinship and patronage network, both in her

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162 James, *Catherine Parr*, 128.
163 Linda Porter, *Katherine the Queen: The Remarkable Life of Katherine Parr, the Last Wife of Henry VIII* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2010), 240.
native Lincolnshire, and in its uprooted form in exile on the Continent.\textsuperscript{167} Her chapter on Catherine’s time as a religious refugee emphasizes her ability to construct a religious community with other exiles, rather than the motivations for her flight or the consequences of this decision. Franklin-Harkrider makes clear that “family ties and patronage bonds were influential in shaping exiles’ decisions to relocate.”\textsuperscript{168}

Catherine Willoughby’s marriage to a fellow reformer likely contributed to her decision to become a Marian exile. With her sons, Henry and Charles Brandon, dead and the Suffolk dukedom removed from her care, Catherine’s autonomy, as well as the strength of her patronage network, allowed her flee abroad and avoid Catholic conformity. Anne Stanhope, who, as will be discussed in the next chapter, owed her freedom and the restoration of her family’s position to Mary I, chose to remain in England. While Mary was responsible for the execution of Jane Guildford’s husband, the Duchess of Northumberland’s relationship with the queen and her circle allowed her to similarly save the rest of her family from ruin. Unlike Catherine, neither Anne nor Jane had any practical motivation for going into exile, and religious enthusiasm could not be incentive alone, or many more Protestants who remained in England during Mary’s reign would have instead followed the Duchess of Suffolk into exile. Yet, whatever effect John Foxe and centuries of Protestant authors have had on her historical legacy, it cannot be denied that Catherine Willoughby was a devoted and fervent Protestant during the early days of the English Reformation. Catherine’s undeniable religious dedication, combined with the vigor of her patronage network and her flattering portrayal in Foxe’s \textit{Book of Martyrs}, helped to construct her historical image as a Protestant heroine. Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford instead lost their standing as reformist leaders when they acquiesced to Mary I’s Catholic rule.

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\textsuperscript{167} Franklin-Harkrider, \textit{Women, Reform and Community}, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid., 111.
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Catherine, Anne, and Jane each acquired their own historical reputation that was based in both myth and in early modern stereotypes. While Catherine’s decision to become a Marian exile transformed her into the “Protestant heroine,” Anne and Jane became the “intolerable wife” and the “wicked mother-in-law” respectively. The Duchess of Suffolk’s story was used by contemporaries and later writers as an example for Protestant enthusiasts and as a medium through which they could praise the Protestant establishment. Contrastingly, most writers interpreted the influence that the Duchesses of Somerset and Northumberland had over their husbands and over the political events of the early 1550s to have a decidedly negative influence. Such misrepresentations of these historical figures have persisted throughout the centuries and still appear in works of modern scholarship. The examples of Catherine, Anne, and Jane make clear that each generation – while eager to discover its own interpretation of historical figures and events – in undoubtedly beholden to the interpretations and judgments of the past.

According to Paul Zahl, Catherine Willoughby “ventured everything on her religion and took extreme risks to stay the course.” In contrast, he writes, the majority of other high-ranking Protestant women abandoned their faith the moment Mary I took the throne. He points out that both Jane Guildford and her husband “went back to their roots, returning to Catholicism when the world came strong against them.” Yet religion and political power were both relatively fluid in the mid-Tudor era. An individual’s unwillingness to sacrifice life or livelihood for his or her faith does not necessarily indicate a lack of Protestant fervor. In fact, many of those Protestants who had supported Edward VI’s religious reforms remained in England during Mary’s reign. The great majority of those living in England under the Tudors were more

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willing to adapt to the continual religious changes than to remain inflexible and take a stand on principle. Even Catherine Willoughby was hesitant to seek martyrdom. While she later disapproved of Elizabeth I’s religious moderation, she still backed down when faced with royal displeasure. In March 1580, the Duchess of Suffolk wrote to the queen’s favorite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, humbling herself after appearing to have criticized the queen over the matter of religion. Catherine wrote:

I thank God, I am not the beginn [that] the shame will rest where it should. But I lament that I have deserved no better of such good lady, as hath given so [serious] judgment of me as the loss of my head… But He that rules all and knows all, I trust will move Her Majesty’s heart to think no worse of me for any such words, than she hath found me, and so, by God’s grace, shall find me to the end.

It was no secret that the Duchess of Suffolk objected to Elizabeth’s via media. Before returning to England, she wrote to William Cecil in March 1559, that “there is no fear of innovation in restoring old good law and repealing new evil; but it is to be feared men have so long worn the Gospel slopewise that they will not gladly have it again straight to their legs. Christ’s plain coast without seam is fairer to the clear eyed than all the jaggs of Germany.” She ended her letter with a plea that her friend “will only seeks Him as His elect and chosen vessel ought to do.”

William Cecil had already been appointed as the queen’s principal secretary, and Catherine was therefore making her criticism known to one of the most highest-ranking members of the queens’ government. However, when her protests crossed a line twenty years later, the Duchess of Suffolk humbled herself – as so many had before her – rather than face royal wrath.

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172 A transcript of this letter can be found in Baldwin, Henry VIII’s Last Love, 18-19.
173 SP, Elizabeth I: 12/3, f. 9.
Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford all promoted the Protestant cause throughout the late 1540s and early 1550s. However, when faced with crises, each woman worked to mitigate the consequences and make decisions that furthered her own interests and those of her family. In these cases – and especially for Anne and Jane – family concerns existed alongside and even surpassed religious considerations. As important figures within influential aristocratic families, Catherine, Anne, and Jane drew upon the personal and political connections they built at court in order to protect their families during times of crisis.
CHAPTER SIX. CRISIS AND SURVIVAL

The Downfalls of Somerset and Northumberland

On October 14, 1549, after it became clear that Edward VI’s government had lost faith in his leadership, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset was escorted to the Tower. Meanwhile, his rival and erstwhile ally, John Dudley, Earl of Warwick stepped into his place and soon took the reins of power into his own hands. Throughout her husband’s imprisonment, Anne Stanhope worked to achieve his release. She petitioned vigorously on her husband’s behalf by writing to William Paget, asking him to favor her husband in such a “miserable unnatural time” since she believed him to be “sore grieved at the heart.”¹ Anne also used her relationship with the Dudley family to campaign for her husband’s freedom. Her acquaintance with Jane Guildford, Countess of Warwick originated from their days in Catherine Parr’s household. Anne used this connection to obtain audiences with Dudley in order to plead for her husband’s release. In December 1549, Francis van der Delft wrote to Charles V that the Duchess of Somerset was “always in [Dudley’s] house” and, before long, Dudley had been “won over by the Protector’s wife.”² While van der Delft did not explicitly state Jane Guildford’s involvement, it is likely that Anne was welcomed repeatedly into the Dudleys’ home because of her connection to Jane. The continued attachment between the two women soon became evident.

In February 1550, thanks in large part to Anne Stanhope’s efforts (and perhaps Jane Guildford’s mediation), Edward VI’s government released her husband from the Tower. Despite losing his position as Lord Protector, Edward Seymour retained his dukedom and his original place on the Privy Council. Dudley became Lord President of the Privy Council, preferring to

² Martin Hume and Royall Tyler, eds., Calendar of State Papers, Spain, 9: 489.
decline the more controversial position of Lord Protector. The Duchess of Somerset immediately worked to further strengthen her family’s connection to the Dudley family, using her connection to the Countess of Warwick in order to accomplish this aim. Anne and Jane organized the marriage of their children, Anne Seymour and John Dudley – the eldest daughter and eldest son of the two families. The wedding took place in June 1550, four months after the Duke of Somerset’s release from the Tower. Jehan Scheyfve wrote to Charles V, “It is said that the two mothers have made the match.” Anne Stanhope and Jane Guildford utilized the relationships they had made at court by working together to heal the estrangement of their two families.

