The Theological Aesthetics of the English Reformation: The Development of English Heritage and Cultural Identity

Casey Austin Williams

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Theological Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Theological Studies) at
Concordia University
Montréal, Québec, Canada

March 2023

Concordia University
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Casey Austin Williams

Entitled: The Theological Aesthetics of the English Reformation: The Development of English Heritage and Cultural Identity

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Theological Studies – Thesis)

complies with regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the Final Examining Committee:

Dr. Marie-France Dion	Chair
Dr. Ted McCormick	Examiner
Dr. Lucian Turcescu	Examiner
Dr. Jean-Michel Roessli	Supervisor

Approved by *Dr. Pascale Sicotte, Dean of the Faculty Arts & Sciences*

April 2023

Abstract

The Theological Aesthetics of the English Reformation: The Development of English Heritage and Cultural Identity

Casey Austin Williams

Master of Arts (Theological Studies – Thesis)

Concordia University

2023

The cultural and historical heritage of the United Kingdom is arguably one of the richest and most famed national identities sociologically speaking. The aesthetic qualities and values of England are well ingrained within the nation's consequent theological history. An analysis of English heritage and culture, particularly literary culture, is not complete without taking into account the complexities and specific nature of the English theological identity and Church-State relations. The English Reformation of the 16th century not only created a distinctive British culture, but more importantly cemented the nation as leaders in literary and rhetorical spheres. Particularly, William Shakespeare's contributions to the canon of English Literature were widely based upon, and somewhat constrained to, England's theological state during the Renaissance and the Early Modern Period. Importantly, while Henry VIII technically spearheaded and created the Church of England, his daughter Elizabeth I should be given the true recognition for definitively situating England within the world's elite in literature, aesthetics, and the creation of a distinct national identity. Therefore, it is paramount to address the importance and influence of the six wives of Henry VIII, and Queen Elizabeth, in creating and perpetuating the aesthetic practices and identity of Early Modern England. Through isolating the significant figures, texts, and aesthetic theories of the English Reformation, one can certify that English culture, heritage, and national identity are a distinct entity that warrant study and analysis outside of the purely imperial lens.

Key Words: English Reformation; Reformation; Henry VIII; Elizabeth I; Edward VI; Mary I; Theology; England; English Culture; Nationalism; Identity; Literary Culture; Manuscript Culture; Printing Press; Anglican; William Shakespeare; Church-State Relations

Acknowledgements

This thesis has most definitely been a work in progress through a tumultuous time both personally and professionally. I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation for those who have supported me, aided in my research, inspired me, and been an integral part of my experience throughout my graduate studies. Firstly, I would like to thank the Department of Theological Studies at Concordia University and the encouraging, stimulating, and confident community it houses. Throughout the course of my undergraduate and graduate studies I have been immensely lucky to have worked with the most informed and passionate professors whose care for their students and dedication to their craft is unrivalled.

Specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Jean-Michel Roessli, my thesis supervisor and mentor, without whose guidance, erudition, and motivation I would not have been able to complete my graduate studies and this thesis. Dr. Roessli, I cannot express the pride I feel to have worked with you over the past years. You truly have the most extraordinary mind I have, and am sure will, ever come across and learning from you has challenged me and developed my abilities in academia more than I could have hoped for. I cannot properly express my gratitude for how your passion for theological studies and devotion to your students has resulted in the most fruitful and meaningful intellectual growth I have experienced in my life thus far. Your constant support, kindness, and generosity are qualities I cherish and am profoundly appreciative to have received – thank you, thank you, thank you!

I would also like to thank Dr. Lucien Turcescu, without whom I would not have discovered theological studies and found my purpose and passion. Dr. Turcescu, choosing to take your course "Religious Pluralism in a Secular Culture" at the very beginning of my undergraduate career invariably changed the course of my life both in and out of academia. I am truly in debt to your guidance, support, and comradery over these past years. Thank you for helping me find my path.

To Dr. Ted McCormick, I am so grateful that you have agreed to be on the examining committee for my thesis. Your insights, suggestions, and direction are so very valued. I look forward to hopefully working with you in the future and engaging further in your scholarship.

Lastly, to my father, there are no sufficient words to encapsulate your love and devotion. You mean more to me than you will ever realize, and I am blessed to be your daughter. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for supporting my dreams, investing in my education, and always being there whenever I need you. You mean the world to me, I love you.

Furthermore, this thesis draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I extend my gratitude and many thanks to those who have believed in my research and supported its development. I am indebted to you all.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

Dedication

To my Mother,

May your memory be a blessing.

Table of Contents

The Theological Aesthetics of the English Reformation: The Development of English Heritage and Cultural Identity

List of Figures

Introduction

King Henry VIII (r. 1509 – 1547) is perhaps one of the most feared, venerated, and prolific figures in English history. Prior to the Tudor reign, commencing with Henry VII, England's national identity and particular cultural characteristics were arguably homogenous with the entirety of Europe. However, with Henry VIII's unexpected and historic rise to the throne in 1509, the landscape and identity of England as both a nation and people were entirely redefined and distinguished as a major political, theological, and cultural power across continental Europe, which no longer reflected the previous centuries structure under the witenagemot or the later papal supremacy of the Catholic Church. Henry VIII's English Reformation of the 1530s set in motion a paradigm shift in the way Englishmen, and their concepts of national identity and cultural heritage, were perceived and lionized. The notion of a cohesive and distinct English character became of paramount importance to the monarch, royal court, and English people themselves during the reign of Henry VIII and continuing on, and through, Elizabeth I's reign.

In assessing England's heritage and culture within the framework of theological historiography, it can be certified that liturgical, doctrinal, poetic, and aesthetic theories and practices are at the core of English identity. Literature and studies on the English Reformation, and the Early Modern and Renaissance periods as a whole, are vast and incredibly comprehensive. However, most of these studies have a relatively linear perspective and focus directly on one integral facet of the time, as they simply mention and/or refer to outside or supplementary material. In researching the lasting effects of the English Reformation, in conjunction with its origination of an English national identity and artistic culture, a wealth of literature and varying interdisciplinary studies are required. Research on such a vast and intricate era requires equally vast and intricate sources, each addressing various elements of the Reformation, English nationalism, the rise of the veneration of the Monarchs, and the development and certification of a cultural aesthetic theory. As such, both the primary and secondary sources used for this particular research draw from a wide array of traditional scholars, architects, theologians, novelists, artists, literary analysts, sociologists, demographic(s) specialists, royal correspondents and representatives, and many more, which ensure that the research undertaken, and the sources that support any new discovery or findings within the historical record, are thorough yet compendious in nature. In order to approach the history of the Church of England in the most nuanced and unbiased means possible, it is paramount that I use sources that are both complementary to, and in discordance with, the establishment of the Church of England and Henry VIII's break with Rome.

The proliferation and certification of English culture has historiographically been solidified and accelerated by the nation's literary notoriety, which is epitomized through the works of William Shakespeare. In adapting and referencing the Church of England's main liturgical text, *The Book of Common Prayer*, in the country's native language, Shakespeare fostered an artistic and intellectual sphere in which both theology and literature could co-exist and provide the same function – exalting England and the majesty of the monarch(s). While Shakespeare's work is perhaps the most defining in English literary history, earlier works by Sir Phillip Sidney and Edmund Spenser also aided in establishing a particularly English character to

the literary and wider aesthetic culture(s) of the time. To accurately assess the veracity and efficacy of the nationalistic developments made during the English Reformation, the entire Tudor era, and beyond, must be scrutinized both historiographically and through a retrospective appraisal of contemporary attitudes in order to trace and identify cultural and aesthetic developments throughout the period. In particular, I will be addressing not only Henry VIII's establishment of the Church, but consequent regents (Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I) adaptations and reforms to this theological doctrine, which became what is today known as Anglicanism.

Perhaps even more important than the monarchical role in creating the Church of England are the works and reforms of royal aid and Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. Cranmer not only facilitated the expansion and development of the Church of England, but created and certified the theological doctrines for which the Church is now famous. It is crucial to note that the *anglicana ecclesia* (The Church of England) is first and foremost a political and territorial entity formed in order to facilitate Henry VIII's annulment to Catherine of Aragon, later becoming a true Christian denomination under Edward VI and Thomas Cranmer. While Cranmer's continued involvement with the monarchy after the death of Henry VIII allowed for Henrician reforms to thrive, Thomas Cromwell's work as chief minister to Henry VIII was invaluable in regard to the establishment of the Church of England and the introduction of Reformist theology and politics, which later allowed for Henry VIII to legally declare himself the Supreme Head of the Church of England. While Cranmer and Cromwell were contemporaries and both aided in the proliferation of the Church of England and the development of a distinctively English national identity and culture, the two worked in slightly different capacities – these different capacities being Cromwell's establishment and legalization of the Church of England, and Cranmer's more specific doctrinal focus on the mission and message of the Church.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, the Church began to be characterized as a *media via* (middle way) between Protestant doctrine and Catholic ritualistic and sacramental practices. Christopher Hill's *Reformation to Industrial Revolution* presents its arguments in a particularly Anglo adjacent format, ensuring that Hill's primary purpose is to "differentiate English history from that of the rest of Europe"[1] and in doing so ensure that the reader is prompted to recognize that "England was unique"[2] and deserving of praise for this characteristically bold separation from the Papacy. On the other hand, John Vidmar's *English Catholic Historians and the English Reformation 1585 – 1954*, while focusing on a slightly different yet overlapping period of history as Hill's research, predicates its findings upon the accounts of Catholic historians. Many of these accounts state that the English Reformation, rather than being lauded for its unique nature, "had jeopardized the very existence of the Catholic community, called into question the Catholic claim to continuity with the Early Church, and even made the civic loyalty of Catholics suspect"[3]. Vidmar and the larger Catholic community's reception of the English Reformation differs greatly to that of Christopher Hill. While Hill notes some of the various complex, difficult, and downright awful consequences/issues pertaining to the English Reformation, he does so in such a manner that overall legitimizes the actions of Henry VIII, and his successors (namely Edward VI and Elizabeth I). Hill proposes that these figures' actions were ultimately

[1] Christopher Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution: 1530 – 1780* (London: Verso, 2018), 13.
[2] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 13.
[3] John Vidmar OP, *English Catholic Historians and the English Reformation: 1585 – 1954* (Eastbourne: Sussex Academic Press, 2019), 2.

done in an attempt to solidify a "protestant national myth"[4] that was in the greater service of ensuring that this theological and political reform "strengthened patriotism…[and] helped to bind Englishmen together in national unity"[5]. Hill's focus is on the monarchy's, and its subsidiaries', efforts to extend the rights and values of English society that were being developed during and after the English Reformation in order to "reinforce England's national security"[6] and its newly developed individualistic identity. Vidmar, while certainly lauding the ingenuity of the English during the Reformation period, is more focused on how the lasting effects of the English Reformation resulted in a disquieting "atmosphere of caution which had characterized Catholic behaviour"[7]. In doing so, Vidmar suggests that the English Reformation engendered the start of a theologically propelled era in which "a new atmosphere of aggressiveness was taking over"[8], resulting in a lack of space for safe and developmental discourse to take place between Protestants and Catholics in England. To fairly assess the efficacy, repercussions, and overall lasting impact of the English Reformation, sources like Hill and Vidmar must be consulted in equal measure to ensure that a full and nuanced perspective on the English Reformation is expressed within my thesis. While opposing sources and historical accounts are vital to encompass the true breadth and divisiveness of the English Reformation, sources that act as an amalgamation of the two are equally as relevant. Rather than taking a definitively 'pro' or 'anti' stance on the English Reformation, Kevin Sharpe's *Selling the Tudor Monarchy* approaches the topic in a much more comprehensive light by situating the English Reformation within the realms "of the moral, polemical and political…rival narrations of history and contesting claims to memory that were inseparable from denominational"[9] struggles. Sharpe's perspective on this particular era of English moral, political, and theological history hinges upon the rather unassailable statement that the English Reformation was by and large a display "in direct relation to [England's] dynastic insecurity"[10] and overall sought to end "the greatest ideological division in the state [by] detaching the monarchy from the papacy…rewriting and refiguring…kingship itself"[11]. Sharpe's nuanced approach, taking into consideration a variety of historical, political, religious, and aesthetic components of the period, renders his work as a foundational necessity when analyzing the particularities of the English monarchical system and the wider notions of early modern kingship and national identity.

An integral part of my research depends upon a substantive appraisal of the theological aesthetic theories present prior, during, and after the English Reformation within various Christian denominations. In order for England to ascertain its own distinct culture and national identity separate from the wider Catholic presence and institutionalization of continental Europe, it is paramount to certify what culture(s) and aesthetic(s) existed prior to and during the English Reformation, largely within the Catholic community, and how these artistic movements and styles were either co-opted or anglicized. While the majority of my sources do touch either on the architectural, liturgical and ceremonial, theatrical, and visual aesthetics associated with the English Reformation, the main sources that devote themselves to the exploration of the overall

---

[4] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 42.
[5] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution,* 42.
[6] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution,* 42.
[7] Vidmar OP, *English Catholic Historians,* 67.
[8] Vidmar OP, *English Catholic Historians*, 67.
[9] Sharpe, Kevin. *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009. 13.
[10] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 68.
[11] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, 68.

theological aesthetic theory are William Dyrness' *The Origins of Protestant Aesthetics in Early Modern Europe,* Margaret Aston's *Broken Idols of the English Reformation,* Lucy Gent and Paul Mellon's *Albion's Classicism,* Roland Fyre's *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* Simon Jenkins' *England's Cathedrals*, and Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman's *The Myth of Elizabeth.* Dyrness' book opens with a caution to all scholars of Medieval and Reformation studies that should be taken into account, that "it is hazardous to generalize about the contemporary art scene"[12] during these periods by presuming "art objects were mostly restricted to particular motifs that served special religious purposes"[13]. This sentiment is echoed in Gent and Mellon's compendium of Albion focused scholarship on aesthetic theories and developments, which purports that the generalization or mass assumption(s) about art during the early modern period are misleading in that they neglect the ways "of challenging old assumptions"[14] that were already present prior to the Reformation. The authors further suggest that an approach toward aesthetic theory, particularly to that of the English Reformation, which "demolish[es] the notion that there is a monolithic 'English classicism' of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries"[15], is required in order to highlight the depth of the English culture and national identity that were advanced due to the English Reformation. The aforementioned scholars are in agreement with the notion that the aesthetic theories of the English Reformation, and beyond, cannot be reduced to purely theological themes, but are also representative of "a great difference between reforming an existing fabric of state and establishing a new one"[16]. Furthermore, the development of the aesthetic properties of the English Reformation are unique within the history of art and aesthetic theory, as the population during this time was forced "to witness the disgrace and punishing of holy statues, to see them exposed as tools and toys of fraudulent priests…[to be] given an active role in the dismembering of idols"[17] and the destruction of art and literature as a whole in pursuit of the fashioning of a new national and cultural identity. The particularly active role of the individual during the English Reformation in concealing, destroying, rebuilding, or creating anything within the aesthetic realm was of a particularly intimate and confronting nature; therefore, resulting in the fact that the attempted reconstruction in response to "the manipulation of memory [at the hands of the English Reformers] was a project that necessarily took several generations to reach the intended results"[18].