Female networks were essential an essential aspect of Tudor politics. Such alliances between women created emotional and material relationships and could enhance the political power of women’s families. During times of crisis, aristocratic women could deploy “those feminine political networks seen at more stable moments only in the exchange of gifts, the arranging of marriages and so on.” When noblemen were imprisoned for treason, their wives often intervened with those in power on their behalf. When possible, they appealed to the monarch in person. Although Anne Stanhope was unable to submit her plea to Edward VI, her nephew by marriage, she was clearly attempting to mobilize the alliances she had built with other aristocratic women and their families on behalf of her husband. Anne’s utilization of her connections to women like Jane Guildford and Anne Preston, Lady Paget allowed her to function in a true political capacity for her family during various moments of crisis, beginning in 1549.

3 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 10: 98.
Despite the significance of a Seymour-Dudley marriage alliance, “the Earl of Warwick was not present” at the union – perhaps indicating that Anne’s efforts at a reconciliation were not altogether successful. Tensions increased in the spring of 1551, when Scheyfve reported that “the Duke and my Lord of Warwick fell into a dispute in open Council, but the matter was soon calmed down.” Furthermore, “a certain gentleman of the Duke’s household said to someone else at Court that his master was better qualified to govern than Warwick and, besides, ought to be preferred to him because he was the King’s uncle.” At a ceremony of the Order of the Garter that year, John Dudley attempted to diminish Edward Seymour’s claim of kinship to the king. To Somerset’s title of “uncle to the King of England,” Dudley inserted the key phrase, “on his mother’s side.”

Unhappy with the political situation, Edward Seymour began to plan John Dudley’s downfall. By October 1551, Dudley – now the Duke of Northumberland – was aware of the plot and had Seymour arrested again. Anne Stanhope seems to have participated actively in her husband’s attempted coup against Dudley’s administration. Once his conspiracy was uncovered, the Duke of Somerset commanded his wife and her brother, Michael Stanhope, “to meddle no more in talk” with Henry Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel – a fellow conspirator. Anne’s enthusiasm for her husband’s cause failed to restore him to his former position. Dudley realized Anne’s political value, and this time she followed her husband to the Tower, where she remained for two years.

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7 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 10: 98.
8 Ibid., 262.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., 291.
Thomas Norton, a secretary to the Duke of Somerset, wrote to Jean Calvin about the coup against his employer. Calvin, an associate and supporter of the Seymours, was concerned about the family’s fate – particularly that of the children. Norton assured Calvin that the Seymour daughters were safe. Anne Seymour remained married to John Dudley’s heir. Four other daughters – Margaret, Jane, Mary, and Catherine – were committed “to the care of their aunt,” Elizabeth Seymour, the widow of Gregory Cromwell. The youngest daughter, also named Elizabeth Seymour, went to stay with another aunt, Dorothy Seymour. Edward VI provided for his cousins by allotting them each one hundred marks a year for their livelihood. The three boys – Edward, Henry, and another Edward – came under the care of William Paulet, the Lord High Treasurer. The elder Edward, the duke’s heir, was aged thirteen and Norton reported that he was “the living image of his father.” All of the Seymour children were now wards of the king. Norton also wrote to Calvin of Anne Stanhope’s captivity, saying that “some parties are of opinion that she was not imprisoned for having committed a crime, but to prevent her from committing one.”

Norton’s comments illuminate Anne’s political influence. Imprisoned, the Duchess of Somerset could not work for her husband’s cause as she had three years previously.

Although the Duke and Duchess of Somerset were prisoners in the Tower, Edward VI’s administration provided the king’s uncle and aunt with a comfortable confinement. Each had three attendants to care for their needs. They were also given fine clothing, furniture, dishes, and food. Among the items requested were a pair of velvet shoes and a velvet cap for the duke, and for the duchess a gown of black velvet edged with garnets, as well as silver dishes and silver

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spoons. Henry Ellis writes that “grandeur in a dungeon is not often desired by a captive.” However, lavish confinement for illustrious prisoners was not unheard of. In May 1536, when Henry VIII sent Anne Boleyn to the Tower, he allowed his wife to reside in the lodgings she had used for her coronation. Jane Grey’s time in the Tower during Queen Mary’s reign was similarly comfortable. Lady Jane lived in the gentleman-gaoler’s house and had three gentlewomen as well as a manservant to serve her. Yet despite their lavish imprisonments, both queens met their untimely end in the Tower.

A jury of his peers soon tried the former Lord Protector, and he pleaded not guilty to the charge of treason. Despite Edward Seymour’s declaration of innocence, his nephew ordered his execution in January 1552. Edward VI recorded his uncle’s death in his chronicle with characteristic indifference – “The Duke of Somerset had his head cut off upon Tower Hill between eight and nine o’clock in the morning.” With the death of Edward Seymour, her husband and confidante for nearly two decades, Anne probably believed that her own death was inevitable as well. Days after the duke’s execution, she requested that John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester and the duke’s former chaplain, be given permission to speak with her “for the settling of her conscience.” Around this time Jehan Scheyfve reported, “the Duchess, Somerset’s spouse, will soon go the same way [as her husband].” However, Anne Stanhope escaped execution and remained in the Tower for the rest of her nephew’s reign.

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15 Ellis, Original Letters, 215.
20 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 10: 453.
After the Duke of Somerset’s death, John Dudley and his administration seemed to have believed that Anne Stanhope was no longer a threat. While nevertheless a prisoner, the duchess’s life remained relatively comfortable and she began to receive visitors. In June 1552, Elizabeth Bourchier, now the widowed Lady Page, was able to visit her daughter in the Tower. During Easter of 1553, Bishop Hooper called on Anne once again. That same year, Dudley took £100 “out of the profits arising of the lands of the late Duke of Somerset” and sent it to the Tower for the duchess’s use. Anne remained a prisoner for nearly two years. Throughout her imprisonment, she maintained a relatively comfortable lifestyle and had intermittent contact with the outside world.

Although a resident of the Tower, Anne Stanhope was not an eyewitness to any of the events surrounding the Dudleys’ attempts to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne in 1553. Jane Guildford moved into the Tower with her son and daughter-in-law after Lady Jane Grey’s proclamation as queen. All three were detained there following Lady Jane’s deposition. However, Mary’s government soon released the Duchess of Northumberland. Charles V’s ambassadors in England wrote on July 29 that she had “been let out of prison sooner than was expected.” According to their reports, Jane then set out to intercept the new queen on her way to London, hoping “to move her to compassion towards her children.” Mary refused to receive her and instead ordered her to return to the capital.

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23 Strype, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 2.2: 254-255.
24 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 11: 106.
25 Ibid., 11: 120.
26 Ibid., 11: 126.
John Dudley’s biographer, David Loades, argues that Mary harbored a “particular animosity against the Dudleys,” and that “it was both convenient and congenial to her to place the weight of blame on the duke [of Northumberland], and also fitted comfortably with popular prejudice.” John Dudley soon became a scapegoat for what Mary viewed as “the disgraceful aberrations of the previous four years,” and his family was left to endure the consequences.\(^{27}\) Loades emphasizes that the Dudley family’s recovery after the Duke of Northumberland’s execution was slow. He attributes this to Mary’s antipathy and the fact that, while John Dudley recanted his Protestant faith in his final hours, the rest of his family did not.\(^{28}\)

Regardless of the new queen’s fury, Jane Guildford stepped back into court politics in an attempt to save her husband’s life and the rest of her family from complete ruin. Unable to obtain an audience with the queen, Jane immediately sought out those female contacts at court who still had influence under the new reign. Like Anne Stanhope, Jane turned to William Paget and his wife, Anne Preston. At some point in August 1553, she wrote to Lady Paget, asking that “for the love you bear to God forget me not.” Jane wasted no time making her request clear:

> Make my lady [Marchioness] of Exeter [Gertrude Courtenay] my good lady & to remember me to Mistress [Susan] Clarencius to continue as she hath begun for me: & good madam desire your lord [William Paget] as he may do: in speaking for my husband’s life: in way of charity I crave him to do it madame I have held up my head for my great heaviness of heart that all the world knows cannot be little… good madame desire my lord to be good lord unto my [poor] sons.\(^{29}\)

Jane Guildford perhaps felt that enlisting the assistance of Gertrude Courtenay and Susan Clarencius would serve her cause well, as they were responsible for the queen’s pardon of

\(^{28}\) Ibid., 272.
\(^{29}\) A full transcript of this letter is printed in Gunn, “A Letter of Jane, Duchess of Northumberland,” 1270-1271.
William Parr, Marquess of Northampton – John Dudley’s ally and co-conspirator. While Jane’s allies at court could do nothing to save her husband, her pleas do seem to have had an effect on the treatment of the rest of the Dudley family under Mary’s reign.

John Dudley was beheaded for treason on August 22, 1553. Within a month, Mary I – likely feeling that her political revenge had been sufficiently exacted – began to ease her hostility towards the Dudley family. The Spanish ambassadors reported that Jane’s sons would not be executed like their father, and that the queen had provided the Duchess of Northumberland with “a furnished house and a pension of 300 crowns, besides the enjoyment of her own private possessions.”

Mary’s government officially pardoned Jane Guildford on May 2, 1554. While she was required to surrender much of her property a month later, the Crown gave her control of manors in Warwickshire and Staffordshire for life.

Mary was perhaps inclined to treat Jane with some leniency owing to their personal connection dating back to her father’s reign. The Duchess of Northumberland had treated Mary with some consideration during Edward VI’s reign, entertaining her during visits to her brother’s court and accompanying her when she withdrew to her private chambers. The duchess had also previously acted as an intermediary for the princess with her husband, as referenced in a letter written by John Dudley. In it, he explained that, after “having seen a letter lately, directed to my poor wife” he was reminded of his “bounden duty” to “your Grace.” Mary’s letter to the Duchess of Northumberland concerned her conflict with her brother, Edward VI, over her right to celebrate the Catholic mass with members of her household. She wrote to the duchess, hoping

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30 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 11: 204.
31 Calendar of State Papers, Relating to England and Spain, 11: 204.
33 Ibid., 128.
34 Ibid., 11: 8.
that the duke would “be a mean to help” the princess’s “said servants,” who had been imprisoned for their Catholic obstinacy.\footnote{L. Howard, ed., \textit{A Collection of Letters from the Original Manuscripts of Many Great Princes, Great Personages and Statesmen} (London: E. Withers, 1753), 160-161.} Dudley did no more than promise to forward Mary’s suit to her royal brother, but Jane Guildford’s intercession seems to have at least elicited a reply from the Duke of Northumberland. The officers of the princess’s household were eventually released from their imprisonment a few months later.\footnote{Ives, \textit{Lady Jane Grey}, 92.} The princess’s appeal to the Duchess of Northumberland mirrored Jane’s own pleas to the women in her network in the early days of Mary’s reign. Because of her history with the new queen, the duchess had every reason to think that she would at least entertain her suit on behalf of her family.

In addition to using Lady Paget to make contact with Gertrude Courtenay and Susan Clarencius – Englishwomen who were intimates of Mary I – Jane Guildford utilized her family’s association with Spanish diplomats. The most convincing evidence for the Dudleys’ Spanish connection comes from the Duchess of Northumberland’s will, written in her own hand either in late 1554 or early 1555 – less than two years after her husband’s death. Jane left bequests to Ruy Gomez de Silva, Philip II’s advisor, and Gutierre Lopez Padilla, his steward. Jane left two of her most unique and expensive possessions to Spaniards. Her “book clock” went to the Spanish writer and diplomat, Diego Mendoza, and her “green parrot” went to the Duchess of Alva, wife of one of Philip’s most powerful advisors. Aside from listing her numerous material bequests, Jane made it clear in her will why she was singling out many of the men and women around the new king consort. She wrote hoping that the Duchess of Alva would be “a good Lady to her Children, as she has begun” and that the gentlemen of Philip’s Privy Chamber would “for God’s sake to continue the good lords of my sons in their needs.” Unsurprisingly, Jane singled out
Diego Mendoza, who had known the Dudleys for some time and was a godfather to Guildford Dudley, as the main advocate behind her struggle to save her family. She pointed out the “great friendship he hath showed me in making me have many friends about the king’s majesty as I have found.” She also encouraged him to continue his support of her children, for whom “he showed himself like a father and brother.”

In the weeks before Jane Guildford’s death, Mary I still had not officially pardoned the duchess’s children. The threat of immediate execution no longer loomed, but they were still attainted. While her son, Guildford Dudley, met his own end alongside his wife, Jane Grey, the Duchess of Northumberland felt confident nearly a year later that her other sons would escape the same fate. In her will, she asked the queen again to pardon her children and requested that she not “consent to have any part of my will broken.” The purpose of her will, according to Jane, was to “have my debts paid and my children and servants considered.” She stated that she was leaving her children, and especially her three sons, “all to the King’s Magesy and her Highness behind me.”

Mary I seems to have taken the duchess’s final wishes to heart. The sons who outlived her – Ambrose, Robert, and Henry – received their pardons a week after her death. They eventually obtained their inheritance rights and Ambrose and Robert eventually became members of the peerage. Mary Dudley, wife of Henry Sidney, maintained an amicable relationship with the queen, and named her first child after his godfather, Philip of Spain. The Dudleys flourished during Elizabeth I’s reign – both Robert and Mary served as the new queen’s close confidantes.

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38 Ibid.
39 Loades, John Dudley, 272, 281-282.
In 1746, Arthur Collins wrote that Jane Guildford “was the greatest example in fortitude of mind in adversity, and of modest virtue; and whose wisdom, care, and prudence, restored her overthrown house, even in a reign of cruelty and tyranny.” Jane’s impassioned pleas and direct action certainly turned the tide of retribution against her family. However, it took more than “fortitude” and “prudence” to accomplish this. The Duchess of Northumberland – like so many aristocratic women before her – utilized her female network during a time of crisis in order to eventually achieve pardons for herself and members of her immediate family. These networks were built through marital alliances, personal connections, and years of service at the royal court. Significantly, such networks did not always develop purely out of religious affiliation – as is exhibited by the experiences of both Jane Guildford and Anne Stanhope.

A Catholic Queen

Jane Guildford was not the only Protestant forced to come to terms with the accession of a Catholic queen. Although she had been imprisoned by John Dudley after her husband’s downfall and execution, Anne Stanhope’s association with the previous regime’s Protestant policies was undeniable. Nevertheless, Anne managed to both survive and prosper during Mary I’s reign. One of Mary’s earliest actions as queen was to release many of her Catholic supporters from the Tower, including the disgraced Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. That same day, Mary released Anne Stanhope – her friend of over three decades. The queen’s decision to release Anne reveals the strength of their personal relationship. Their friendship, which began in Catherine of Aragon’s household, overrode any religious differences between the two women and is evidence of the strength of social and political connections.

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40 Arthur Collins, ed., Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, part of the reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver’s usurpation. Written and collected by Sir Henry Sydney. London: T. Osborne, 1746), 1: p. 3 of dedication.
Anne maintained an amicable relationship with Mary and her Catholic regime. The queen restored Anne’s title as Duchess of Somerset, despite the disgrace of the duke’s execution. Anne’s eldest son, Edward Seymour, also became Earl of Hertford (one of his father’s old titles). After nearly two years in disgrace, Anne Stanhope’s family became, yet again, one of the most powerful in England. The duchess retained the use of Syon House in London, which had belonged to her late husband, in order to remain close to the court. In May 1554, the queen asked Anne to give the imperial ambassador use of Syon for the summer.41 The next year Reginald Pole, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, gave Anne a license to eat meat during Lent.42 In 1556, the queen gave Anne funds to repair Wulfhall, the old seat of the Seymour family, for her eldest son. Edward Seymour, who turned seventeen that year, was just coming into his majority and was therefore still in his mother’s custody.43 In 1558, the crown also granted Hanworth Palace in Middlesex to Anne for life, possibly in anticipation of the duchess’s second marriage.