The so-called arrival of these results can be epitomized in the character and the dramatic works of William Shakespeare: a figure who emerged from the tumultuous stories and scenes of desecration in England during the English Reformation and was reintroduced to a society deeply in need of a revival that was equally significant in both cultural and aesthetic values. Whether Shakespeare's role was merely performative or symbolic, it is clear that the English writer sought to distinguish himself and his work in a particularly English fashion by heavily relying on *The Common Book of Prayer* and the malleability of the English language itself to make his works far more domestically oriented than other writers at the time. While Shakespeare's

---

[12] William Dyrness, *The Origins of Protestant Aesthetics in Early Modern Europe: Calvin's Reformation Poetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 1.
[13] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 1.
[14] Lucy Gent and Paul Mellon, *Albion's Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550 – 1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1.
[15] Gent and Mellon, *Albion's Classicism*, 5.
[16] Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 35.
[17] Aston, *Broken Idols,* 14.
[18] Aston, *Broken Idols,* 115.

popularity in regard to the establishment of an English literary canon only arises in the early 18th century, contemporarily Shakespeare's works were examples of how various artistic and literary movements within England began looking inward to England and its specific emerging culture for inspiration, rather than following the previously populous notions of adopting central European aesthetics to entice a broader audience. Roland Frye notes that Shakespeare's particularly literary, and overall aesthetic, style drew from "his own treatment [and view] of heathen religion and ethics"[19], which corresponds to the history in which he found himself; a world where religion and nationalism converged and were in need of unique representation. Frye highlights the means in which "Shakespeare does not [explicitly] devote his writings to theological ends, but where doctrines are treated in the plays they are treated with sufficient sophistication [and experience] to show that Shakespeare had an intelligent and informed lay knowledge of theology…the universally human"[20], which was a particular area of concern in need of remedy post-Reformation. Shakespeare's attempts to rebuild English culture through literature were seen recapitulated through many aesthetic domains across the nation, with a large emphasis on the refurbishing and restoration of the churches, monasteries, and religious properties that were affected by Henry VIII's tempestuous acts of dissolution. Simon Jenkins notes that "cathedrals are [now] the great ghosts of English history"[21] due to Henry VIII's abrasive and immediate move aimed at ending "a millennium of ecclesiastical history since Augustine [that] was dissolved overnight"[22] in 1538 with the dissolution of the monasteries. Queen Elizabeth I was a contemporary, and reported friend or fan, of William Shakespeare, and "was the embodiment of cautious moderation"[23] as she sought to rectify, as did Shakespeare, the aesthetic and cultural values of England. Notably, under Elizabeth I, the churches, although now largely Protestant, flourished again but more so as murals of royal supremacy and religious liberalism; churches both Catholic and Protestant, "were painted over with the ten commandments, communion 'cups' replaced popish chalices…aisles and chancels became ever more crowded galleries of the great and good of church and community"[24]. Elizabeth's utilization of the Church, and sacrality overall, highlights the means in which the Church was exploited by the ruling elite as both a theological and territorial entity to further advance the goals of those in power. While these changes are not necessarily in favor of aesthetic excess or plenty, Elizabeth I's rule sought to sublimate England and its past tumultuous religious identities into a more refined and understated form of theological adherence by allowing the churches to exist as places of worship in a hybridized Anglo-Catholic state. The churches remained places of worship through their focus on ensuring that the opulence and pageantry, which caused major contention during the Reformation, were channeled into a thriving artistic, literary, and national culture.

I could not possibly appraise the importance of each of the sources I have chosen to consult in this thesis, but I feel it to be of specific importance to mention and briefly describe some of the other sources I will be engaging with. Peter Ackroyd, an English biographer, novelist, and expert in British history, has published a wealth of material that I will consult as it is crucial to my research. What is particularly striking about Ackroyd, and why he, as a scholar

[19] Roland Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 114.
[20] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 115.
[21] Simon Jenkins, *England's Cathedrals* (London: Little Brown, 2016), xi.
[22] Jenkins, *England's Cathedrals*, xvii.
[23] Jenkins, *England's Cathedrals,* xviii.
[24] Jenkins, *England's Cathedrals,* xix.

and artist, aligns so well with my research, is the fact that he is well versed in the literary-fictitious and historiographical-biographical representations of English national identity and heritage, with over 25 non-fiction publications mostly pertaining to English culture. In particular, I will be relying on Ackroyd's non-fiction works on the Tudors, the English Reformation, and Shakespeare as an emblem of English culture. Ackroyd's main work I will use is *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*. Ackroyd himself is a distinguished scholar and source of knowledge, as his work (both creative and academic), has resulted in his appointment as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire; an order which is largely considered to be a remnant of the pageantry and aesthetic pomp of Early Modern England. While the development of an English national identity and distinct aesthetic culture cannot be expressed entirely in one thesis, I intend to use a variety of sources dealing with all aspects of the English Reformation, aesthetic theory, and national identity in order to properly facilitate a thesis that is both well rounded and accessible. The main areas addressed in this particular study on the theological aesthetics of the English Reformation, and the cultural and nationalistic developments it engendered, are that of the material and particularly literary culture of the era, the establishment and later doctrinal development of the Church of England, the introduction of arguably the strongest form of domestic kingship in the early modern period, the development of the literary panegyric of the English monarch(s), and the creation of a staunch and lasting national identity brought about by the melding of the political and theological spheres.

My research methodology has been conducted mainly through the principles of document and thematic analysis, accounts on/of cultural relativism, and historical interpretivism or *verstehen*. I have also engaged with the fields of performativity and dramaturgy within the framework of an arts-based inquiry. A study of the English Reformation, in alignment with the principles of aesthetic and literary theory, is undoubtedly an interdisciplinary endeavour. As such, the principles and research methodologies I have employed are taken from a variety of fields and different forms of scholarship. First and foremost, a clear understanding and solid background of the English Reformation as a singular historical and theological entity must be gained. During this preliminary research, I took an organic historical approach, actively avoiding literary and aesthetic discourse in order to accumulate the most objective and singularly historical material(s) available. While both historical and literary perspective do indeed have a bias, as do all sources, literary and aesthetic discourse are largely representative of an individual's perception and attitude towards their preferred aesthetic, while historical discourse's bias is lessened by the contextuality and encyclopedic work required in order to ascertain its claims. My next step within the preliminary stages was to access and catalogue/interpret literary and aesthetic sources in the same manner. After both areas of research have been covered and a sufficient amount of data has been obtained, I combined the two fields to create a linear structure or timeline in which an entanglement of various historical, theological, literary, and aesthetic theories that were formulated and popularized. Furthermore, through my assessment and compilation of the various historical and aesthetic sources I uncovered, I then to section off sources into the veins of either theologically or secularly based materials. In order to accurately assess the impacts of the English Reformation, one must be able to separate (where possible) the theological information from the so-called secular information. Of course, there are documents and primary sources which pertain to both the theological and secular sectors, however, where possible, it is necessary to sufficiently distinguish between Church and State history/ideology.

The main methodological areas I have occupied are those of history and historians, dialectic(s), doctrine(s), and communication(s). The steps I took, in general terms, were to isolate

the important figures, texts, and aesthetic theories pertinent and adjacent to my research. Next, I evaluated the breadth and bias of these findings. My goal in evaluating and critiquing my sources is of the utmost importance as my research pertains directly to the British Royal Family's response(s) and growth during a period of immense theological and secular turmoil, therefore many sources I have come across are innately biased and some primary sources may have been censored to a certain extent. After accumulating my sources, theories, and accounts of various Church-State ideologies, I sought to certify whether my ideations of English national identity and culture are not only scholastically founded, but evident in the material culture I encountered. Once asserting and certifying my position that English national identity, heritage, and culture are all inextricably linked and were stimulated/formed by the English Reformation, I have assessed said heritage/culture within a theological, historiographical, and literary framework.

Chapter 1: Situating & Defining the English Reformation

1.1 Roots of the Reformation:

The English Reformation is a moment of potent theological and political development in history, resulting in the entire upheaval of a society's theological and nationalistic ideals all taking place under a drastic and unprecedented break with the Roman Catholic Church. However, while the character and specific details of the English Reformation are remarkable in and of themselves, there of course was the preceding and larger Protestant Reformation which allowed for the English Reformation to thrive. Historian Peter Marshall assertively, and correctly, states that "the Reformation created modern Europe"[25] and in doing so has engendered the grandiose mythos of Early Modern and Renaissance Europe to prevail over the course of history. The English Reformation, due to its mass scholastic popularity and contemporaneous sensationalism, has resulted in studies pertaining to the English Reformation being "refined, redefined, and rewritten to the extent that it is hardly recognizable as the same story"[26]. Therefore, it is paramount that the roots of the English Reformation, and the preceding Protestant Reformation which engendered its very existence, are properly situated and acknowledged.

While the Protestant Reformation, popularized and spurred on by the *Ninety-Five Theses* of Martin Luther (c. 1483 – 1546) in 1517, was in essence an attempt at internal Catholic reform, it was largely co-opted in that "Luther's more complex theological ideas were usually sacrificed in favor of broad satirical attacks on the Catholic clergy and hierarchy"[27]. This successful repositioning, and arguably manipulation, of Luther's theology and ideology positioned the Protestant Reformation in a rather precarious and unforeseen state – a Reformation that was by the people, for the people, and ardently in opposition to the so-called "machine of papal government along with the growth of papal political influence"[28]. Undeniably, the so-called roots of the Reformation took place within Germany, and due to the growing influence and accessibility to Johannes Gutenberg's (c. 1393/1406 – 1458) Printing Press of 1440, spread across Europe rapidly enabling the creation of an alternative Christian denomination that was decidedly separate from the Roman Catholic Church and innately rooted in literary culture – Protestantism. However, the particular roots of the Reformation I am exploring are those in England, and while an understanding and basic appraisal of the Protestant Reformation is necessary in forging my argument, I will focus specifically on these so-called roots in England.

The English Reformation was undoubtedly one of the most remarkable and contentious periods in Early Modern European history, as Henry VIII's resolute separation from the seemingly limitless power of the Roman Catholic Church across mainland Europe effectively situated England "as standing alone against a European tyranny"[29] in the eyes of the English Reformers and wider Protestant adherents. However, much to the dismay of many staunch Englishmen and Protestant adherents, the English Reformation, in its purest and most original state, was in no way concerned with theological growth, reappraisal, or betterment. Rather, the roots of the Reformation in England can be effectively summed up through the recognition of

---

[25] Peter Marshall, *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1.
[26] Peter Marshall, "(Re)Defining The English Reformation", *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 565.
[27] Marshall, *The Reformation,* 20.
[28] Barbara Bombi, *Anglo-Papal Relations in the Early Fourteenth Century: A Study in Medieval Diplomacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 16.
[29] Marshall, *The Reformation,* 24.

one figure: Catherine of Aragon (c. 1485 – 1536). While there are many historians and contemporaneous accounts (including those of William Stubbs, E.A. Freeman, and J.R. Green) who refuse to acknowledge that the summation of the English Reformation was essentially due to Henry VIII's desire to divorce Catholic Spanish icon Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry the latest object of his desires, Anne Boleyn (c. 1501/1507 – 1536) – it can be said with relative certainty that "had Pope Clement VII agreed to annul the King's marriage to Catherine…[t]he Act of Supremacy would not have been needed and there would have been no [need]…to foster new doctrines at the highest levels in both the English Church and royal court"[30]. This more inherently political foundation to the English Reformation is evidenced in Kevin Sharpe's *Image Wars* in which the author clearly states that the Tudor monarchy, and by extension the English Reformation itself, was concocted as a "representation of their [Tudor] rule as vital as institutions, policies and practices to the stability and success of regal government"[31] which in turn led to the monarch(s) need to assume "the image of ruler as the unifying symbol"[32] and penultimate power over both church and state. Henry VIII's 1534 Act of Supremacy, although relatively brief in its initial proclamations, authoritatively severed any and all ecclesiastical ties the English nation, and its monarch, had to the Roman Catholic Church and papacy. Now a relic of English and international political history, the 1534 Act of Supremacy, the first version of subsequent Acts of Supremacy under later British monarchs to come, states that:

> Albeit, the King's Majesty justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England, and so is recognised by the clergy of this realm in their Convocations; yet nevertheless for corroboration and confirmation thereof, and for increase of virtue in Christ's religion within this realm of England, and to repress and extirpate all errors, heresies and other enormities and abuses heretofore used in the same, Be it enacted by authority of this present Parliament that the King our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors Kings of this realm, shall be taken, accepted and reputed the only supreme head in earth of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia…and that our said sovereign lord, his heirs and successors Kings of this realm, shall have full power and authority from time to time to visit, repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner spiritual authority or jurisdiction ought or may lawfully be reformed, repressed, ordered, redressed, corrected, restrained or amended, most to the pleasure of Almighty God, the increase of virtue in Christ's religion, and for the conservation of the peace, unity and tranquillity of this realm… [33].

The assertions made in the 1534 version of the Act of Supremacy ensure that, from a legislative standpoint, the newly established Church of England, and the rights and responsibilities of its sovereign monarch Henry VIII, are afforded the utmost protection against not only the Roman Catholic Church and other European powers, but by Englishmen themselves. While the Act of Supremacy was the official document certifying the encompassing power of the English

[30] Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and The English Reformation* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1.
[31] Sharpe, Kevin. *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660*. New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010. 12.
[32] Sharpe, *Image Wars,* 13.
[33] UK Parliament, "Act of Supremacy 1534 – UK Parliament", accessed November 27 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/collections/common-prayer/act-of-supremacy/.

monarch, prior to its release was The Act of Restraint of Appeals of 1533, led by English parliamentarians, notably Thomas More (c. 1478 – 1535), which essentially "denied authority to the papacy"[34] by proclaiming the sovereignty of the royal estate of the imperial crown remained with the King, therefore ensuring a doctrine of royal supremacy prior to officially separating from the Catholic Church[35]. While these documents refer specifically to the religious commandment of England itself, the obscure theological specifications within both texts, expressed rather vaguely in the Act of Supremacy as the King "shall have full power and authority…to repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempts and enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any manner spiritual authority…"[36], merely amount to the situation in which Henry VIII was universally powerful across England and could not be questioned, dethroned, or chastised in any legalistic capacity. The amorphous nature of the early parliamentary texts which solidified the establishment of the Church of England, and Henry VIII's royal supremacy, ensured that "immanent royal presence became an animating and redemptive real presence, bringing ruler and ruled together in a communion stronger than any proffered by an alien papal authority"[37] and entirely in service to the desires of the monarch, however superfluous or short-sighted they may have been. Through a retroactive appraisal of English history, it is clear that "the young Henry VIII cast envious eyes at the [Catholic] Church's wealth"[38] but waited, for both personal and territorial reasons, to challenge the Catholic Church until a vision of "a single kingdom of England"[39] was both financially feasible, theologically within reach, and personally gratifying.