At some point in 1558, Anne married for a second and final time. Her choice fell on Francis Newdigate, who was nine years her junior and a member of her household. Newdigate was the Duke of Somerset’s steward, and therefore well below Anne’s own social standing. However, he did have much to offer the duchess as a husband. He had been imprisoned alongside his employers in 1551, but was released not long after the Duke of Somerset’s execution. While the duchess continued her confinement in the Tower, Newdigate salvaged and supervised her family’s estates.44 His steadfast devotion to the Seymour family “was presumably a principal reason for the duchess’s acceptance of him as her second husband in a marriage

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42 The National Archives, Longleat Manuscripts. SE/VOL. IV/32. 7 March 1555. Accessed at http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/a2a/records.aspx?cat=2238-se&cid=7-3-7#7-3-7
43 *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566-1579*, 448.
which could have appeared a disparagement.” In choosing Newdigate as her second husband, Anne “adopted the course which was almost universal in former days with the most illustrious widows: she chose a protector not so much of her person as her property.” As a matriarch, she realized that marriage to someone below her position was perhaps the only way in which she could remain solely devoted to the Seymour family. Another marriage to a nobleman could have resulted in a wavering of loyalties, for she would have been expected to defer to his interests rather than her own. Additionally, at the age of fifty, Anne was beyond her child-bearing years. Marriages between noble families were usually arranged with the intent of producing an heir. Anne’s union with Newdigate, then, was ideal. His loyalty to the Seymour family was unquestioned, and her inability to produce more children was not an issue. As in Catherine Willoughby’s marriage to Richard Bertie, romantic love also likely had a part to play in Anne’s choice of husband, for when such women “had achieved the highest rank to which they aspired, they felt free to follow their inclinations when they remarried.” The Duchesses of Somerset and Suffolk were not the only aristocratic widows who chose to marry one of their servants. Frances Brandon, Duchess of Suffolk (Catherine Willoughby’s stepdaughter and Jane Grey’s mother) shocked Elizabeth I and her court when she married Adrian Stokes, her secretary and groom and a man fifteen years her junior. While many of their contemporaries disapproved of their marriages to men below their own social standing, a significant number of aristocratic widows nevertheless made this choice.

48 Ibid.
Francis Newdigate’s marriage to Anne Stanhope proved to be “the turning point in [his] life” and his almost immediate rise in political standing attests the duchess’s influence and power.\textsuperscript{49} Through her sponsorship, he served as Justice of the Peace for Middlesex from 1573 and sat in the House of Commons three separate times – in 1559 for Great Bedwyn, in 1563 for Chippenham, and in 1571 for Middlesex.\textsuperscript{50} By serving in the Commons while his stepson, the Earl of Hertford, sat in the House of Lords, Newdigate bolstered the Seymour family’s political capital. Great Bedwyn, in particular, was “a Seymour preserve,” as it was not far from Wulfhall. The duchess also held a lease of the manor of Monkton Farleigh in Chippenham.\textsuperscript{51} Although court affairs were important to elite families, their positions as great landowners encouraged participation in local government as well. As the instigator of Newdigate’s political career, Anne remained loyal to her husband and his interests. Her actions also provide insight into her role in local politics. In 1574, she complained to William Cecil, chief minister to Elizabeth I, of a slight made against Newdigate by Thomas Radclyffe, Earl of Sussex.\textsuperscript{52} While the dynamic within her new marriage was different than in her first, Anne remained her husband’s devoted supporter.

Francis Newdigate was worthy of his wife’s encouragement, for he returned the favor by looking after her own interests. Upon her release from the Tower in 1553, Anne Stanhope began to petition the crown for the return of her first husband’s estates. As a widow, she was particularly concerned with her dower and jointure. The legal dispute over the assets owed to the Duchess of Somerset lasted until 1568, when the crown agreed to pay her £10,000 in £700 yearly installments. Both Francis Newdigate and her son, Edward, were involved in the suit.\textsuperscript{53} 

\textsuperscript{49} Blatcher, “Newdigate, Francis,” 126.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 125-126.  
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 126.  
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 127.  
\textsuperscript{53} State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580, 291; Ibid., 310.
commission had also been set up in 1555 to “trace the disposal of the dead Duke’s property,” and Newdigate (as the duke’s steward) provided valuable information.\textsuperscript{54} In 1564, Newdigate wrote to William Cecil, responding to Thomas Smith’s allegations that Anne Stanhope planned to marry one of her daughters into the Swedish royal family.\textsuperscript{55} Elizabeth I, ever wary of her noble subjects’ marriages, disapproved of the match. Newdigate denied that such a marriage had ever been intended, making it clear that the Seymours were still her dutiful and obedient servants. In 1571, Newdigate wrote to Cecil again, this time asking him to intercede on the duchess’s behalf in the matter of “her interest” in Combe Nevell Manor.\textsuperscript{56} He asked that “my Lady’s grace’s yearly rent be not diminished” and explained that his wife “hath… referred the matter over unto me.”\textsuperscript{57} Anne trusted her husband with financial matters, and she knew that he was a capable manager of her estates.

Anne Stanhope’s decision to marry Francis Newdigate provides another example of the ways in which aristocratic women – specifically widows – could act to protect their own interests and those of their family during times of crisis. While Mary I released Anne from the Tower and restored her family to the upper echelons of the peerage, Anne knew more than most that royal favor and social position were never certain. After living through the reigns of multiple Tudor monarchs and the repeated transformation of religion and politics in England, Anne likely felt that a partner, as well as a companion, could help her weather any further crisis. Newdigate had worked to defend the financial interests of the Seymour family during Anne’s imprisonment, and as a member of the House of Commons, he provided a useful ally for her son, Edward, who sat in the House of Lords. Francis Newdigate and Anne Stanhope were clearly well-matched from a

\textsuperscript{54} Blatcher, “Newdigate, Francis,” 126.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580}, 241.
\textsuperscript{56} Nichols, “Anne Duchess of Somerset,” 374.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
practical perspective, but it is also likely that the two shared a commitment to the same faith. Given his service in the Duke of Somerset’s household prior to his marriage, it is probable that Newdigate identified with the tenets of Protestantism.

Catherine Willoughby and her own second husband, Richard Bertie, suited one another in the same way. After the death of her first husband and well as both of her sons, Catherine – as an heiress in her own right – likely felt that the Willoughby inheritance was in jeopardy. Unlike Anne Stanhope’s later marriage, Catherine’s union with Bertie at the age of thirty-four was capable of producing more children. Her daughter, Susan, was born in 1554, and her son, Peregrine, in 1555. Peregrine succeeded his mother as Baron Willoughby de Eresby after her death in 1580. Catherine’s second marriage therefore offered her a way to preserve her family’s titles and lands. Peregrine, named for his parents’ “peregrinations,” was born during their exile on the Continent.\(^5^8\) Perhaps because she was first mourning the death of her sons and then pregnant with her daughter throughout the tumultuous events of Edward VI’s short reign, Catherine had behaved as a bystander, mostly residing far from the royal court in her native Lincolnshire. She would have mourned the deaths of both Edward Seymour and John Dudley, but the accession of her former friend, Mary I, could only have filled her with a sense of dread.