1.2 The Monarchical Response to Reformation: Cranmer and Cromwell

Although now historically considered one of the most marvelous and revolutionary periods in English history, the English Reformation was not necessarily viewed as such in its contemporary setting. While Henry VIII's intentions were clear – to divorce Catherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn by creating the Church of England – the country itself was firmly Catholic prior to the Church's instatement, as the large remainder of continental Europe was also Catholic and subject to the doctrine(s) of Papal Supremacy and Catholic liturgy. More pressing than the country's religion was that of the King's – prior to Henry VIII's desire to dissolve his marriage from Catherine of Aragon, all accounts describe the King as pious and a true Catholic. The King's Catholic fervor was commonly known as it was detailed in his *Defence of the Seven Sacraments* of the Catholic Church in 1521, which will be addressed forthwith. The English response to the Reformation was of course divided; some relished in the opportunity to establish their nations "new priorities of communal life, to refashion the…identity"[40] of the English nation

---

[34] Richard McCoy, *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 15.
[35] McCoy, *Alterations of State*, 14-15.
[36] UK Parliament, "Act of Supremacy 1534 – UK Parliament", accessed November 27 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/collections/common-prayer/act-of-supremacy/.
[37] McCoy, *Alterations of State*, 15.
[38] Diarmaid McCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life*, (New York: Viking, 2018), 13.
[39] McCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell*, 13.
[40] Christopher Warley, "Reforming the Reformers: Robert Crowley and Nicholas Udall," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, ed. Michael Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 273.

itself, while others were firmly against Henrician Reform and the "heretic who denied the pope's authority…a perjurer who violated…[his] coronation oath which provided a defense of the Catholic faith"[41]. Far more pressing than the praise that the English Reformation received from some members of English society at the time, particularly those who had experienced excommunication, ostracization, and financial obligations to/from the Catholic Church, was the vast and unprecedented theological, liturgical, and doctrinal changes the English Reformation engendered. The specific doctrinal and liturgical changes made due to the creation of the Church of England will be outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Henry VIII's Church of England, although established as a mainly political and territorial entity, required theological distinction, and dissent, from the doctrine of the Catholic Church it sought to leave behind. Scholars debate on the theological intents, if there were any, of Henry VIII in creating the Church of England, but can agree that the theological aspects, refined liturgical practice, limiting of sacramentology, and overall doctrinal structure of the Church of England was due to the steadfast work of Thomas Cranmer (c. 1489 – 1556). Thomas Cranmer is now known as "the man to [have] guide[d] the English Reformation"[42] and served as The Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as one of Henry VIII's most trusted and revered advisors during the emergence of the new Church. Arguably, Cranmer's ecclesiastical authority was held in higher standing to Henry VIII's, as Cranmer invariably "codified doctrine and ritual for his church"[43], the Church of England, and in doing so ensured that Henry VIII was able to "assert the royal supremacy, and the general renovation of the Church, without embracing Lutheran doctrine"[44]; this therefore allowed for a specifically English character to emerge within the Church of England.

While Cranmer was the leading English theologian at the time, his theological developments and famed works were bolstered and further refined by Henry VIII's Chief Minister from 1534-1540, Thomas Cromwell (c. 1485 – 1540). Cromwell was known to be "an exceptionally cosmopolitan Englishman, with a web of connections…"[45] and as such he was able to redefine and resituate his mercantile roots "into a power-base for England's developing Protestantism"[46]. Cromwell's particular brand of wit, intellect, and ingenuity eventually landed him at King Henry VIII's court. Reportedly, Cromwell's "rise into royal favour was so swift and unexpected"[47] that his contemporaries, namely Thomas Cranmer, were incredibly impressed at how easily the former merchant was welcomed into court and made a legitimate member of Parliament. Both Cranmer and Cromwell were integral in ensuring that royal supremacy was asserted, and maintained, prior to and early within the establishment of the Church of England. Both men "oversaw or even devised these constitutional changes"[48] in order to oppose fervently and eruditely "the power of ecclesiastical courts…[and promote] common law over canon law"[49]. It is paramount to note that both Cranmer and Cromwell were, prior to their service under

[41] John Vidmar OP, *English Catholic* Historians, 14.
[42] Peter Ackroyd, *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2012), 55.
[43] John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudors Origins of the Protestant Tradition*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 122.
[44] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 102.
[45] McCulloch, *Cromwell*, 27.
[46] McCulloch, *Cromwell*, 27.
[47] McCulloch, *Cromwell*, 104.
[48] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 73.
[49] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 73.

King Henry VIII, valued members and highly praised figures within the papal curia and the wider Catholic community. Therefore, it is paramount to address how Henry VIII's co-opting of the Protestant Reformation, into the English Reformation, resulted in a paradigm shift of theological and national allegiances that had remained largely untouched for centuries (with the important exception of the proto-Protestant Lollard movement in the 14th century). Cranmer and Cromwell, the two most powerful English Reformers and creators of English national identity, were initially in service to the Catholic Church which sought universal European papal supremacy. The deep entanglement between Church and State was incredibly precarious during the emergence of the Church of England and as such the reception of the English Reformation was predicated upon the ability of formerly, or in certain cases current, Catholics to put aside their own faith in order to "sanctify places, things, institutions, and rulers"[50] all in the service of English royal supremacy and the emergence of a distinct English national identity. Cranmer in particular had various encounters with the papal curia, and the Pope himself, as he spent the majority of 1530 in Italy. Cranmer's personal correspondence reveals that throughout his time in Italy, the then Dr. Cranmer was open with the English monarch about how "pessimistic…the Pope's hostility to the English investigation"[51] was and furthermore how Cranmer firmly believed that "the Pope with all his Cardinals [are] extremely against us"[52]. After Cranmer's time in Italy, Henry VIII enlisted Cranmer to aid with "his campaigning to intimidate the English [Catholic] Church authorities"[53], which ultimately led to Cranmer's meeting with the reformers of continental Europe. These meetings with the reformers swung the tide in England's direction as Cranmer was now able to produce "congenial and profitable literary work for the King's cause in a variety of capacities"[54] and in doing so ensure that Cranmer "began developing the [rhetorical] skills which would bear the most fruit in the greatest editorial task of his life, the Book of Common Prayer"[55]. Therefore, while Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer both played an integral role in the development and expansion of the Church of England, Thomas Cranmer should truly be given more praise as a rhetorician and politician as he laid the foundation upon which Thomas Cromwell was able to build the doctrine of the Church. While both Cranmer and Cromwell served the English crown and were responsible for a series of major reforms and developments, Cranmer's corrections are unfortunately overshadowed by the far more sensational narrative of Cromwell's life, and death, at the hands of the King. However, while not necessarily academically pertinent, Cromwell's fame far outweighs Cranmer's due to Cromwell's execution in 1540 as it lends itself rather kindly to the mainstream narrative of Henry VIII's supposed inherently monstrous nature.

1.3 The Aesthetic Theory of the English Reformation: Material and Literary Culture

The particular aesthetic theory, or qualities, which define the English Reformation are decidedly unique in that they not only created the modern conception of England as a distinct nation but did so through co-opting, and somewhat indiscriminately combining, existing

[50] McCoy, *Alterations of State*, 22.
[51] MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996. 49.
[52] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 50.
[53] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 52.
[54] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 53.
[55] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 54.

European culture(s) into a homogenized English identity. Therefore, simply stated, the English national identity and culture which emerged during the English Reformation was in actuality not purely English at all, but was crafted, interpreted, and represented in such a way that the dissemination of this cross-bred cultural identity was received as wholeheartedly English.

During the English Reformation, Henry VIII was largely unconcerned with the theological particularities of the Church of England, as he was preoccupied with ensuring a male heir and furthering the Tudor Dynasty. Henry VIII's lack of awareness of the profound impact theology and worship had on the English nation went largely unrecognized due to "the King's ambivalence over the question of religious reform"[56]. Reports on Henry's true theological allegiances differ, with some scholars certifying that the King "remained a Catholic at heart"[57] while others fervently deny his devotion and assert that "the patriotic aspects of the Reformation…struck [the King] and contemporaries far more forcibly than any doctrinal change"[58]. Regardless of Henry VIII's personal/internal opinions or theological allegiances, the facts of the development of the English Reformation remain the same – "the Tudors treated the realm as though it was their manor, and the church as if it were their parish…in both spheres their power was shared"[59] and it was of the utmost importance that the nationalization of the Church was far more pressing than its specific doctrinal qualities. During its conception, the English Reformation was concerned with its reception as truly English in a visible and tangible aesthetic quality rather than defining itself through oppositional theological doctrine or liturgy; therefore, making the early stages of the English Reformation a purely aesthetic and exclusively performative enterprise rather than a definitively theological and faith-based endeavour. This particular cultural fusion, or co-opting of European culture and aesthetics, is epitomized through various figures in the Reformation and post-Reformation eras; mainly Lucas Horenbout / Hornebolte, John Bale, Hans Holbein the Younger, and later William Shakespeare.

However, the aesthetic quality of the early Reformation period did take on a specific theological tonality that was naturally derivative from King Henry VIII's desire to solidify England as a sovereign and affluent nation. Furthermore, the necessity of reintroducing artistry into the core of English identity was crucial due to the lack of artistic development and innovation brought about during the War of the Roses (1455 – 1487). For example, the Tudor legacy was strongly predicated upon the creation of a specifically Tudor interpretation of magnificence and lionization of various English styles, religious elements, and political forces which sought to consolidate England under the so-called *one rose*. This ideology, and literal symbology, of the *one rose* sought to free England from its previous dependency to either the white (Lancaster) or red (York) rose and instead strengthen the nation with the Tudor Rose – although Henry VII was the first monarch to use the Tudor rose at times, Henry VIII was the first monarch to popularize the emblem which has led to its continued use within the United Kingdom's coat of arms. The Tudor rose, among many other aesthetic and symbolic elements, highlights the means in which the Tudor monarchy was crafted with an intentional and discerning aesthetic eye.

However, Henry VIII's most declarative and tangible take on his separation from Rome was undertaken through the equally declarative, tangible, and profoundly anti-Catholic sentiment

---

[56] Alex Woolf, *The Tudor Kings and Queens: The Dynasty that Forged a Nation*, (Bickels Yard: Arcturus Publishing, 2020), 89.
[57] Woolf, *Tudor Kings and Queens*, 89.
[58] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 34.
[59] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 34.

of the dissolution of the monasteries. While English society at the time was aware of monastic reform/restructuring and various aesthetic expansions, or even the "spectacle of Churches taken out of use and clergy removed"[60], Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries was the first major and widespread attempt at faith-based symbolic and aesthetic destruction within the Early Modern period. The more permanent effects, and theological reasoning and implications, behind the dissolution of the monasteries will be discussed later in this thesis, however, it is of the utmost importance to first situate why monastic dissolution was used as an aesthetic tool during the English Reformation. As mentioned previously, England and Europe at large had experienced monastic dissolution before, but simply not to the extent in which Henry VIII's campaign was taken out, therefore making this particular English experience of the dissolution of the monasteries "the exception to what emerged as the European rule [or practice] for the dissolution of monasteries…it was unmatched in its scale"[61] and ultimately sought for the permanent removal of England's medieval religious houses.

During Henry VIII's rule, and the Tudor Dynasty at large, monastic tradition was well-engrained within English society, as the lay Englishman was "charged with greater knowledge than their forebearers"[62] on the wider structure and role of the monastery within England. This knowledge of the pastoral, religiously embellished, and romantic qualities of monastic life that are portrayed in the Arthurian legends, that were released by William Caxton in 1485 – the year that King Henry VII took to the throne – preoccupied the nation's cultural foundation. Common in these legends and other early modern English literature, largely fairy stories and fantasy adjacent literature, was the notion that these tales "bequeathed most of the key images to them [the Tudor society] to modernity"[63] and served as a tradition concerned with "broader culture at all levels of society…[that was] defined as a body of ideas and beliefs"[64] that united the nation. Central to all of these narratives, particularly that of the famed Sir Galahad, was the overarching idea that "before the teaching and worship of the institutional [Catholic] Church washed over them"[65] the priority was placed on the reverence "of kingship, knighthood, and national identity"[66], which often found itself heavily wrapped up in the notion of a sacred or mythical form of Christianity that was native to England. This particular nationalistic form of Christianity was promulgated by Henry VIII prior to his dissolution of the monasteries and separation from the Catholic Church. Tournai, now largely known as Henry VIII's Tower, was taken by the English forces in 1513 in what was described by John Taylor, Clerk of the Parliaments, as a profoundly religious and borderline sacramental juncture in which:

> On the 24th [September 1513], the King entered it [Tournai], met by the chief men of the city – their horses and mules having the English ensigns painted on paper before them. At the first gate, the King passed under a canopy of gold and silk prepared by the citizens, and carried by six of the principal burgesses – others attending bearing wax torches conducted him to the Cathedral, where, after service, the King made several knights.

---

[60] James G. Clark, *The Dissolution of the Monasteries: A New History*, (Cornwall: Yale University Press, 2021), 3.
[61] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 7.
[62] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 23.
[63] Ronald Hutton, "The Making of the Early Modern British Fairy Tradition," *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 1137.
[64] Hutton, "British Fairy Tradition", 1137.
[65] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 24.
[66] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 24.

> After dinner in the market place a deputy chosen by the citizens offered the city, its inhabitants, and their good, to Henry [VIII], on which the people shouted *Vive le Roi*.

This profoundly heroic, spiritually moving, and indubitably Arthurian retelling of Henry VIII's conquest of Tournai is in near perfect alignment with the notions of messianic rites and ceremonies, nationalistic proclamations of eternal glory, and common literary elements of monarchical veneration and idealization common in Early Modern England. Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries took place during the 1530s; this particular event at Tournai took place seventeen years prior, which only further highlights the massive shift undertaken by Henry VIII upon his separation from the Catholic Church.

Perhaps propelled or inspired by Biblical narratives and Arthurian legends themselves, Henry VIII made the conscious aesthetic, and forceful, choice to no longer simply adhere to or imbue himself with the qualities of literary heroes and Biblical protagonists, but rather chose to become an object of veneration and chronicle himself, seeking to overthrow and supersede the eminence of sacred and treasured traditions in the goal of making himself a God amongst men. Therefore, the dissolution of the monasteries, although religiously inclined and affiliated, was ultimately part of a larger scheme in which Henry VIII would attempt to redefine English history, literary culture, and monastic life in order to "plan for their [the monasteries] restoration less than a year before the accession of the monarch [as the Supreme Head of the Church of England] who would lead them into a new Protestant world"[67]. Henry VIII's implicit and purposeful acquisition of England's most treasured symbols, literary tradition, and devout faith were deconstructed then later rebuilt upon the notion that King Henry VIII was to be the eternal legend of the English nation in both history and faith; essentially, overshadowing the sacred veneration or literary hail of any other figure that potentially held more power than he did.

[67] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 56.

Chapter 2: Henry VIII and the Institutionalization of the Church of England

2.1 The Creation of the Church of England: A Summation of Challenges & Goals

Henry VIII's annulment to Catherine of Aragon in 1533, or rather their marriage itself in 1509, marks the unofficial start of the English Reformation and the creation of the Church of England. While reformed theologies and a more discerning eye had been cast on the practices of the Catholic Church in the past decades, Henry VIII's extremely well-orchestrated and premeditated expulsion of Catherine from England's monarchy was seen as a resounding success amongst the English court. Henry's reasons for divorce were multitudinous, however they can be summed up in a rather neat manner in stating that "the Queen [Catherine] was the symbol of a rejected alliance"[68] between Henry VIII and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, and as such "the welfare of his [Henry VIII's] kingdom would be best served by repudiating Catherine"[69]. The propulsion for annulment was remotely theological at best, with Henry VIII firmly clinging to his decidedly literalistic interpretation of Leviticus 20:21, which states that "If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity; he has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless"[70]. However, this biblical fragment was inarguably not the source of Henry VIII's true reasons for divorce, as Catherine of Aragon had already provided Henry with a child, Mary I, and as such the biblical assertion of damnation that Henry so feared proved to be entirely invalid. Henry VIII's true reasons for seeking an annulment to Catherine of Aragon can be amounted to in two very superficial statements: the English King sought to indulge his desires with newfound love interest Anne Boleyn, who "refused to become his mistress"[71], and to enact the "Great Cause, which was to have incalculable consequences for subsequent English history"[72] and ensure the King was memorialized, lionized, and venerated more so than any other monarch in history. Therefore, the Church of England, and the English Reformation itself, was born out of political, territorial, and mainly personal gain resulting in "the subordination of the Church to the State as a sort of government department – and the royal supremacy…[which] vested its headship in the person of the King"[73]. While the nuances and various political and ecclesiastical policies that were circumnavigated in order to ensure the King's annulment with Catherine of Aragon are numerous and worthy of their own solitary study, the particular narrative and argumentative propulsion of this thesis comes from the aftermath of the annulment/divorce and begins with the creation of the Church of England as a legitimate doctrinal, liturgical, and theological institution.