As established in the previous chapter, Catherine Willoughby and Richard Bertie’s flight into exile during Mary’s reign was not necessarily a near-death experience. Their decision to become religious refugees was based largely on an unwillingness to compromise their Protestant faith with public acquiescence to the return of Catholicism, as well as a desire to follow the example of many others within their Protestant network. Catherine and her husband traveled to Wesel, which was under the dominion of the Duke of Cleves, to Frankfurt, and then Weinheim,

and finally to Poland, where they eventually settled in Samogitia, part of modern-day Lithuania. The duchess’s friends John Foxe and Thomas Becon also resided in Frankfurt, and Miles Coverdale spent time in Wesel. Catherine and Bertie quickly constructed a religious and social community with other exiles on the Continent. Melissa Franklin-Harkrider’s seminal work on this subject proves that kinship and patronage networks were vital during the exiles’ relocation.\(^59\) Catherine Willoughby’s decision to become an exile, as well as her ability to construct a corresponding community of coreligionists outside of England also demonstrates further ways in which aristocratic women could utilize their networks during times of crisis.

While away from the familiar environment of her countryside estates and the royal court in England, it was more vital than ever for Catherine Willoughby to draw on her Protestant connections. Miles Coverdale helped the duchess and her husband settle in Weinheim when he contacted Otto Heinrich, Prince-Elector Palatine on their behalf. The prince-elector granted a castle and an accompanying establishment to the duchess and her family. Catherine later returned the favor by supporting him financially for five years after his return to England in 1559.\(^60\) While there is no evidence connecting Catherine Willoughby and Catherine Carey, Lady Knollys during their time as exiles, they may have crossed paths. At the very least, the Duchess of Suffolk may have been acknowledging their mutual experience when she gifted Lady Knollys a pair of sleeves worth £6.\(^61\) Catherine’s Protestant connections on the Continent were not limited to her fellow English exiles. Francis Perussel, a Flemish pastor, had – according to John Foxe – “received some courtesy in England at the duchess’s hands.” Perussel, along with many of his


fellow Flemish Protestants, eventually settled in Wesel and founded a church there. Through Perussel’s intervention, the Wesel authorities gave Catherine Willoughby and Richard Bertie permission to settle in the city. Catherine and her husband’s residence in Wesel attracted further congregants to the church, eventually numbering as many as 100.62

Even religious exile did not completely sever Catherine Willoughby’s ties with England. She relied on her personal networks at home in order to help manage her practical affairs from afar. Her mother-in-law, Alice Bertie, who was – according to John Foxe – as “Catholic as any within [England],” helped to oversee her properties while she was abroad.63 The Duchess of Suffolk also appointed Walter Herenden, a Willoughby servant and a religious conformist, to supervise her estates. Because a bill that would have denied Marian exiles access to income from their English estates was defeated in the House of Commons, Catherine was therefore still able to receive some of the revenue from her properties.64 Yet despite their comfortable lodgings and the support of foreign rulers, Catherine and her husband do seem to have run into financial difficulties while abroad. Miles Coverdale wrote to Conrad Hubert, Martin Bucer’s secretary, in September 1555:

With regard to the business, concerning which you requested me to inquire relating to the most illustrious duchess of Suffolk, her very distinguished husband, whom I spoke to on this subject at Frankfurt, assured me that her grace, as far as money was concerned, owed nothing at all either to our excellent father Bucer, or to any other persons. But when I shall return to Wesel… I will make diligent examination into the whole business.65

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64 Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 160.
David Baldwin argues that, while Coverdale was eager to make it seem as though Catherine Willoughby did not owe money to anyone, his language “implies that there were others who thought she did.” The Duchess of Suffolk and her family were therefore largely dependent upon the generosity and goodwill of their hosts on the Continent. Johannes a Lasco, a Calvinist reformer and the son of a Polish nobleman to whom Catherine had provided financial assistance during his time in England, intervened on their behalf with King Sigismund II Augustus of Poland. After Sigismund offered “large courtesy,” Catherine and Bertie made their way to his kingdom.

Catherine Willoughby and her family eventually settled in Samogitia in 1557, and likely intended to remain there. However, in November 1558, Mary I died and her Protestant half-sister succeeded her as Elizabeth I. The news seems to have reached Catherine quickly, for she sent the new queen a New Year gift of a pearl-embroidered cushion, as well as the Book of Ecclesiasticus decorated with purple velvet, silver, and gilt. A few months later, while still living abroad, the Duchess of Suffolk wrote to Elizabeth I, congratulating the queen on her accession and making it clear of her hopes for a firmly-Protestant settlement in England. Catherine proclaimed, “Now is our season, if ever any were, of rejoicing. If the Israelites might [find] joy in their Deborah, how much more we English in our Elizabeth!” With such an optimistic future on the horizon, Catherine and her family began making plans to return home.

Surviving the “Virgin Queen”

In 1559, Catherine Willoughby was hopeful of a return to the religious policies of Edward VI, but she was quickly disappointed. The Elizabethan Settlement, negotiated by the

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new queen’s first Parliament, effectively combined Protestant belief with Catholic tradition. Like most compromises, it left many unsatisfied. The Duchess of Suffolk made it very clear to her longtime friend, William Cecil, that she disapproved of the new queen’s religious policies. She wrote in March 1559 that she wished all of England “were likewise one in Jesus Christ.” In a not-so-subtle attempt to shame both Cecil and his mistress, Catherine drew upon the example of his erstwhile employer, Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset – “that good Duke” – whose “hot zeal to set forth God’s true religion” she clearly admired. She then went further, arguing that Mary I was at least to be commended for her complete devotion to her Catholic faith. The previous queen “deserved immortal praise, seeing she was so persuaded that [the Catholic mass] was good.” Elizabeth I and her advisors, instead, were trapped between “two opinions.”

Regrettably, Cecil’s replies no longer exist, and we can only guess at his reaction to the duchess’s disparagements. Perhaps he made it clear that Elizabeth would not tolerate such criticism, for Catherine did not express her opinions quite so vociferously again.

Aside from her friendship with the queen’s closest advisors, including William Cecil and Robert Dudley, Catherine Willoughby does not seem to have been particularly well-disposed to Elizabeth I. Despite her dramatic falling out with Mary I over religion, Catherine had actually had stronger ties to Henry VIII’s eldest daughter prior to her accession. Although the Duchess of Suffolk had lost most of her traditional Catholic roots decades before, perhaps her family’s connection to Henry VIII’s first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and their antipathy to his second wife, Anne Boleyn – Elizabeth I’s mother – had made it difficult for the two women to establish any real association. Catherine Willoughby’s attraction to Puritanism during Elizabeth’s reign no doubt pulled the two women further apart. In 1570, writing again to Cecil, Catherine revealed

70 Ibid, 12/3, f. 28.
some of the tension in her relationship with the queen. She stated that when “in her Majesty’s presence, she finds her Majesty most gracious and loving towards her,” yet at the same time “so neglected, rejected, and forgotten in all things, unless it be for charge and service.” It may have been the duchess’s precarious position with the queen that kept her from successfully obtaining the title of Baron Willoughby de Eresby for her husband, Richard Bertie. Despite pleading with William Cecil to “perfect what is well begun” – namely her suit on behalf of her husband’s promotion to the peerage – Bertie never acquired the title.

Catherine Willoughby’s lukewarm association with Elizabeth I and her distaste for the queen’s religious policies came to a head in 1580, when her daughter-in-law, Mary de Vere, sister to the Earl of Oxford, apparently helped to circulate rumors that impugned the Duchess of Suffolk’s loyalty to the queen and her government. Catherine had disapproved of her son Peregrine’s choice of wife, writing to Cecil in 1577 that she “had rather he [Peregrine] had matched in any other place.” Her reservations about the marriage stemmed largely from her hesitation to attach herself to the de Vere family, as they had been embroiled in multiple quarrels and scandals. Catherine also mentioned that their “religions agreed not,” and went as far as to ask Cecil to persuade the queen to forbid the match. She made it clear to Mary de Vere that she was displeased with her son’s marriage, and this cannot have endeared her to her daughter-in-law once the marriage did proceed. Considering that Peregrine and his new wife resided often at Grimsthorpe with his parents, the tension between Catherine and her daughter-in-law can only have increased over the years. By 1580, the rumors about the Duchess of Suffolk had either

72 Ibid.
73 Salisbury, Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. Marquis of Salisbury, 146.
spread enough to cause comment or were based in enough truth – likely both, considering Catherine’s earlier condemnations of the Elizabethan Settlement – that she felt the need to appeal to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester for assistance. As discussed at the end of the previous chapter, Catherine humbled herself and asked that Dudley plead her case to the queen. The duchess’s tone was anxious – “And as for Treason, I am sure that it is far from my heart as it could never be written by my hand. So far, I am sure, there is no cause to part my head from my body.” With regard to her daughter-in-law, whom she blamed for her difficult position, she intended to “leave the revenge to God to whom I pray to deliver my innocence from wicked & most malicious slanders.” Catherine chose the recipients of her appeals wisely. Not only were William Cecil and Robert Dudley two of the queen’s most trusted and powerful advisors, but they both had personal and religious ties to the Duchess of Suffolk and her family.

Despite her often-volatile relationship with the queen, Catherine Willoughby was able to establish herself as a wealthy and respected dowager duchess in her later life, and her family remained an important one in both local and national politics. While he never rose to the ranks of the peerage, Richard Bertie lived a comfortable existence as a country gentleman. He sat in the House of Commons for Lincolnshire from 1563 to 1567, but his service on the committee appointed to deal with the question of the succession, as well as his likely opposition to ecclesiastical vestments (which were debated in Parliament), could not have won him any favor from the queen. Elizabeth was often tetchy about the question of her marriage, even in the early years of her reign, and she supported ecclesiastical vestments, despite the Puritan complaint that they were “popish” remnants. Richard Bertie may have been attempting to win approval from

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74 A transcript of this letter can be found in Baldwin, *Henry VIII’s Last Love*, 18-19.
the queen when he wrote an unpublished response to John Knox’s divisive *First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. Despite their agreement on religious matters, Bertie countered Knox’s derision of female monarchs and argued vehemently in support of the “regiment of women” like his own queen.76 While Elizabeth may have appreciated Bertie’s defense of her right to rule, his efforts do not seem to have benefited his family in any tangible way.

As a high-ranking member of the peerage and a former career courtier, the Duchess of Suffolk continued to visit the royal court. Between October 1561 and June 1562, she lodged at court on three separate occasions.77 Richard Bertie was also occasionally pulled into the royal orbit, for he was invited to accompany the queen on her visit to Cambridge in 1564.78 However, based on the duchess’s household accounts, she and her husband spent most of their later years in Lincolnshire. A great many of their gifts and expenses went to their servants, tenants, and neighbors in the county. Their travel also tended to be local, and they seemed to have preferred to keep their visits within the Lincolnshire gentry and aristocracy.79 Catherine’s advancing age, her broad influence as a major landowner in Lincolnshire, and her difficult relationship with the Crown likely kept her settled at Grimsthorpe and her other country estates more often than not.

Anne Stanhope also experienced Elizabeth I’s wrath even before Catherine Willoughby’s own troubles had emerged. In 1561, the queen had Anne’s eldest son, Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and his pregnant wife, Catherine Grey, imprisoned.80 The young couple had been

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77 Salisbury, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. Marquis of Salisbury*, 467, 469, 471, 472.
80 *State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580*, 184.
secretly married for over a year. Catherine, as sister to the deceased Jane Grey, was potentially a
claimant to the throne. Many Englishmen believed her to be the preferable candidate, for the
alternative was the Catholic Mary of Scots. Elizabeth I, childless and cautious of rivals and
clandestine marriages, viewed her cousin’s secret marriage to the Earl of Hertford as a threat to
her security. Unsanctioned marriages to members of the royal family often led to harsh
repercussions. In 1536, Henry VIII had imprisoned his own niece, Margaret Douglas, after she
secretly married Thomas Howard, a younger son of the Duke of Norfolk. The couple was likely
spared because of the intervention of Margaret’s mother.81 Similarly, Anne Stanhope intervened
on behalf of her own child. Like Catherine Willoughby, Anne reached out to her friend, William
Cecil, denying all knowledge of the marriage and expressed her hope that “the willfulness of her
unruly child will not diminish the Queen’s favour.”82

In *Lives of the Queens of England*, Agnes Strickland argues that Anne’s words
concerning her son were “hard” and “unfeeling.”83 However, it seems that the duchess’s eldest
son was much like his uncle, Thomas Seymour, in his temperament and political acumen. A few
months earlier, the young Edward Seymour had accompanied William Cecil’s eldest son,
Thomas, to Paris in order to serve with the English ambassador and to further their studies. Anne
wrote to William Cecil with trepidation about her son. She wrote that she was “sorry for his
willfulness, and begs Cecil not to spare, but to over-rule him.”84 At this point, the Earl of
Hertford was already secretly married to Catherine Grey and his mother was likely anxious to
curb his recklessness. Sir Thomas Windebank, the boys’ chaperone in Paris, wrote to William

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82 Ibid.
84 *State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580*, 174.
Cecil before long and expressed his concern, thinking “it better Mr. [Thomas] Cecil should not travel in company with Lord Hertford.”\(^{85}\) He believed that Edward Seymour was a distraction and an impediment to Thomas’s studies, particularly to his progress in learning the French language.\(^{86}\) Elizabeth I had the Earl of Hertford recalled to England when his clandestine marriage became known to her. Anne Stanhope’s letter to William Cecil was an attempt at damage control, and not necessarily an abandonment of her son. It was also a plea to a man who had significant connections to the Seymour family, and who now served as a powerful advisor to the queen. The Earl of Hertford and his mother also seem to have reached out to Catherine Willoughby for assistance, as Catherine Grey was her step-granddaughter. The Duchess of Suffolk – who clearly had no qualms about disagreeing with the queen – seems to have supported the match and authorized a letter to the queen on behalf of the couple. Unsurprisingly, the duchess’s support does not seem to have helped.\(^{87}\)

Edward Seymour and Catherine Grey were immediately confined in the Tower together, where she gave birth to a son named Edward. The birth of a boy made their situation more precarious, for the infant was now a potential male heir to the throne of England. Catherine gave birth to another son, Thomas, in 1562. That same year, Elizabeth’s government proclaimed their marriage to be invalid, and the children were declared illegitimate. However, still wary of her cousin’s claim, Elizabeth kept Catherine and her sons in the Tower. She did allow the Earl of Hertford some liberty by placing him in the care of his mother at Hanworth Palace – probably in the hope that the couple’s separation would keep them from producing more heirs. The earl wrote to Robert Dudley from Hanworth in 1563, asking him to speak with the queen on his

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 182.
\(^{86}\) Ibid., 183, 185.
\(^{87}\) Goff, *A Woman of the Tudor Age*, 253.
behalf and to present her with a gift of gloves.\textsuperscript{88} In 1564, Elizabeth allowed Catherine Grey and her children to leave the Tower, as plague threatened London. Catherine went to stay with her uncle, John Grey, and the boys were placed in the care of Anne Stanhope, their grandmother.\textsuperscript{89}

Elizabeth I’s decision to place two potential male claimants to the throne in Anne’s care demonstrates the persistence of the duchess’s status, the crown’s faith in her, as well as the strength of her court networks. The same year that the boys were placed in their grandmother’s care, the queen gave the Duchess of Somerset an “honourable reception” at court. The Earl of Hertford thanked Elizabeth I for the respect given to his mother, though he was clearly still in disgrace and prayed “for restoration to the Queen’s favour.”\textsuperscript{90} Anne went to court again in May 1565 and, two years later, the suit regarding her dower and jointure was settled in her favor.\textsuperscript{91}

Although her son had made a disastrous decision that temporarily halted his political career, the queen did not punish Anne Stanhope or the rest of the Seymour family. This was likely a result of Anne’s ability to cultivate a strong and lasting relationship with the crown.