The Church of England's fundamental propositions, although developed and restructured up to the modern day, originally stemmed from what can be summarised as the main Henrician principles, these being "a strong anti-papalism with a commitment to the supreme authority to Scripture, he [Henry VIII] rejected justification by faith alone and asserted free will; and he opposed idolatry and superstition while believing in the corporeal presence in the eucharist"[74]. In

---

[68] Allan G.R. Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England 1529 – 1660*, (London: Longman, 1997), 17.
[69] Smith, *Emergence of a Nation State*, 17.
[70] Leviticus 20:21, NRSV
[71] Smith, *Emergence of a Nation State*, 17.
[72] Smith, *Emergence of a Nation State*, 17.
[73] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 8.
[74] Susan Doran and Christopher Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England 1500 – 1700*, (Oxon: Routledge, 2003), 18.

summation, these ideas are a mix of well entrenched Catholic doctrinal and liturgical practices, coupled with newer Reformation ideologies. Therefore, in its initial theological stages, the Church of England could be viewed as a *media via*, or middle way, between staunch Catholicism and the opposing emergent Protestantism. Yet it is imperative to note how this middle way engendered discourse on political and diplomatic structures of the Church, which ultimately "encouraged theological experimentation in England"[75]. However, the efforts made by the likes of Thomas Cranmer, Thomas Cromwell, and Bishop Edward Foxe (c. 1496 – 1538) to situate a distinctive and accessible theological foundation more definitively for the Church of England were incredibly tumultuous and, at first, received severe condemnation from King Henry VIII. Cromwell and Cranmer, later joined by Foxe, "used their considerable influence to promote reform in the Church and advance [the merit and support] of evangelicals who questioned the sacramental power of the priesthood [within the Catholic Church] and defended the translation of the Bible into English"[76]. However, the publication of the *Bishop's Book* of 1537, also known as *The Institution of a Christian Man*, was met with major disapproval from Henry VIII, as the theologies described were far more Lutheran leaning than the King had intended his Church to be. In order to rectify what the King perceived as a gross misinterpretation of his theological adherences, "he withheld his full assent, merely authorising its publication and use for a period of three years"[77], which allowed the King to craft *The King's Book* of 1540 which definitely situated the theology of the Church of England in stating that while the Church of England "adopts the classic Catholic defence of prayer for the dead…it attacks the gamut of papal teaching on purgatory…[offering] an official repudiation of the name itself"[78]. Therefore, from 1540 onward, the overarching concern of the Church of England was to "have made the Crown financially independent for generations, with no need to call Parliament"[79] and in doing so "ensuring that the Reformation was maintained, and Roman Catholicism was never fully restored"[80]. However, these goals were vastly unrealistic and situated the Church in the particular position of pleasing and ensuring the King's will rather than that of the English people and their religious allegiances.

Henry VIII ascended to the English throne in 1509. However, his kingship up until the late 1520s was relatively unexciting and traditional. Arguably the true rise or instigation of the English Reformation occurred in 1529 when Henry's attempted to find a religiously palatable means in which to part with Catherine of Aragon and was rewarded by the court's finding of the *Lenges Anglorum* of 187 AD, which chronicled how Lucius I became the first Christian King of England. Why this particular text was so revolutionary lies in the fact that the pope at the time, Pope Eleutherus, is quoted as corresponding with Lucius of Britain and stating that "you [the King] are the vicar of God in your own realm"[81], and in doing so set a precedent "whereupon the pope had [stated]…that the King did not need any Roman intervention"[82] in matters of state. The English state's discovery that there was documented historical precedent that the King need not defer to the pope in regard to religiosity within England allowed for Thomas Cranmer and the King's council to conclude that Henry VIII had legitimate grounds to act of his own free will.

---

[75] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 14.
[76] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 14.
[77] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 122.
[78] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation,* 128-129.
[79] Woolf, *The Tudor Kings and Queens*, 89.
[80] Woolf, *The Tudor Kings and Queens,* 89.
[81] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 59.
[82] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 59.

Once brought to the King, these papers reportedly set ablaze Henry's desire to secede with the papacy and in early 1530, having been informed of William Tyndale's anti-clerical works and the rise of Reformation within continental Europe, the King "declared that the pope was an ignorant man and not fit to be any kind of universal pastor"[83]. With this newly gleaned information in hand and Henry's growing impatience with Catherine and the papacy, along with the King's vastly accelerating frustration with Anne Boleyn's refusal to be mistress, Henry officially began his crusade to rule separately from the Catholic Church in a manner that was situated upon the proposition of "entire Englishmen against Englishmen papisticate"[84]. In early 1531, with the recall of Parliament, the English clergy was officially transferred from St. Paul's (a then Catholic stronghold) to Westminster (the eventual heart of Anglicanism), and in doing so Henry VIII launched the first step in moving forward with the English Reformation – now "both bodies [church and state] would be under the King's thumb"[85]. All later developments, both doctrinal and institutional, were made possible by the King's initial action in reclaiming the clergy as his own. However, this assertion of kingship in 1531 formally ignited the hostility of the Catholic Church against England – both King and country.

2.2 The Papal Conflict and Birth of Royal Supremacy

The Catholic Church's response to the English Reformation was fervent and explicit, while England did not ignite a physical war with the papacy, the papal response to English reform was exacted as such. Importantly, while the Protestant Reformation was already well under way across continental Europe when Henry VIII officially began his crusade against the papacy, no other nation or monarch had shown such staunch violation and complete disregard of the papacy on such a massive scale. While the English nationalistic standpoint of the Reformation is well documented, it is understood that the English Catholic community of historians "have not contributed much to its own history…their reluctance is understandable"[86] and most denominationally driven accounts, especially those of the Catholic variety, are deemed to be somewhat of a futile attempt by the "embarrassed or over-devout…sustaining [of] tradition"[87]. However, this stance is short-sighted and frankly bigoted – while there of course is bias when looking at any source, in order to truly understand the ramifications of the English Reformation, and to grasp the era in its totality, the Catholic perspective is valid, astute, and absolutely necessary. The Catholic Church, and its aesthetics in regard to symbology and sacramentology, have always been deeply embedded in the ethos of the "incarnational in promoting its church and its sacraments as a perpetual extension of Christ's incarnation"[88]. In adopting such an omnipresent aura, the Catholic Church was historically extraordinarily successful in supressing or relegating "its opponents as heretics, until Protestant achieved unprecedented victories in the sixteenth century"[89]. With the rise of Protestantism, and various issues within the institution of the Catholic Church, the European continent (and abroad) were offered an alternative route in which their faith would still be upheld but asserted and addressed in their own terms, on a less formal system, and with much more accessibility. The official

[83] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 60.
[84] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 62.
[85] Ackroyd, *Tudors*, 62.
[86] Bossy, John. *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. 1.
[87] Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*, 1.
[88] McCoy, *Alterations of State*, 2.
[89] McCoy, *Alterations of State*, 2.

doctrinal and theological Catholic response to the newfound freedoms and liberties that arose with the rise of Protestantism is colloquially referred to as the Counter-Reformation or, more positively, the Catholic Reformation. However, a later period of Catholic reform emerged specifically under the circumstances of the English Reformation – this series of reforms are not the same as those made during the Counter/Catholic Reformation. The Catholic Reforms only truly developed under Pope Paul III (pp. 1534 – 1539) and were continued by Pope Paul IV (pp. 1555 – 1559). Prior to the Council of Trent (c. 1545 – 1563), the Catholic Church sought to address the complaints that were initially made by Martin Luther in 1517 and further expounded upon by the various Protestant Reformist movements that were created during the developmental stages of the Protestant Reformation. Notably, this official period of Church reform led by the Catholics occurred at a different time than the English Reformation – therefore, the overall Catholic response to the English Reformation should not be entirely aligned with the Counter Reformation movement of the late 16th and early 17th centuries as it was more directly aimed at the Protestant Reformation at large. Rather, the Catholic reforms and response to the English Reformation should be looked at in their own specific circumstances and are more fittingly associated with the more immediate contemporary beliefs of the English Reformation where "Catholic apologists and High Church men…reaffirmed the [early] characterizations"[90] of England and its monarch as an enabler "of the religious as victims of a reign of terror…[with] Henry VIII as a wicked monster"[91].

It is of the utmost importance to remember that Henry VIII, prior to the creation of the Church of England, was a devout Catholic having reportedly penned the *Assertio septem sacramentorum* in 1521 which rather viciously condemned and "pounded the heresies of Martin Luther"[92]. While many scholars argue that Henry himself did not actually write the handbook, the mere fact that he fervently supported it and agreed to act as its author shows the lengths of his Catholic devotion earlier in his reign. A key element of the Catholic response to the English Reformation comes from this shift in loyalties the King so callously displayed and was further reinforced by the fact that the marriage he sought to annihilate was to Catherine of Aragon, a beacon of European Catholicism. Not only did England's separation from Rome seem religiously incoherent, but it was also a true affront on Henry's virtuous Catholic Queen that was promulgated out of "pure wanton lust…in scruples of conscience"[93]. Henry's union with Catherine upon his ascension to the throne is described as a "solemnisation of marriage"[94] and the King became concerned with political and personal exigency because "the emergence of the doctrine of the royal supremacy is inextricably bound up with the pursuit of divorce"[95]. Henry VIII's Act of Dispensations, or the Ecclesiastical Licenses Act, of early 1534 did not explicitly do away with Catholic doctrine, as it stated "that the King did not intend to vary from the congregation of Christ's Church in any things concerning the very articles of the Catholic faith of Christendom"[96] but rather focused on allowing annulment or divorce specifically. However, this proclamation was clearly understood by the papacy and its Catholic contingents to mean that Henry VIII had begun trifling with the notion of papal dispensation "as his temperament was

[90] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 15.
[91] Clark, *Dissolution of the Monasteries*, 16.
[92] Marius, Richard C. "Henry VIII, Thomas More, and the Bishop of Rome." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 10 (1978): 89–107. https://doi.org/10.2307/4048429. 89.
[93] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 1.
[94] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 2.
[95] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 7.
[96] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 14.

such that he could never allow any challenge to his authority to go unanswered, and if he could help it, unpunished"[97].

While tensions and dissent were evident between the monarch and the papacy during Henry VIII's mission to divorce his wife, the true conflict between the two major powers was due to the momentum provided to the King's cause with the introduction of Thomas Cranmer. Cranmer was a "most effective agent in sabotaging the whole enterprise"[98] of the Catholic Church within England due to his rhetorical expertise, shrewd investigative abilities, and his growing experience and nationalistic ferver as an English reformer. Cranmer flourished, with the help of Thomas Cromwell, to characterize the English Reformation and propose doctrinal and liturgical alterations that were logically sound as "he appealed to the [Biblical] past…to emphasize Bible-reading as a central precept of the monastic life…[and] ordered that the Scripture should be expounded in English"[99], giving the English Reformation its particularly literary aesthetic quality. Cranmer manufactured the means in which the Act of Supremacy was able to alter "the operation of the Royal Supremacy…[and] explicitly gave Henry the right"[100] to organize government/state legislation while maintaining royal power in the church. However, Cromwell's involvement proved troublesome and inadvertently undermined the Kings cause as prior to the instatement of Cranmer's carefully crafted Act of Supremacy instated in late 1534, Cromwell's goals in ceasing Cranmer's power and influence became clear and was shown through "an unequal partnership between himself and Cranmer, in which the Archbishop [Cranmer] should play the main public role, but under controls institutionally expressed by the various links to the Chancery"[101] – Cromwell's domain. Cromwell's quest for power, and evident entanglement in bolstering his own position in the 1534 Act of Supremacy, are merely two of the factors which resulted in his later execution in 1540, and the subsequent need to continually reform, adjoin, and compose further adjustments to the base foundation of the Church of England – its establishment and certification of royal supremacy – for generations to come.

2.3. The Acts of Supremacy, Acts of Uniformity, and the Elizabethan Settlement

At the core of the Church of England, and the English Reformation as a whole, are the political acts, settlements, mandates, and proclamations which allowed for English national identity and culture to be forged during the reign of the Tudor dynasty. No aesthetic developments would have been possible, and the entire argument of this thesis rendered null and void, without the political and theological groundwork that allowed for a new nationalistic and cultural aesthetic to develop. The various Acts of Supremacy, Acts of Uniformity, Ordination of Ministers, Jesuits etc. Act 1584, and countless others cemented the foundation of the Church of England and the integral role both monarch and theology were to play in English society; which in turn allowed for the aesthetic revival of England's monarch and propelled the nationalistic ornamentation of both church and state. While *The Book of Common Prayer* is the chief source of the Church of England's operations and doctrine, and England's conception of monarchy itself, *The Book* alone does not allow for cultural advancement through aesthetic reappraisal.

---

[97] Marius, "The Bishop of Rome", 101.
[98] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 125.
[99] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 128.
[100] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 129.
[101] MacCulloch, *Cranmer*, 134.

Therefore, in order to certify the claims made within *The Book of Common Prayer* and properly situate the roots of the aesthetic developments brought on by the English Reformation, a chronological explanation regarding the development and intent of some of the key political statutes is required.

The (First) Act of Supremacy of 1534 is the foundational political determination that made Henry VIII, and all subsequent monarchs, the Supreme Head of the Church of England and vested the monarch to "have full power and authority…whatsoever they may be"[102] in both ecclesiastical and national affairs. This proclamation made by the first Act of Supremacy necessitated the importance of the sentiment that "the image and perception of the monarch were [as] essential to the exercise of royal authority"[103] as were the manuscripts declaring such authority. This version of the Act of Supremacy lasted relatively uncontested within English parliamentary and ecclesiastical discourse until Mary I, Henry VIII's staunchly Catholic daughter with Catherine of Aragon, was deemed legitimate in a repeal of the 1534 Act of Supremacy in 1544. However, upon Mary I's death and the end of her short reign, preceded by Edward VI's, the reign of Elizabeth I began and the Act of Supremacy of 1558 was instated. This version of the supremacy act was more so politically poignant than personally motivated like Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy. The Act of 1558 did largely maintain the same elements as that of the 1534 Act. However, this Elizabethan Act had a clear terminological and nominative change made in order to promote religious toleration. The 1558 Act used the term *Supreme Governor* rather than *Supreme Head* – this one word alteration resulted in the monarchy, and the Church of England, being viewed in a far more accommodating and reverent light as the new Queen showed her devotion to "the auspicious administration of her kingdom…advertising another essential virtue of the good ruler"[104] she was to be. Elizabeth I's Act of Supremacy sought to reinvigorate the Protestant and reformed values of her father Henry VIII's reign, distance herself from the tyranny and deterioration of her half-sister Mary I's reign, and most importantly solidify her own reign as both unyielding and authoritative. These goals are all reflected within the 1558 Act of Supremacy, which states that:

> Where in time of the reign of your most dear father of worthy memory, King Henry VIII, divers good laws and statutes were made and established, as well for the utter extinguishment and putting away of all usurped and foreign powers and authorities out of this your realm and other your highness's dominions and countries, as also for the restoring and uniting to the imperial crown of this realm the ancient jurisdictions, authorities, superiorities, and pre-eminences to the same of right belonging and appertaining… may it therefore please your highness, for the repressing of the said usurped foreign power and the restoring of the rights jurisdictions, and pre-eminences appertaining to the imperial crown of this your realm, that it may be enacted by the authority of this present parliament that the [acts/ policies of Mary I] be repealed, and shall from thenceforth be utterly void and of none effect . . . [and that Parliament] do utterly testify and declare in my conscience that the Queen's highness is the only supreme governor of this realm and of all other her highness's dominions and countries, as well in all spiritual or ecclesiastical things or causes as temporal, and that no foreign prince, person, prelate, state, or potentate hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power,

[102] UK Parliament, "Act of Supremacy 1534 – UK Parliament".
[103] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor* Monarchy, 82.
[104] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor* Monarchy, 331.

> superiority, pre-eminence, or authority, ecclesiastical or spiritual, within this realm; and therefore I do utterly renounce and forsake all foreign jurisdictions, powers, superiorities, and authorities, and do promise that from henceforth I shall bear faith and true allegiance to the Queen's highness, her heirs, and lawful successors…[105].

The assertions made in the 1558 Act of Supremacy, although remarkably similar to those of the 1534 Act, are more decisive in their language regarding royal supremacy and English national identity, they are clearly condemnatory of Mary I's reign and attempts to return England to the papacy, and forthright in declaring Elizabeth I's alignment and intention(s) "to establish a Henrician-style settlement, a form of Catholicism without the pope"[106] but to do so in the spirit or style of Protestantism "which called from religious reform"[107]. With the 1558 Act of Supremacy, an era, or series of religious and political reforms, known as the Elizabethan Settlement, began. While Elizabeth I's early reign showed no fervent "desire to liturgical change…no immediate intention of introducing a Protestant Prayer Book"[108], the Queen sought to establish a Henrician-style settlement that naturally engendered religious reform and a type of theological ambiguity which aided in rendering the Church of England more palatable for a wider audience. The Elizabethan Settlement is the precise era in which the English Reformation thrives spiritually, culturally, aesthetically, and nationalistically. While Elizabeth I's reign is characterized as the Golden Age of English history and monarchical adulation, the Act of Supremacy and the forging of the Church of England under Henry VIII were the main reasons as to why England was able to establish a long-lasting reign of monarchical reverence that was most popularly orchestrated under the Elizabethan regime. Furthermore, and more theologically pressing, were the means in which Elizabethan England was able to capitalize on the Protestant reforms and redetermination(s) of England as a nation under Henry VIII and Edward VI with the creation of the Church of England (Henry VIII) and the solidification of a theological doctrine (Edward VI) that was inextricably tied to the national pride and identity of the English people. While Edward VI's reign was by no means lengthy, his development of *The Book of Common Prayer* proved to be majorly influential in establishing England's unique liturgical character and provided the groundwork upon which Elizabeth I was able to further England's identity and theological standing as distinct from continental Europe.

2.4. Doctrinal Developments: The Church of England & *The Book of Common Prayer*

The Church of England's official certification, or doctrine of faith, was *The Book of Common Prayer,* first released in 1549 under the reign of Edward VI and with subsequent contemporaneous editions and edits up until 1662. The Church of England became officially realized and institutionalized with the liturgical text's mass release and universal usage throughout the English ecclesiastical framework. While there are a variety of aesthetic, cultural, and nationalistic aspects that need to be discussed in order to certify the larger importance of *The Book of Common Prayer*, this portion of my thesis is dedicated purely to the doctrinal and liturgical standing of the Church of England having been fully consolidated, for the first time, in

[105] UK Parliament, "Act of Supremacy 1558", accessed November 27 2021, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aep/Eliz1/1/1?timeline=false.
[106] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 21.
[107] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 21.
[108] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 21.

1549. The most salient changes engendered by *The Book of Common Prayer* are made in regard to England's development as a distinctive aesthetic national identity pertain to the notions of sacred kingship, the administration and postulation(s) regarding eucharistic phenomenology, and the re-administration of the calendar of the liturgical year. Notably, *The Book of Common Prayer* emerges after the dissolution of the monasteries and well into the Henrician Reform, being mass released to the English public some nineteen years after the first acts of English Reformation and under the newly minted King Edward VI, Henry VIII's sole male heir courtesy of Henry's third wife Jane Seymour. Prior to the Henrician Reform of the 1530s, "the view that the vast majority of the laity was deeply attached to the beliefs and practices of the Roman Catholic Church"[109] rang true throughout Europe, England included, and as such resulted in mass dissent, shock, and accusations of heresy when Henry VIII began his campaign for the Church of England and the rectification of certain Catholic practices. Due to the initial unceremonious reception of Henrician Reform across Europe and England, "the early Tudor Church of England stood in clear need of rationalization"[110] and therefore required a cohesive and defensible stance of Protestant polemics and the further recertification of the need for a national and sovereign Church in England. Therefore, it can be definitively stated that "the most lasting positive contribution of Henry VIII's Reformation to the popular religion of England was the official sanctioning [and mass dissemination] of the English Bible"[111] and the consequent development of *The Book of Common Prayer* under Edward VI, which it naturally engendered.

The main version of the English Bible that directly concerns the English Reformation is that of William Tyndale's (c. 1494 – 1536) translation from the 1520s, which was used by King Henry VIII to encourage "in many other ways the development of a popular religious culture that was literate and vernacular"[112]. This particular version of the Bible shaped English Protestant tradition by ensuring that "there was a considerable diversity of experience"[113] available for those who chose to, or were readily persuaded, to follow and adhere to the newly forming Church of England. The English vernacular translation of the Bible – translated from the original languages of the Bible (Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, etc.) and not from Latin translations, as was John Wycliffe's (c. 1328 – 1384) previously extant English Bible – are of the utmost importance in regard to the accessibility and the overall Protestant Reformation's *sola scriptura* shift to religious adherence and worship, did not address or quell the English laity's concerns "that religious and social ills were not easily to be distinguished"[114]. Therefore, the release of *The Book of Common Prayer* in 1549 under Edward VI, and the theologically and monarchically devoted Thomas Cranmer, allowed for the first official declaration of doctrine and liturgy of the Church of England [to be followed] for future generations. As such, the various doctrinal and liturgical receptions, or misconceptions, of Henry VIII's vague theological movements were firmly cemented in a cohesive text that spoke for the entirety of the Church of England and put to rest various rebellions, mainly the Western Rising or the Prayer Book Rebellion, which sought to ensure the "uniformity of service and [correct] administration of the sacraments throughout the realm"[115]. Edward VI's *The Book of Common Prayer* effectively put to rest the dissent and confusion surrounding the Church of England's official theological stance. Under the theological

[109] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 87.
[110] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 32.
[111] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 83.
[112] Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation,* 83.
[113] Doran and Durston, *Princes, Pastors and People*, 86.
[114] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 209.
[115] Ackroyd, *The Tudors,* 209.

and political advisement of Thomas Cranmer and the consequent Act of Uniformity of 1549, *The Book of Common Prayer* "became the standard liturgy of the Anglican Church…[on] the Eucharist…clerical marriage, imposed compulsory services in English, and ended veneration of the saints and the use of images in worship"[116]. While Henry VIII facilitated the development of the Church of England, his son and successor Edward VI was the monarch responsible for the first major doctrinal and liturgical proclamations of the Church. Importantly, while these various functions and practices of the Church would continue to change up until, and during the reign, of Elizabeth I, Edward VI should be rightfully given credit as the first monarch after Henry VIII's reign to truly continue the theological growth and development of the Church of England. *The Book of Common Prayer* makes a series of alterations, both major and minor, to the English ecclesiastical process.

The main point of contention within the English Reformation, and its swift and rather hasty disinclination to Catholic liturgical practice, centered around the historically contentious interpretation of the Gospel's phraseology of *Hoc est corpus meum*, translating to 'this is my body'. In traditional Christian, and more pressingly Catholic liturgical practice, Mass "was more than a celebration or memory…it was a re-enactment, in which Christ's body and blood miraculously reappeared and were sacrificed"[117] each time the Mass was performed. However, centuries prior to the Protestant and England Reformation(s), famed theologian Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274) sought to distinguish the nature of *things* versus the nature of *language*. In popularizing the Lateran Council of 1215's term *transubstantiatio*, Aquinas was able to assert that the substance of the bread used in Mass changes "but the accidents remain the same – it is still physically bread"[118], which lead to a rise in the notion that "Christ was bodily present in the Mass; but this 'real presence' could mean anything from a highlight abstract argument to a magical belief in a change in the properties"[119] of the bread. While Aquinas was Catholic and adopted, and interpreted the doctrine of transubstantiation as such, further discussion on the doctrine explained by Aquinas actually led to the creation of a counter doctrine – that of consubstantiation, although the official term was coined much later. Ultimately, within the Protestant community and reformed England, a view that was somewhat adjacent with the theology of Swiss Reformer Heinrich Zwingli took prominence, that of consubstantiation in which "it made no sense to interpret Christ's words literally…[the Mass] form(s) a covenant between God and man, a promise fulfilled by faith"[120] and not a literal sacrifice. However, it is crucial to note that the theology of reformed England was only Zwinglian in the sense that the nations doctrine regarding the Lord's Supper emerged from Zwingli's symbolic rendering of the eucharist, however the transformational or spiritual qualities of the eucharist were developed along the lines of traditional Calvinistic theology. The Calvinists understanding, which more directly aligns with the doctrines developed by the English Reformers maintains "a symbolic

[116] Woolf, *The Tudor Kings and Queens*, 101.

[117] Cummings, Brian, ed. *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. xxvi.

[118] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* xxvi.
[119] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* xxvi.
[120] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* xxvi.

instrumentalist understanding of the eucharist"[121]. Calvin's, and consequently the Church of England's, modelling of the eucharist comes from a variety of interwoven sources and opinions from other theologians, mainly those of Zwingli, Luther, Heinrich Bullinger, Henry Bucer, and in part Phillip Melanchthon[122]. Calvin's model of what would later come to be known as consubstantiation was predicated upon the notion, derived from the Council of Chalcedon's founding's in 451 BC, that the natures of Christ were indivisible bur rather evocative of a "distinction, but no separation (distinction sed non separatio)"[123]. In making this claim, Calvin was able to firmly cement that there was "a firm distinction between 'reality' and 'sign' [in the eucharist] that nevertheless would not separate"[124] Christ's personhood. Thomas Cranmer himself followed a blend of Zwinglian and Calvinist eucharistic theology and stated that the whole enterprise should be undertaken figuratively. The rise of the English Reformation and creation of the Church of England, coupled with rising critiques on the traditional understanding of the eucharist as cannibalistic or merely ritualistic, within the British Isles led to a coarser understanding of the eucharist. Records indicated that the seventeenth century English clergyman began to believe that "the words 'hocus pocus' to be a juggling corruption of the phrase *hoc est corpus"* and therefore further promoted consubstantiation within the Church of England. The very first edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, produced under Edward VI and Thomas Cranmer, in 1549 clearly outlines the beliefs of the Church of England in regard to what would become the doctrine of consubstantiation – clearly stating that:

> We received that holy Sacrament: (for when we spiritually eate the fleshe of Christ, and drinke his bloude, then we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, wee bee made one with Christ, and Christ with us) so is the daunger great, yf wee receive the same unworthely, for then we become gyltie of the body and the bloud of Christ our savior, we eate and drinke our owne damnacion, not considering the Lordes bodye…whiche by his precious bloud shedyng he hath obteigned to us, he hath lefte in those holy Misteries…for us to fede upon spiritually [125].

The later editions of *The Book of Common Prayer* retain this exact textual fragment, albeit in more modernized English, therefore highlighting the means in which the doctrine of consubstantiation has been fervently maintained throughout the course of the development of the Church of England. In the 1662 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the *Mass* is now referred to exclusively as the *Lord's Supper* and the Church of England as a governing *Office* rather than a *Ministracion*. These seemingly minor linguistic changes evidence the monumental growth of the Church of England's power and the monarchy so strongly affiliated with it. This growth is evident as the content of *The Book of Common Prayer* not only becomes more unwavering in its claims, but also visibly shifts from its initial Catholic-Apostolic, or blended practice, to a liturgy that is firmly rooted in "the whole state of Christ's Church [Church of

---

[121] Diarmaid MacCulloch. *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700*. New York, NY: Puffin Books, 2005. 178.

[122] MacCulloch, *Reformation,* 248.
[123] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 250.
[124] MacCulloch, *Reformation*, 250.
[125] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* 402.

England] militant here in earth"[126] where the "supre(a)m(e) [is] the position of the sovereign as the paramount authority in the Church of England"[127] and not God, or Christ, themselves.

[126] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* 407.
[127] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* 817.

Chapter 3: The Literary and Aesthetic Qualities of English Theology and Cultural Identity

3.1 The Ethos of Literary Culture: Manuscripts, the Printing Press, and the *Lingua Franca*

The English Reformation, and the plethora of theological, cultural, aesthetic, and nationalistic developments it engendered would not have been possible without the specifically English character of manuscript culture that was developed during, and after, the English Reformation through ensuring that English literature and writers were at the forefront of the emerging material culture. Manuscript culture, although evolving expeditiously throughout Europe after Johannes Gutenberg's introduction of the printing press to the European continent in 1440, became a rather English phenomenon as the newly emerging national power was able to ingratiate themselves to the notion that manuscripts, and larger literary culture, were at the very essence of the nation's ethos. Furthermore, while England itself would later become home to some of the most renowned poets and writers early modern Europe, initially England trailed behind the likes of the Italians and French on literary and wider artistic fronts. The English Reformation era, which neatly took place during the later end of the Italian and French Renaissance eras, focused on "literary work squarely in the context of religious, social, and political history…it isolates the most imaginative literature of the period…and provides readings of individual texts"[128] rather than producing vast chronicles, poignant verse, and enthralling prose which provide literature with its particularly whimsical and breathtaking qualities. Understandably so, England as a nation was far more preoccupied with solidifying its break from Rome and paving a clear path to English nationalism independent of former religious ties through the English Protestant intellectual works of William Tyndale, Simon Fish, John Frith, and Robert Barnes "in turning out sub-literary rhetorical forms, including appeals to the monarch, complaints against religious and social abuses, and barely fictionalized dialogues"[129]. This particular category of polemic and astringent literature, although absolutely necessary for the development of the Church of England and the consequent nationalistic veneration of the Tudor monarch(s) to occur, was by and large uninventive and lacked the compelling qualities of dramatic and rhapsodic literary forms which entertained the masses. However, with the emergence of John Bale (c. 1495 – 1563), the so-called *mythmaker* of the English Reformation, came the composition of a "large corpus of anti-Catholic plays…[which] synthesize the biblical form of the medieval mystery cycles with the allegorical conventions and psychomachia plot of the Tudor[s]"[130]. Bale's works, later popularized in the Elizabethan era after his exile from the English continent in 1548, lionized and exhumed "a large body of reformist poetry, dialogues, and satires"[131] which breathed new life into the previously dull and legalistic literature of the Henrician reforms. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to recognize that England's literary prowess and penchant for the dramatic arts was not won easily; in order for the nation to thrive, and to this day remain, a major international literary power, English artists, intellectuals, and the laity needed to live through the fastidious and piety laden times of the English Reformation and the development of the Church of England in order to re-emerge as a nation that was not only

[128] King, John N. *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.
[129] King, English Reformation Literature, 4.
[130] King, English Reformation Literature, 4.
[131] King, English Reformation Literature, 5.

ready, but willingly disposed to the prospect of a distinct English Renaissance which would lead the nation from Reformation to resplendence.