Throughout her son and daughter-in-law’s disgrace and imprisonment, Anne Stanhope wrote to William Cecil and Robert Dudley petitioning for their release – “her highness’ displeasure is too long lasting… how unmeet it is this young couple should thus wax old in prison.”\textsuperscript{92} Not only were Cecil and Dudley the queen’s closest and most powerful advisors, they also had strong connections to the Seymour family’s networks. William Cecil had worked for the Duke of Somerset and Robert Dudley was a younger son of John Dudley and Jane Guildford. A year after the couple’s release from the Tower, Anne wrote to Cecil once again. She wrote at the

\textsuperscript{88} State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580, 221.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 230.
\textsuperscript{90} State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580, 236.
\textsuperscript{91} Calendar of State Papers, Foreign Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1564-5, 372.
\textsuperscript{92} Strickland, Lives of the Queens of England, 5: 152.
beginning of Passion Week, hoping that “the occasion of this Holy Week and charitable time of forgiveness… will bring forth some comfortable fruit of relief to the long afflicted parties.”

The duchess believed that her son had been duly punished and now deserved mercy. On March 22, 1564, Robert Dudley wrote to the Earl of Hertford, promising his support. Dudley, who had already spoken to the queen on the earl’s behalf, asked Edward Seymour to “wait the event with patience” and that his “mother also has done her part.”

Through the intervention of William Cecil, Robert Dudley, and Anne Stanhope, Edward Seymour seemed poised to regain royal favor. However, a few months after Dudley had given the Earl of Hertford such encouragement, John Hales wrote *A Declaration of the Succession of the Crowne Imperiall of Inglande*. Hales argued that the royal succession should favor Catherine Grey – Henry VII’s great-granddaughter through his younger daughter, Mary – rather than the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, Henry’s great-granddaughter through his older daughter, Margaret. This argument appealed to many English Protestants, who feared the reign of another Catholic monarch. Hales defended the secret marriage between Catherine and Edward Seymour and argued that their sons were legitimate. The *Declaration* merely infuriated Elizabeth and ruined any chances of reconciliation between the queen and the Earl of Hertford.

Catherine Grey died in captivity on January 27, 1568. Elizabeth I paid for her cousin’s funeral expenses, but Catherine’s death did not ease the queen’s displeasure toward the Earl of Hertford. In 1571, he was still writing to William Cecil, now Baron Burghley, of “his

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93 Ibid., 153.
94 *State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580*, 236.
96 *State Papers, Domestic, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, 1547-1580*, 305.
97 Ibid., 306.
continued sorrow for want of the Queen’s favour." Anne’s eldest son did eventually regain royal favor, but lost it soon after with another clandestine marriage. In 1585, he married Frances Howard, one of the queen’s ladies-in-waiting. The Earl of Hertford’s second marriage and repeated attempts to legitimize his sons brought him to the Tower briefly once again. Impulsive and ambitious, Anne Stanhope’s eldest son did manage to survive the reign of Elizabeth I. He remained an important political figure during the reign of the first Stuart monarch, James I, before dying in 1621. Had he served under a less cautious and forgiving monarch than Elizabeth I, Edward Seymour could easily have followed his father and uncle to the executioner’s block.

While Anne’s efforts at utilizing her network to save her husband back in the 1550s had not been successful, she managed to preserve the lives of her children and the position of her family on multiple occasions.

Anne Stanhope continued to be a force in political and religious matters under Elizabeth I, and the queen demonstrated her favor. In 1575, Elizabeth gave the duchess Somerset House in London – another manor that had previously belonged to the Duke of Somerset. On August 24, 1580, Francis Walsingham wrote to William Cecil that the queen was to dine with the duchess that night. Anne used her friendship with the crown to support her family and friends, and to sustain her patronage network. In 1576, she wrote to Cecil recommending a “Mr. Druse for preferment.” In 1581, she wrote to Cecil again, requesting that her nephew, Edward Stanhope, become the new Master of Requests. Edward was the son of Michael Stanhope, Anne’s brother who had died in the Duke of Somerset’s service. It is also likely that Anne’s influence

98 Ibid., 414.
99 Ibid., 498.
100 Ibid., 672.
102 Ibid.
was behind her Grey grandson’s ennoblement as Viscount Beauchamp – his deceased grandfather’s first title. The youngest Edward Seymour never regained his legitimacy, but since the Earl of Hertford never produced any other legitimate children, Viscount Beauchamp remained his heir. Anne’s utilization of her network at court kept the Seymour family’s status and influence intact.
CONCLUSION

Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford all died as duchesses – the highest title to which an aristocratic woman could aspire. In their wills, they were therefore capable of distributing a significant amount of wealth and property to those in their familial, personal, and patronage networks. They were also able to fashion themselves after their deaths through their construction of grand funerary monuments. As Barbara Harris demonstrates, such women tended to follow a pattern in which “scores of wives and widows of knights and noblemen commissioned tombs and stained glass whose location, effigies and painted images, epitaphs, and heraldry recorded their chosen identities.”1 Women like Catherine, Anne, and Jane therefore used their funerary monuments as a means of “self-discovery, self-presentation,” and “some personal autonomy and self-expression.”2

Catherine Willoughby died on September 19, 1580, either at Grimsthorpe or London, at the age of sixty-one.3 No record of her last will and testament seems to have survived, but considering that she died a woman of immense wealth and privilege, her bequests were likely numerous. She was survived by her husband, Richard Bertie, and their two children, Susan and Peregrine. Catherine’s funeral took place at St. James Church in Spilsby, Lincolnshire. The chief mourner was her daughter, Susan, now Countess of Kent. Other mourners who accompanied her included friends and relations. Perhaps the most significant of these was Mildred Cecil, Lady Burghley – wife of Catherine’s powerful friend, William Cecil. The women were escorted by

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2 Barbara Harris, Defining Themselves,” 738.
Catherine’s only surviving son, Peregrine, and his cousin, William Willoughby. Following in their wake were the Dean of Lincoln, a banner bearer, four “bearers of the corpse” and four “assistants to the bearers,” as well as two officers and two gentlemen ushers. “Poor men, poor women, singing men and chaplains” led the procession into the church where the Duchess of Suffolk was laid to rest. Richard Bertie only outlived his wife by eighteen months, and he was buried alongside her.4

Catherine Willoughby’s tomb that she shares with her husband at Spilsby stands as a monument to her devotion to the Protestant faith. The brief inscription noting their deaths is not particularly descriptive, but it is the six inscriptions on the opposite side of the tomb that provide insight into Catherine’s choice of self-expression. Five of the inscriptions are in Latin and quote biblical passages. The sixth is in English and is “a rhyme on the frailty of life and depicts death as the great equalizer of social status.” Melissa Franklin-Harkrider argues that these inscriptions weave together “many of the themes important to her faith and her promotion of Protestantism: the centrality of scripture to religious experience, human sinfulness, justification by faith alone, and an exhortation to those chosen for salvation to remain faithful.”5 Yet like her contemporary, Anne Stanhope, Catherine Willoughby chose for most of the inscriptions on her tomb to be in Latin, rather than English. Additionally, the monuments of both duchesses are elaborately constructed. Both of these qualities distinguish them from the more austere tombs of the later Elizabethan period.6 Like most of their devoutly-Protestant contemporaries, both duchesses would have supported the reading of the scriptures in the vernacular and may have opposed the

4 Baldwin, Henry VIII’s Last Love, 207-209.
use of iconography in religious spaces. However, both of the duchesses’ tombs embrace these more traditional features. There are some possible explanations for this. The fact that their epitaphs are largely in Latin and contain elaborate decorations, as well as their likenesses in sculpture, perhaps indicates that their lives spanned the era both before and after the onset of the English Reformation. While both women converted to Protestantism, they were still in some ways products of their more traditional upbringing. Additionally, it was likely important to both women that their tombs project the position and influence of their respective families.