The success of the printing press in England, and the consequent rise of English language as *lingua franca* of the British Isles during the Reformation era, allowed for the nation to proliferate various texts which were not only English in character and production, but more explicitly English in their parlance during the Elizabethan and English Renaissance eras. The English parlance is stylistically dependent upon the notion, presented by literary critic Francis Barker, that English literary "subjection does not properly involve subjectivity at all, but a condition of a dependant membership in which place and articulation are defined not by an interiorized self-recognition…but by incorporation in the body politic which is the King's body in the social form"[132]. However, this connection between subject and subjectivity being so adamantly tied up in the notions of kingship raises a pertinent question in regard to the development of an English literary aesthetic – how does the literary excellence of the English literary system of the Renaissance era emerge from the extremely limited and plain literature of the Reformation era to create a national literary body? Simply put, English nationalism and English literary traditions are cardinally entwined as "it is from the Tudors that our English perception of a national identity is to be dated"[133] and therefore the notion of "nationality and literary greatness are made to coincide"[134] as fundamental compositions of English identity as both bound by King and country. England's precise literary character is dependent upon the forced involvement of the State into private, moral, personal, and household matters during Henrician reform and as such English literature, more so than any other nations literary ideals and constructs, is given permission and unadulterated access to "private, interior, and ultimate moral actualities – holiness and sin, guilt and repentance, heaven and hell – matters not usually thought of, now or then, as the business of the state and its rulers"[135]. English literature, in its most nascent form, is dependent upon the English Reformation's principle of unsanctioned sovereignty which "ignores the boundaries separating civil from ecclesiastical jurisdiction and the external from the penitential"[136]. While these innate characteristics of English literature are by no means savoury in the modern context, the lengths to which King and country were so extolled in England are constitutionally tied to the means in which the English literary culture was able to be so pervasive and unwavering in its development, given that English literary tradition is sacral to the nation's ethos.

While William Shakespeare is undoubtedly the heraldic and prominent figure within English literary culture, prior to Shakespeare's historic rise were a series of poets and playwrights who introduced the nation to the pastoral and waggish character now so ardently favoured within the English literary canon. Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* of 1400 are arguably the most famed work(s) of English literature prior to the Reformation era, however the *Tales* themselves are seminal in theological discourse and do not possess a particularly English character besides taking place in England itself. Although the works are now acclaimed and lauded within the literary canon, the true identity of English literature begins to emerge with

---

[132] Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Politics, and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1994. 14.
[133] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 17.
[134] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 17.
[135] Shuger, Debora K. *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in Measure for Measure*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001. 109.
[136] Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England*, 110.

John Bale and is further catapulted by the likes of Edmund Spenser and Philip Sidney who arguably made the largest contributions to the characteristics of English literature aside from William Shakespeare.

Bale's work is categorized by his "conscientious and meticulous attention to detail"[137], undoubtedly stemming from his time as a Carmelite friar, and is further characterized by the invention of the printing press. Bale took on the formulaic tradition of having "recorded [and published] briefly the lives of illustrious Christians…followed by a list of works, with incipits"[138] that culminated with Bale as the last name listed in order to secure himself to the physical "Catalogue of writers and learned men"[139], whose work was being largely distributed in print manuscripts. Bale's work was established upon the position that "true Englishness could not be separated from Protestantism"[140] but unlike other English Reformer authors, his works were able to expand upon dreary commentary on religious reforms and political treatises and instead positioned Bale "to be valued as a satirist who uttered truth under the mask of laughter and continuously wages war on certain babbling friars"[141]. Bale's work "maps out the history of true Christian consciousness versus the false worldly pomp of the Catholic Church"[142] and in doing so turned national legends, and plain history, to the uses of propaganda in the larger English cause. Therefore, Bale is established as the purported *mythmaker* of the English Reformation and one of the first figures to explore Henrician politics in a newfound style of aesthetic and innovative bureaucracy which would bolster the further expansion of English literary aesthetics for centuries to come. Sir Philip Sidney (c. 1554 – 1586) appears within the courtly literary sphere at a time in which "early modern [or reformed] religion is caught up in developments in literary media, in the shift from manuscript to print or the politics or vernacular"[143] and therefore renders Sidney's work to be equally immersed in poetic theory and the "reminder that once again we [English literary figures] are dealing with a [series of] work with a complex textual"[144] and aesthetic history. Sidney, as a literary figure, belonged to mid-Tudor reformation literature, characterized by its significance "not only for intrinsic merit but even more so because of its vast influence on later authors"[145]. Sidney's most famed works address the "synthesis of royalist politics and reformist art"[146] within Edwardian England; therefore, having a much more unique aesthetic quality than the basally political, although satirical, works of John Bale. Sidney's style embodies the realms of "both sacred and secular reading…piestic prose mixed with literary fiction or drama"[147] that is specifically characterized by the "intervening medium of the post-Reformation language of theology"[148]. One of Sidney's most famed works, *An Apologie for Poetry* also known as *The Defense of Poesy*, speaks in this post-Reformation parlance in which "not all nations are equal; they do not have an equivalent

---

[137] Happé Peter. *John Bale*. Twayne's English Authors Series, Teas 520. New York: Twayne, 1996. 62.
[138] Happé, *John Bale*, 63.
[139] Happé, *John Bale*, 63.
[140] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 42.
[141] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 43.
[142] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 57.
[143] Hass, Andrew, David Jasper, and Elisabeth Jay. *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 80-81.
[144] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 132.
[145] King, English Reformation Literature, 6.
[146] King, English Reformation Literature, 6.
[147] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 90.
[148] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 94.

access to knowledge and truth"[149] and as such Sidney firmly roots himself within the English literary tradition of cultural articulation in a section of the *Apologie* entitled "The Poet Never Lieth" which states that:

> I affirm that no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poesy [poetry], then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed…good is not good because better is better. But I still utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge…Now for the poet, he nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth…The poet never maketh any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writeth. He citeth not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calleth the sweet Muses to inspire him a good invention; in troth, not laboring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be. And therefore though the recount things not true, yet because he telleth them not for true he lieth not…[150]

Sidney's declarative stance on the power, and changeable qualities, of the poet and the wider artistic community highlights the means in which England, post-Reformation, was able to define its own specific cultural aesthetic theory. Sidney's work emphasizes the means in which English poetry "can look back to a classical heritage and simultaneously across to the foremost poets of contemporary Europe"[151] in order to inhabit its own individual and decidedly nationalistic style. This style is grounded in the principle that "if England is worthy to exist within the line of noble nations, it is clearly partly due to the literary efforts of…a style Sidney was to adopt when performing his own poetic experiments"[152] and exemplified in Sidney's construction of the first English sonnet sequence, *Astrophil and Stella*, in the 1580s. Sidney's literary career as a whole was predicated upon the desire to propel England to move from "gnosis with praxis, and thus illustrate his central concern that poetic feigning is the highest form of knowledge"[153], which is ideally suited to the veneration of the monarch, the exaltation of Englishness as a base characteristic, and the certification that England's particular blend or co-opting of wider literary traditions lends itself to a rendering of English aesthetic theory as prestigious in comparison to Sidney's perceived rudimentary literary accomplishments of other nations. Sir Philip Sidney and John Bale are arguably two of the most powerful literary figures of the English Reformation period. However, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* of 1590/96 is undoubtedly the hallmark of Tudor exaltation and the first true instance of the English literary vernacular to reach international acclaim. It is also pertinent to note that Spenser's works are more suitably discussed in accordance with the emergence of the literary panegyric of the Queen, which is to be discussed in the upcoming sections of the development of an English national aesthetic theory.

[149] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 134.
[150] Sidney, Philip. "The Defense of Poesy." 1595. WordPress. Accessed February 21, 2023. https://bidoonism.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/philip_sidneys-defense-of-poesy.pdf.35-36.
[151] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 135.
[152] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 137.
[153] Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, 137.

3.2 Holbein Portraits: The Six Wives of Henry VIII and the Tudor Aesthetic

A hallmark of the Tudor aesthetic, and the later English aesthetic of veneration and lionization of the monarch, to a large extent traces back to the area of the visual arts within the English court and the construction of an indistinguishable and consistent representation of the monarch and their affiliates. While England is not necessarily lauded for its advances in visual arts, the works of Hans Holbein the Younger (c. 1497 – 1543) are considered to be some of the most famed works and depictions of English nobility. However, Hans Holbein was in no way English – born and raised in Augsburg, and mainly working in Basel in his youth, Holbein is the perfectly suited, albeit majorly unexpected, pioneer whose artwork defined the Tudor era and the larger aesthetic periods and qualities of England. Interestingly, Holbein's particular religious affiliations were not clear, as the artist worked for both Catholic and Protestant patrons and his corpus of work represents both ends of the Catholic and Protestant theological spectrum[154]. What made Holbein so well suited to the Tudor era, and post-Reformation England, is firmly rooted in the fact that Holbein is not English. The Tudor monarchy, and later English dynasties to come, were so successful in creating and staging their conception of Englishness through the adoption and co-opting of other European powers aesthetics, that Holbein, a non-English native, is to this day lauded as one of the greatest painters in the history of English portraiture. While Holbein works are by no means limited to the Tudor court, with his time in England representing only the last decade of his life, Holbein is now tethered to the Tudor legacy in a way that no other artist of any domain can challenge[155]. Intrinsic to Holbein's legacy, and the larger English aesthetic as a whole, are the famed six wives of Henry VIII – Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anne of Cleves, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr. While each wife added a new dimension to the development of English culture and national identity, the wives depicted by Hans Holbein (Boleyn, Seymour, Cleves, Howard, and Parr), and their subsequent children, arguably had the largest impact on the emerging literary and visual aesthetics of England as "it is almost impossible to imagine Henry VIII and his entourage through anyone else's eyes but Holbein's"[156]. In being characterized as the great painter of the English Reformation, Holbein occupies an incredibly interesting space within England's aesthetic theory as his esteemed depictions of the Tudor monarchy have effectively rendered him as a symbol, and representative, of England itself.

Holbein's artistic gaze represented both the Renaissance Europe and early modern England as he "ubiquitously deployed a lexicon of sight and looking – of view, perspective, mirror, glass, regard, eye portrayal, and even gaze"[157] due to the fact that European Renaissance ideals, coupled with the theological revolutions of Reformation, resulted in the laity "beginning to look at their world and themselves afresh and to be preoccupied with seeing and the arts of being seen"[158]. It is rather undisputed that "no ruler has better established visual recognition – his brand – than Henry VIII"[159] as his image became synonymous with depictions of monarchy in general and as a standard in classical and lifelike styles of representation within visual arts.

---

[154] Moyle, Franny. *The King's Painter: The Life and Times of Hans Holbein*. Croydon, London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2022. xiii.
[155] Moyle, The King's Painter, 76.
[156] Moyle, The King's Painter, xii.
[157] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 129.
[158] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 129.
[159] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 130.

Holbein's work within the English court was not initially concerned with Henry VIII and the exaltation of royal supremacy, rather Holbein worked for the lower nobility like Sir Thomas More and the mercantile class of London's gentry. Holbein's unofficial entrance to the interior court occurred in 1532, when Thomas Cromwell took notice of the artist and commissioned a portrait, of which only copies remain. Holbein's timely entry into the English court was "embroiled in the revolutionary events of the break from Rome and the royal assumption of the Supreme Headship"[160], which not only strongly affiliated Holbein with Reformed ideologies, but more so with the aesthetic domain of the monarch(s) in proclaiming dynasty, authority, and reverence. Importantly, when working on English commissioned works of art, Holbein was reportedly tasked with "preparing English oak…[rather] having always worked on fir or limewood in Basel"[161] which resulted in both the material and aesthetic binding of Holbein's works to the English nation itself. Holbein's work became increasingly more Anglo-centric and his skill as a painter, both classically and as an illusionist, is best represented in his painting *The Ambassadors* of 1533. *The Ambassadors* is speculated to have been commissioned by Anne Boleyn for a variety of reasons, largely due its unveiling occurring in the year future Queen Elizabeth I, Anne's daughter, was born. *The Ambassadors* marked a decided shift in Holbein's artistic style and to this day "remains one of the most complex metaphysical conceits ever wrought"[162]. This particular work of Holbein's exactingly, and enthrallingly, depicts the state of the Reformed English nation through an anamorphosis and highlights the means in which England's role as a Protestant nation hinged upon the clear message presented by Holbein "about the inevitability of death, but equally salvation through Christ's sacrifice"[163]. Therefore, subliminally asserting the doctrine of royal supremacy that centers the depiction of the monarchy and its agents, or ambassadors, within the wider framework of Christian faith. Holbein's use of anamorphosis is perhaps one of the most famous uses in history – an anamorphosis is a distorted image/projection which appears normal or contextual within an image when viewed from a specific angle, often employed to convey a subliminal message or reveal the artists perspective on the content of their commissioned work(s). Holbein's depiction of an anamorphic skull within *The Ambassadors* is a hallmark of art history and a variety of theories regarding its usage are still in circulation; some scholars believe the skull is a nod to the notion of *memento mori* while others hold that distorted image was not only an expression of Holbein's skill but a commentary on the principles of perspective which characterized early modern and Renaissance art. When examining the anamorphic skull under the guise of its commission by Anne Boleyn, and by extension the court of King Henry VIII, it is most logically understood as a representation of the split between Church and State that is literally rendered as an overwhelmingly adjacent, and prevalent, form of thanatophobia – the intense fear and constant awareness of death and consequently one's mortality; issues which were at the center of the theological discourse surrounding Henry VIII's creation of the Church of England.

While each Holbein portrait, painting, or depiction is noteworthy and significant in its own right, the Holbein portraits that typically garner the most attention are those of Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves (c. 1515 – 1557). Each of these portraits exemplify the "particular virtues of industry and circumspection"[164] when representing or performing royal supremacy in a variety of

[160] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 131.
[161] Moyle, The King's Painter, 190.
[162] Moyle, The King's Painter, 270.
[163] Moyle, The King's Painter, 269.
[164] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 171.

different ways, and in doing so ensure that the artistic representation of England, and its major figures, are "held to be intrinsic to a humanist education in virtue"[165] and the establishment of a forceful national identity. Henry VIII's famed portrait by Holbein, *Portrait of Henry VIII* of 1537, is the ingrained image of the Tudor King within the collective consciousness. This portrait in particular introduces a variety of elements that not only become hallmarks of Holbein's style, but major ideograms of the English nation. This particular depiction of Holbein's Henry portrays the ideals of the Tudor nation in physical form, with the King being represented as "blessed by nature with a princely countenance and muscular physique, Henry played all these parts on the stage of the court, the realm and Christendom"[166]. In addition, Holbein asserts that through Henry's declarative stance and attitudinizing aggressive masculinity, that England was to lay witness to the "growing identity of the people with the Tudor dynasty and the nation…[with] a mounting sense of local community"[167]. Having officially been instated as the King's Painter, Holbein was granted an unprecedented "cachet of access to the monarch that the status [only] of King's Painter"[168] could afford. Official documents from Henry VIII's court detail the monarch's feelings toward Holbein "where his fondness for the artist is expressly noted for the record"[169] therefore certifying the King's usage of Holbein in the creation of his magnum opus, the 1537 portrait of Henry VIII, which was "the culmination of Holbein's career…a large mural celebrating the Tudor dynasty…deliver[ing] the most famous and defining depiction of Henry VIII ever made"[170]. Due to the mass success, and overall acclaim, of Holbein's portrait of the King, Henry VIII continued to use Holbein, and rely on his aesthetic appraisal, for both personal and professional matters.

Another acclaimed Holbein portrait, and one of great contention within the history of the Tudor dynasty and the mythmaking of Henry VIII, is Holbein's *Portrait of Anne of Cleves* of 1539 which effectively ended the contract between Henry VIII and Holbein. A famed legend in English history, Henry VIII was reportedly presented with Holbein's portrait of Anne of Cleves in what was one of the leading decision-making factors for the King to marry the Protestant gem of Germany. Not only was Holbein's portrait of Anne purportedly greatly exaggerated in regard to the young woman's features, but "when Anne was finally presented to the King's Painter, she was decked out in the most ostentatious finery, indicative of the view that the House of Cleves considered itself a match for any monarchy"[171], which ultimately manifested in the King's "disappointment in the appearance of his new wife…whom he considered not as fair as she was represented"[172]. So troublesome did Henry find Anne's appearance, that their marriage included "no official state entry, Anne was [merely] ritually and publicly presented as Queen"[173] until the marriage was annulled one month later. Henry's disdain and critical eye regarding the female frame was notoriously scrupulous and not aided by Holbein's choice to depict Anne "squarely, face on…the decision by the painter had the effect of making his portrait of Anne of Cleves quite distinct from the very great number of female portraits he had painted to date"[174]. However,

---

[165] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 171.
[166] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 176.
[167] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 177.
[168] Moyle, The King's Painter, 302.
[169] Moyle, The King's Painter, 303.
[170] Moyle, The King's Painter, 303.
[171] Moyle, The King's Painter, 13.
[172] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 137.
[173] Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy,* 168.
[174] Moyle, The King's Painter, 14.

Anne's end with Henry was not as colossal or permanent as the Queens that preceded her. Anne is an aesthetic, cultural, and feminist icon of English history as she was able to use the portrait debacle to her interest and ensure that with her annulment to the King she was to be made "his sister, provide[ed] her with an ample pension, and English household, and to even retain the political allegiance with Cleves"[175], which awarded Anne with an unprecedented amount of freedom, and historical acclaim, in regard to the role of women in early modern society. Although not the most famed wife of Henry VIII, Anne of Cleves's recertification of her rights establishes her as a hero of sorts within English history and more importantly allowed for Anne of Cleves to continue contributing Germanic influences into English culture. Holbein's calamitous rendering of Anne of Cleves led to two major events within the Henrician era that drastically altered the course of English history and the means in which art, particularly that of Holbein, was to be regarded in the Tudor's aesthetic theory. Thomas Cromwell was swiftly executed in 1540 after Anne's departure from court and the report(s) of his death claim the execution took place due to a "painful and ignominious penalty"[176], largely due to Cromwell's orchestration of Henry's marriage to Anne. Cromwell's execution sent shockwaves across Europe, and Holbein was invariably associated with the execution as "Holbein was not just a collaborator in Cromwell's Protestant propaganda machine. His role had also been crucial in securing the Cleves marriage"[177]. Fortunately, Holbein was not solely blamed for the Cleves marriage, and retained his status as King's Painter due to the extensive and profound imagery he had created which bolstered the Tudor monarch. Holbein reportedly spent the remainder of his life working on unofficial and court adjacent commissions and was not tormented by the King. While Holbein's death, reportedly due to a variation of the plague, was by no means dramatic, his legacy as the English Reformation's chief aesthetic architect remains firmly cemented in English history.

[175] Moyle, The King's Painter, 374.
[176] Moyle, The King's Painter, 375.
[177] Moyle, The King's Painter, 378.

Figure 1: Hans Holbein, *The Ambassadors*, 1533

Figure 2:
Hans Holbein, *Portrait of Henry VIII*, 1537

Figure 3:
Hans Holbein, *Portrait of Anne of Cleves,* 1539

3.3 Shakespeare: Theatrical Discourse and Dramaturgy in Representing England's Crown

In the eyes of modern literary critics and scholars of English literature, William Shakespeare (c. 1564 – 1616) is the face of the English Renaissance, the heart of the English literary tradition, and the personage behind the greatest construction of dramaturgy in world history. William Shakespeare's importance and centrality in the evolution, development, and distinction of an English national identity and culture cannot be undersold. Without question, "theology infuses the plays and poems of Shakespeare…as it does virtually all Elizabethan"[178] culture. However, the particular influence William Shakespeare wields over the Elizabeth era, and larger English literary culture overall, is so significant in that these works plainly "indicate that Shakespeare unambiguously supported Anglican Protestantism"[179], or the Church of England, yet also highlight the means in which each of Shakespeare's works simultaneously "allows their religious sentiments [to] readily accord with diverse theological orthodoxies"[180] of the time. This purported support of Protestantism and the Church of England, in this instance, is most deftly understood through the lens of national pride, as the Elizabethan era and the Churches of the period were somewhat hybridized between Anglican and Catholic aesthetic and liturgical theories. William Shakespeare occupies a rare role in theological, and literary, history as he does not only promote the Church of England, largely through the veneration of the monarchs, but he also appeals to the entirety of the English audience by circumnavigating the various religious denominations present in early modern England. In short, Shakespeare is truly a product of his time, and as a dramatist, occupies a nuanced position within literary tradition due to the fact that performed works, like play-texts, "are incomplete in ways that poetry and novels are not… performance always differs"[181] and as such interpretation is fluid, inviting a variety of theological reading to occur. It is paramount to note that while Shakespeare was wildly popular in his time, the literary canon that Shakespeare's work belongs to – that of the English literary canon – became popularized in the 18th century. This timely popularization bolsters Shakespeare's importance in the history of defining a cultural and national aesthetic as his works and their popularity only grew with time.

Shakespeare's works, in regard to their theological content do tend to be largely perceived as mere "references [which] seem to have been drawn from a general background of knowledge rather than from identifiable books"[182]. However, "Shakespeare's dramatic employment of theology…is readily accessible, and here we can draw some quite firm conclusions"[183] on the bard's theological standing and aesthetic aspirations. Therefore, it can be asserted that Shakespeare deals with theology throughout his body of work, but what is more pressing in regard to English national identity and the development of a distinct cultural aesthetic is the means in which Shakespeare renders the theologically driven notions of sacred kingship, royalist Christology, and church-state relations into his works. Shakespeare's history plays detail the means by which "Christian royalism does not operate in terms of constitutionalist categories: it is not a theory about the authority of the crown…but rather a belief, as the contorted

[178] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 382.
[179] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 383.
[180] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 383.
[181] Hass, Jasper, Jay, *Handbook of English Literature and Theology*, 385.
[182] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 12.
[183] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 12.

phraseology of the 'Homily against Disobedience' puts it, in a similitude that Kings 'have or should have, not unlike unto God their King'"[184]. Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* colloquially known as *Hamlet,* is perhaps the largest dramatic expression of Shakespeare's prototypical tragic hero in which there is a "delicate balance between playgoers, actors, and playmakers in Elizabethan England…to make the Book of Genesis a far more potent influence upon plot and character"[185]. Shakespeare uses this strong link between biblical content and the development of the tragic hero to underscore the main principles of the Protestant reformation, that of *sola scriptura*, in asserting that the tales "of Christ's nativity, ministry, passion and resurrection…should bring these commonplace beliefs of audiences of the time"[186] into direct adherence with post-Reformation England. Hamlet's ponderations on the essence and qualities of being human refer directly to the origins of human creation in Genesis; as seen in Hamlet's famed monologue "What a piece of work is man":

> I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes heavily with my disposition; that this goodly frame the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire: why, it appeareth no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man? How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals. And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor Woman neither; though by your smiling you seem to say so… (*Hamlet* II.ii.231-238)[187].

This clear reference to the Genesis narrative is an attempt by Shakespeare, like many other playwrights of the time, not only to be theologically prudent, but more importantly to expand upon the basal humanistic theories and theological precept that "stories of a tragic fall from divine grace recounted in Genesis were familiar to all from constant repetition in Church and from repeated theatrical representations". Shakespeare's depiction of Hamlet as an utterly hapless tragic hero not only serves to ingratiate the Elizabethan audience to the struggles of the protagonist, but allows the theatregoer, or reader, to relate to Hamlet through the shared acknowledgement of the power and pervasiveness of the Holy Scripture. This particular segment from Hamlet is influential in regard to the Anglicanism that is purportedly present in Shakespeare's work(s) as it is represented prosaically rather than in verse. Shakespeare's conscious decision to switch from verse to prose during this monologue highlights the Protestant Reformation's focus on sola scriptura and the insistence that parishioners of the Church were not only instructed the familiarize themselves with the Bible but further read, understand, and express their religious sentimentality in their vernacular language. This sentiment of interconnection, or community, through the acknowledgement of, and reference to, the Scripture is intentional and pointed, as Shakespeare uncharacteristically denotes this monologue in simple

---

[184] Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England*, 51.
[185] Wickham, Glynne, William Gladstone. *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage: Collected Studies in Mediaeval, Tudor, and Shakespearean Drama*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969.
[186] Wickham, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage*, 44.
[187] Shakespeare, William, Mowat, Barbara, and Paul Werstine, *Hamlet*, (New York: Washington Square, 1992). II.ii.231-238).

prose making its claims far more accessible to a general/lay audience. This particular example of incorporating religious texts and their modes of questioning into the core being of a character like Hamlet further highlights a particular guideline of theological dramatic theory employed by Shakespeare, which is centered upon the clarity and "aptness of the treatment of doctrine to the dramatic characters involved and the course of action taken"[188] in response to said doctrine. This ability to adapt non-dramatic doctrinal materials into a dramatic discourse of doctrine allows for Shakespeare to explore the means in which his characters utilize theology to inform their worldview, a worldview that is heavily predicated upon the notion of a common "Christian understanding…a universal element of human experience"[189]. While Shakespeare's conception of Christian understanding does lend itself to "aspects of non-Christian wisdom…[with] Christianity [having] found many attitudes already present in the virtuous heathen which corresponded to the ethical teachings"[190] of the Church, the playwright is able to bind his audience, both Christian and pagan, under the larger moral and ethical tenets of Christianity by relying on the shared communal and lived experience of a hybridized and reformed English public. The English public's shared experience, facilitated by Shakespeare, allows for Christianity, and more specifically the Church of England, to be regarded in a far more appealing and commensurate light given that Shakespeare's plays "draw the sacred back into the political center…the play stages the restoration of Christian social order"[191], which consequently unites the English people under the overarching principles of Christian morals and ethics. The feeling or notion of Englishness arises in Shakespeare's works through the navigation of the writers ability to merge the political, national, and theological – this consolidation of differing spheres was arguably most aptly applied in England as these three domains were regarded with similar, if not equal, importance rather than the common European domineering or all-powerful force of the Catholic Church standing in as the pinnacle of importance across continental Europe.

Although a rather self-evident play to investigate in regard to Shakespeare's rendering, or creation of, a universal English Christian mythos within the Elizabethan era is the 1613 *Life of King Henry the Eighth*. However, this particular historical play yields great significance when discussing Shakespeare's impact upon, and development of, an English cultural literary aesthetic. Reportedly well acquainted with Queen Elizabeth I, Shakespeare's plays were popular in court and garnered several royal viewings during the Queen's reign. However, Shakespeare's publication, or first showing, of *King Henry the Eighth* took place after Elizabeth's passing. While Elizabeth's rule was based upon the "wish to calm any form of disputation"[192] regarding the theological character of England, she was understandably more than eager to quell any discourse about her mothers, Anne Boleyn's, execution by her father the King. Shakespeare, although favoured in court, was well enough acquainted with the Queen to recognize that a history, however fallacious or dramatized it may be, about the Queen's personal life would not necessarily be met with acclaim and praise from the sovereign. Shakespeare's endeavour to write about the Queen's father, and by extension the Queen herself, was exceedingly bold and to some scholars unnecessary; however, I would argue that Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth* is the most important play in regard to installing, and firmly cementing, the legacy of the English Reformation and Henrician reforms within English history. While Shakespeare's work in general

[188] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 114.
[189] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 115.
[190] Frye, *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine,* 116.
[191] Shuger, *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England*, 53.
[192] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 293.

does support Elizabeth I's endeavours to render Elizabethan England as sensitive to both Catholic, Protestant, and Pagan sensibilities and therefore generate a culturally and religiously hybridized aesthetic, Shakespeare's *Henry the Eighth* makes some decisive claims on the notion of state formation and hybridization as the bard's "interest in English history is neither passive nor impartial…it is a strongly participatory, shaping interest in what we might now call the English national narrative"[193] covering national formation, mutation, identification, and future. The play blends Elizabethan aesthetics with larger Protestant aesthetics seamlessly as the "the media does more than represent how a community imagines itself; they mediate that imagination and construct the underlying sensibilities"[194] of the community within a cohesive framework. Both Elizabeth I and Henry VIII did not necessarily adhere to the theological values of their nation, but they required "outward conformity to the English Church for the sake of order"[195] and the maintenance of representation. This constructed façade of theological adherence, or mass liturgical performativity, was masterfully orchestrated by the Tudor dynasty and is shown within the structure of Shakespeare's play. In comparison to other Shakespearean works, *Henry the Eighth* is crafted and presented through a collaborative dramaturgy that focuses in on the exacting nature of staging, both of a play and monarchy, that allows the author to express the sentiment that this play in particular renders "pageant and spectacle, scripted with unusual elaborateness… to come to the fore… [which] implies that political spectacle, performance, and stage management are themselves the matter of history"[196]. *Henry the Eighth* contains more notes on staging and costuming than any other extant Shakespeare plays, which further suggests that the main mode of theatrical representation within this narrative was itself the dramatic quality of the lack of representation and identity that plagued England prior to the revitalizing and distinctive English Reformation. The play's prologue states that:

> I come no more to make you laugh. Things now
> That bear a weight and a serious brow,
> Sad, high, and working, full of state and woe,
> Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow
> We now present. Those that can pity, here
> May (if they think it well) let fall a tear:
> The subject will deserve it. Such as give
> Their money out of hope they may believe,
> May here find truth too… (1-11)[197].