Anne Stanhope drew up her will on July 14, 1586 at the age of seventy-six. Francis Newdigate had died four years earlier. In his will, he had left his entire estate to his wife, writing “As I have received all my preferment by the Duchess’s marriage, so do I, in few words, will and bequeath to her all that I am able any way to give her.” Without her husband, Anne appointed her son, the Earl of Hertford, as the sole executor of her estate. Her generous bequests to both friends and family, along with the extensive inventory of her estate drawn up that same year, attest to her immense wealth. The long list of bequests also indicates that Anne was the matriarch of a large, influential family. In her will the duchess left items to her eldest son, the Earl of Hertford; his wife, Frances Howard; her second son, Henry Seymour; her daughters Mary and Elizabeth, as well as their husbands; and her grandson, Viscount Beauchamp, and his wife. Of her three elder daughters – Anne, Jane, and Margaret – only Anne had not predeceased the duchess. Anne, who was still the Countess of Warwick from her marriage to John Dudley’s son, had suffered a mental breakdown at the beginning of Elizabeth I’s reign. She was not mentioned in her mother’s will. In addition to her immediate family, Anne Stanhope remembered her godchildren, nieces, nephews, friends, and servants. She also left funds to “godly and poor”

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university students and prisoners in London. The inventory of the duchess’s property included lands, money, jewels, plate, clothing, and many other luxurious goods. It was a vast estate and, like most wealthy noblewomen, Anne rewarded those who had been loyal to her.

Anne Stanhope’s will also offers insight into her religious views, which – like Catherine Willoughby’s – had remained unwaveringly Protestant throughout most of her life. She wrote, “First, I thank God in Christ Jesus that he hath long ago called me to the knowledge and love of the Gospel, and ever since kept me therein to an assured hope of life everlasting, through faith in the righteousness of Jesus Christ alone.” An emphasis on the attainment of salvation through faith alone was a mainstay of Protestantism. Anne Stanhope, like so many of her contemporaries, had begun life as a Catholic and was prepared to die a fervent Protestant. The Duchess of Somerset died on April 16, 1587 – Easter Day – at the advanced age of seventy-seven years.

Anne Stanhope’s tomb lies in Westminster Abbey – another sign of Elizabeth I’s favor. It is a “tall” and “gaudy” memorial,” but it is also an indication of her immense wealth and political influence that she is buried in such a lavish manner and in such a prominent location. Her monument projects the exact image she spent her entire life trying to build. Her epitaph declares her illustrious descent as “a Princess descended of noble lineage.” The Westminster monument describes, along with her own virtuous characteristics, the dignity of her marital family. She identified herself as the Duchess of Somerset and wife of Edward Seymour – Francis Newdigate is not mentioned. She also distinguished herself as mother of the Earl of Hertford and grandmother of Viscount Beauchamp – the matriarch of a powerful, persistent line of Seymours.

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8 PROB 11/70/369.
9 Ibid., 375.
Like Catherine Willoughby, Anne used her monument as a means of self-expression, preferring to focus on her own social standing and that of her family.

Because of the religious uncertainty in England in the mid-1550s, Jane Guildford was more ambiguous about her own religiosity in her will. She instructed to “bury me with such service as in the Church” and to “have such divine service as mine executors shall think mete.”¹² She perhaps took a greater risk in commemorating “my lord, my dear husband.” As David Loades avows, “If John [Dudley] had died unloved by the world, he had left a grieving widow, who did not long survive him.”¹³ Jane also made it clear that she preferred to be buried without any pomp or spectacle, issuing a warning, that “whoever doth trust to this transitory world, as I did, may happen to have an overthrow, as I had.”¹⁴ The Duchess of Northumberland died at her family home in Chelsea on January 22, 1555, and despite her instructions, she “was buried with great solemnity” and on February 1. Her funeral procession included “two heralds attending with many mourners, 6 dozen of torches, and 2 white branches, and a canopy borne over her effigies in wax, in a goodly hearse to the church of Chelsea.”¹⁵ A monument was constructed over her tomb in the Chelsea Old Church, complete with an inscription that reads:

Here lyeth interred the Right, Noble, and Excellent Princess, Lady Jane Guildford, late Duchess of Northumberland, daughter and sole heir of the Right Honorable Sir Edward Guildford, Knight, Lord Warden of the Five Ports. The which Sir Edward was son to the Right Honorable Sir Richard Guildford, sometime Knight and Companion of the most noble Order of the Garter; and the said Duchess was wife to the High and Mighty Prince, John Dudley, late Duke of Northumberland, by whom she had issue eight sons and five daughters; and after she had lived forty-six years, she departed this transitory world, at her manor of Chelsea the twenty-second day of January, in the second year of the reign of our

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¹² PROB 11/37/342.
¹⁴ PROB 11/37/342.
¹⁵ Arthur Collins, ed., Letters and Memorials of State in the Reigns of Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, King James, King Charles the First, part of the reign of King Charles the Second, and Oliver’s usurpation. Written and collected by Sir Henry Sydney. London: T. Osborne, 1746), 36.
Sovereign Lady Mary the First, and in the year 1555. On whose soul Jesus have mercy.\textsuperscript{16}

Like Anne Stanhope, Jane Guildford was anxious to present herself and her family in a particular light. When she died, her family was still recovering from their disgrace in the wake of the failed coup to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. Her husband had been executed as a traitor. Yet like Anne, Jane identifies herself as both the Duchess of Northumberland and the wife of John Dudley. Despite the ignominy of her husband’s downfall and execution, Jane also names her husband as a “High and Might Prince” and herself a “Right, Noble, and Excellent Princess.” That she chose to publicly remember her husband at all during the reign of Mary I is a testament to the affectionate nature of their nearly thirty-year marriage. Like Catherine and Anne, Jane used her funerary monument as a means of self-presentation, but for the Duchess of Northumberland – who was living in disgrace and in fear for the livelihood of her children – this exercise in agency was even more vital. Jane Guildford could not have known that her children would prosper in the years after her death, but the final actions that she took before her death indicate that she was still attempting to look after her family’s interests.

The lives and careers of Catherine Willoughby, Anne Stanhope, and Jane Guildford spanned eight decades and the reigns of four Tudor monarchs. Their experiences as wives, courtiers, Protestants, and misrepresented women illuminate important points on the subjects of gender, politics, religion, and historical memory. Women like Catherine, Anne, and Jane could and did function in a range of roles in order to promote their own interests, provide for their families, support their various networks, and uphold their faith. These roles made them public, political actors in their own right, but their ability to build harmonious and effective marriages

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
further expanded their opportunities for agency. As female political actors and marital partners, such women faced both contemporary and later commentary on their actions. This commentary often led to historical misrepresentation.

Catherine, Anne, and Jane were fellow ladies-in-waiting, duchesses, politicians, wives, mothers, and exact contemporaries. They all lived throughout the reigns of multiple Tudor monarchs and managed to survive and protect their families during the upheaval of the “Mid-Tudor crisis.” Like so many early modern women of their position, their actions in the political arena defined their historical reputations – for better or worse. While Catherine, Anne, and Jane led unique lives and made their own choices, the broad outlines of their experiences remain the same. Exploring the Tudor era through the lens of their lives proves to be an informative and valuable way to assess some of the common experiences of early modern aristocratic women.
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