The "subject" here is not Henry VIII himself, but rather the state of the English nation and the various difficulties it will encounter throughout the play's narrative. The reference to "noble scenes" is not only alluding to the royal countenance of the play's main actors, but more importantly situating English history "as an allegorical figure in circumstances of glory"[198] as the nation itself, through the Henrician reforms and the exaltation of Elizabeth I's reign, becomes itself noble. Notedly, the play ends with Elizabeth I's birth and does not chronicle the whole *life*

[193] Shakespeare, William. *The Life of King Henry the Eighth*. Edited by Jonathan V. Crewe. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2018. xxxvi.
[194] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 115.
[195] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 293.
[196] Crewe, *King Henry the Eighth*, xxxiv.
[197] Shakespeare, *King Henry the Eighth,* Prologue: lines 1-11.
[198] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 296.

of Henry VIII as the title suggests. Shakespeare's conscious decision to suspend the narrative upon the birth of Elizabeth further highlights the means in which the author is suggesting that Henry's life, and the life and legacy of the English nation, are inextricably tied to the future Queen. This is evident as King (Henry VIII) proclaims that "this oracle of comfort has so pleased me / that when I am in heaven I shall desire / to see what this child does, and praise my Maker…/ ye shall find me thankful… / ye must all see the Queen… / this little one shale make it Holy Day"[199]. While it is well documented in the historical record that Henry VIII desired sons, not daughters, Shakespeare renders the female heir as an emblem of salvation and the purest blessing upon which Henry kisses and bequeaths that "God protect thee, / Into whose hand I give thy life"[200]. This reappraisal of English history encapsulates Shakespeare's genius so clearly as the playwright is able to merge the "monarch's cultural program"[201] with the image and veneration of the "divinely appointed"[202] Elizabeth I. Queen Elizabeth I not only secured the continued reformation of the Church of England, but furthermore left a lasting "effect on drama and the visual arts in the churches"[203] and theological areas of the English nation by certifying and exemplifying the rise of royal image. Shakespeare's ability to turn *The Life of King Henry the Eighth* into a drama that does not necessarily revolve around Henry VIII, but the country and successor(s) his reign produced, further emphasizes the means in which the playwright sought to exalt and symbolize the inherent divinity of the English nation. As Shakespeare's last history play ever written, ending with the birth of the future Queen Elizabeth I, *Henry VIII* acts as the bard's penultimate dedication to kingdom, country, and "the image of Elizabeth the Virgin Queen"[204], who secured the grand legacy of Tudor dynasty and branded England, both its culture and history, as consecrated and illustrious in the history of early modern Europe. William Shakespeare is not only the leading architect of England's cultural aesthetic glorifying the Crown and the nation it governs through the popularization of literary culture, but Shakespeare is widely regarded as having immortalized English history – its theological, cultural, and national expansion – as the most esteemed and illustrious writer in English history.

3.4 Queen Elizabeth I and the Embodiment of the English National Aesthetic

Queen Elizabeth I of England (r. 1558 – 1603) is the most venerated English monarch in history, now probably alongside Queen Elizabeth II (r. 1952 – 2022). While her father King Henry VIII lay the foreground for the Elizabethan Settlement and the Golden Age of English history, Elizabeth I is the first monarch within the Tudor dynasty, and arguably the last within English history, who garnered true and lasting aesthetic, cultural, and religious fanfare across early modern Europe and the emerging 16th century structures of empire building. The Elizabethan era is a precise moment in English history in which the various Henrician and Edwardian reforms became consolidated, and the true state of England's national identity and cultural aesthetic were revealed. Queen Mary I's somewhat intervening reign, although turbulent and theologically rampant, did not provide England with any specific advancements or distinctive qualities which differentiated the realm from the European continent like the reigns of

[199] Shakespeare, *King Henry the Eighth,* v.iv.65-75.
[200] Shakespeare, *King Henry the Eighth,* v.iv.10-11.
[201] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 116.
[202] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 117.
[203] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 117.
[204] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 387.

Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Elizabeth I did. Queen Mary's reign followed the trajectory of the traditional European monarch who sublimated their power and influence in favor of belonging to Christendom by centering the Church's operations at the center of the state affairs through a staunch devotion to the papacy. However, the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and mainly Elizabeth I propelled England forward in political, theological, and cultural domains, which greatly impacted the nation's identity and facilitated England to distinguish itself from continental Europe and the overarching powers of the Catholic Church during the early modern period. Elizabeth I and the Golden Age of her reign in English history are lauded largely due to the fact that she was the last Tudor monarch to have been lionized across various artistic fields: her personality and mentality are depicted as subversive yet revolutionary, her ideologies and command of a male dominated sphere seen as powerfully feminist and trailblazing, and her lasting impact upon the heritage of England insuperable. Elizabeth I's reign was characterized by "the glories of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth-century cultural developments in England"[205] coupled with her profound sense of Tudor pride, and consequently national pride, as "Queen Elizabeth, like her father, gloried in the splendours of a Court which reflected her own dignity and the majesty of the realm"[206]. Elizabeth I's reign over England is widely conceptualized as "prudent, deliberate, and merciful"[207], with particular attention given to the Queen's "modesty, lack of vanity, scholarship and clemency"[208]. On the account of these so-called Elizabethan virtues, the Queen's representation in English, and wider European history, counteractively takes on a grandiose, majestic, and highly materialistic tone where the purportedly humble Queen is deified to an otherworldly and almost mythological standing. With the reign of Queen Elizabeth I came the creation and popularization of the Cult of the Virgin Mary and the literary panegyric of the Queen, which remains a significant blazon within the English literary canon and the representation of future monarchs. During Elizabeth I's reign, it appears as though "another marvel was reported"[209] at every turn, and even the Queen's most tantalizing or damnatory scandals surrounding her birth, gender, and competence as ruler are maneuvered in such a way that the resoundingly positive and euphoric image of Elizabeth I still remains intact within modern society. No monarch or political figure in England, other than perhaps the Queen's father himself, has had a more extensive and lasting effect on the consummation of English aesthetic values of national and cultural identity.

Elizabeth I, unlike her young brother Edward VI and father Henry VIII before, "showed that she had 'the common touch'; she knew how to play to the gallery of the general public, those ordinary men and women who flocked to see her whenever she appeared in public"[210] and was able to maintain a popular persona throughout her rule due to this social grace. While many speculate that this persona was easier won by Elizabeth due to the less threatening nature of her gender, many scholars overlook the fact that Elizabeth's imprisonment under Mary I effectively made her a martyr, both religious and social, which largely ingratiated Elizabeth to a society that was particularly sensitive to the Queen's grace, and later mercy, shown towards those who had

---

[205] Smith, Alan G. R. *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England, 1529-1660*. 2nd ed. Foundations of Modern Britain. London: Longman, 1997. 211.
[206] Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State*, 211.
[207] Susan Doran and Thomas S Freeman. *The Myth of Elizabeth*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. 32.
[208] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 33.
[209] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 370.
[210] Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State*, 212.

persecuted her during her youth[211]. This innate and rather organic characterization of the Queen as gentile and imbued with the beauty of her mother and the passion of her father was advanced greatly, and most significantly, by Edmund Spenser's epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, released in multiple parts from 1590 to 1596. While Elizabeth I's reign is known for its tasteful mix of resplendent yet verdant theatricality, the growth of the Queen as not only a theological, but larger societal and cultural emblem of England, was effectively substantiated by Spenser's whimsical and kaleidoscopic rendering of sacred kingship and virtuosity that the author imbued his Elizabeth, and adjacent characters, with. The framework which Spenser enacts his Elizabethan reverence upon is based off of Spenser's idealization of the English realm and what both Queen and country ought to represent. Spenser articulates Renaissance and Elizabethan emblems and ideals of virtuosity in such a way that it reveals that any acts of virtue are only made possible when a heroic, virtuous figure overcomes vice – for example Elizabeth I's defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1589, which served as one of many foundational myths of England's predominance, another example being Henry VIII's conquest over the dominance of the Catholic Church during the English Reformation. Throughout *The Faerie Queene* there is one overarching constant, the pursuit of virtue and fulfillment of a righteous creed enacted in order to please the sovereign and grant the protagonist with the opportunity to enter Faeryland, which is Spenser's configuration of the English Court. Additionally, Spenser invites the English public to embody the various characteristics of holiness, courtesy, temperance, chastity, and justice that both Queen and country embody. Essentially, Spenser's veneration of Elizabeth is grounded in the embodiment of ideals within a singular being, or representative, of the state. Therefore, Spenser's Elizabeth is synonymous with England, and England synonymous with divinity and its Queen.

Contemporary accounts of Elizabeth and the pageantry and reverence associated with her rule do readily coincide with the mythologized and pastoral account that Spenser and other Elizabethan writers – like Sir Walter Raleigh, John Donne, and Thomas Middleton – presented within their works. While there was a great deal of criticism contemporarily mounted toward the Queen, the skill in which the mythmakers and historians of the 16th and 17th century were able to minimize these misgivings within domestic accounts is impressive. One specific account of Elizabeth as the embodiment of all the aesthetic splendor England had to offer comes from a description of one of the Queen's summer progresses at Kenilworth Castle, where the Queen was welcomed and:

> Entertained with pageants and with plays… on her procession through the park gates one summer, the porter came attired in the robes of Hercules and delivered to her a speech of welcome. A large pool acted as a moat for one side of the castle, where the Queen was greeted by nymphs who seemed to walk on water. The greatest pageant of welcome was conducted in the base court of the castle, where seven pairs of pillars had been constructed from which the gods and goddesses of Greece offered her various gifts. When she entered the inner court and alighted from her horse, all the clocks of the castle were stopped; no one was to be aware of the time while the Queen stayed at Kenilworth[212].

This ornate and splendiferous welcome afforded to the Queen at Kenilworth in the summer of 1572 is emblematic of the attention, praise, and veneration she garnered. More specifically, this

[211] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 33.
[212] Ackroyd, *The Tudors*, 371.

account of Elizabeth's time at Kenilworth is evidence of the fact that during the Queen's reign no expense was to be spared in honoring both Queen and country, as "the [expected Protestant] prophetic voices raised against the excess of the cult of Elizabeth were strangely muted"[213] and the "aesthetic production of this period came to be dominated by play-making, poetry, and music"[214] which appealed to Catholic, Protestant, and non-Christian audiences because the exaltation of the crown took precedence in an era that was to be characterized by the development of the godly commonwealth.

All of the aforementioned praise, worship, and lionization of Elizabeth I was not easily won, and while it can be exceedingly powerful to regard the Queen as an ornament of state, the developments made during Elizabeth I's reign were not only associated with conventional aesthetic theory pertaining to culture, but more importantly supported the crafting of a national aesthetic that would continue to define England's heritage and character for centuries. The main development that resonated politically and socially, which resulted in the creation of a new aesthetic theory, was the reinvigoration of the cult of the Virgin Mary with Elizabeth I at its core. Elizabeth's personhood and persona, as the contemporaneous face of the Cult of the Virgin Mary, was highly rooted in the literary and the visual tributes of this time being explicitly tied to the "larger dramatic presentation of the Queen endowed with both classical and sacred elements"[215]. The revival of the cult of the Virgin Mary was predicated upon the blatant "success of Elizabeth's rule in an orderly society"[216] and was a master manoeuvre orchestrated by the Queen's privy council to address any and all controversy that arose surrounding the Queen's debatable status as a bastard and the very obvious fact that she was a woman. The collaborative efforts between the Queen and her privy council to "transform herself into the legendary Virgin Queen, formidable, untouchable, and unbeatable"[217] were easily bolstered by the circumvention, or rather absurdist commitment, to the gender norms of the early modern period. Elizabeth as the Virgin Queen was "a political device to inspire awe in her subjects, consolidate her political power, and [most strikingly] signal her intention to marry"[218]. By tying Elizabeth's personhood so closely to the female stereotypes and expectations that previously made her unappealing as a Queen, the Elizabethan court more importantly fashioned a monarch whose femininity was bolstered by chastity and the notion that the Queen was married to her country and not a man. While many critiqued the depiction of the Queen from an explicitly gendered perspective, it was undeniable that the Queen was "the master builder of her public image…she cannily appropriated the symbols of divine virginity in order to overcome cultural attitudes towards women and remove political problems arising from her gender"[219]. While Henry VIII struggled with reigning in his vigorous manhood, Elizabeth capitalized upon the masculine qualities her position as ruler of England fostered and "exploited this gendered visual [and societal] association"[220] by adopting traditionally masculine symbology and iconography to denote a sort of omnipotence or dominion of the notion of gender itself. Elizabeth and her court adopted the phoenix as an additional emblem to the Tudor rose, and pelican, that characterized her predecessor's reigns. The phoenix, a personal symbol for the Queen, further solidified

[213] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 137.
[214] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 117.
[215] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 128.
[216] Smith, *The Emergence of a Nation State*, 215.
[217] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 171.
[218] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 171.
[219] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 171-172.
[220] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 175.

Elizabeth's connection to dominion over the role of theology in England as "the birds' association with the Virgin Mary goes back to St Ambrose and early Christian legend"[221] and its usage therefore implies Elizabeth's organic and almost constitutional connection to the symbology and powerful force that is the Madonna, and the imagery of maternal sacrifice it naturally engenders. Using the phoenix as a symbol, which Elizabeth used mainly to hybridize her masculine and feminine energies, is again bolstered by the mythos surrounding the phoenix which "was supposed to arise asexually from its own ashes on the funeral pyre to begin life anew"[222]. The image of the phoenix, its gender non-conforming history, and the inborn associations of unimpeachable legacy it evoked made the declarative statement that "the English state [and its ruler] was strong enough to challenge and defeat"[223] any force, be it temporal or ecclesiastical, that sought to inhibit English progress.

The reign and influence of Elizabeth I is best capitulated, and arguably reaches its peak, in the infamous *Ditchley Portrait*. Marcus Gheeraerts' (the Younger) *Elizabeth I: The Ditchley Portrait* of 1592 perfectly illustrates the English nation's most ardent principles and endeavours as Elizabeth, and England's, "imperial rule becomes even clearer… the crown, Queen, island, and the globe on which she stands tall are all one"[224] ; ergo, England's history, present, and promise of future growth are set forth in divine political, theological, cultural, and aesthetic splendor. This iconic depiction of Elizabeth and the English empire itself as Spenser's Gloriana, the Faerie Queene, is aesthetically resplendent, symbolically powerful, politically dispensed, and theologically primed. The *Ditchley Portrait* represents the culmination of the English Reformation's feats and the Tudor dynasty's exacting and tumultuous journey to not only create but immortalize the supremacy of the English nation during the early modern period. Elizabeth I's legacy is England's legacy and the intentions of the Elizabethan court to tie Elizabeth to the nations identity and heritage was unmistakably an extreme success. The theological and cultural aesthetics of the English Reformation are summated in the strong link that was created between Church, State, and Monarch; a link that Henry VIII engendered with the creation of the Church of England in 1534 and Elizabeth further strengthened as she "not only oversaw the end of the Tudor dynasty but made virtue of her heirlessness, her virginity… [and] more than Henry, Elizabeth publicized not her dynasty but herself" and established a dynastic political, theology, and aesthetic legacy that has yet to be challenged.

[221] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 178.
[222] Doran and Freeman, *The Myth of Elizabeth*, 178.
[223] Hill, *Reformation to Industrial Revolution*, 156.
[224] Dyrness, *Origins of Protestant Aesthetics*, 127.

Figure 4: Marcus Gheerearts the Younger, *Elizabeth I: The Ditchley Portrait*, 1592

Conclusion

As one of the most significant monarchical figures in history, Henry VIII's English Reformation and the creation of the Church of England refashioned England's national identity, aesthetic character, and church-state relations in a profound and enduring manner. The evolution of cultural and national identity that the creation and proliferation of the Church of England engendered has yet to be rivaled by any other theological movement. The work of the English Reformers, Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer in particular, allowed the English nation to thrive as theologically and politically independent of the papacy, which was the fixed power across continental Europe during the early modern era. The consequent development of a distinct and nationalistic aesthetic theory allowed for the English monarchs to represent themselves in a particularly English fashion and therefore further distinguish themselves from other powers. The English Reformation caused a paradigm shift within the nation and allowed for the blossoming of an English cultural and literary aesthetic which would become a hallmark of the nation for centuries to come. This aesthetic shift, powered by the theological innovations of the Henrician reforms, was principally highlighted in the artistic works of Hans Holbein, John Bale, William Shakespeare, and Edmund Spenser. These artists redefined England's standing in regard to artistic value and worth on the international stage, and although the cultural and aesthetic developments of the nation followed those of the Italian and French Renaissance periods, England's aesthetic character is undoubtedly the most well maintained and promoted in modern society. Queen Elizabeth I's reign ensured that the legacy of England's tumultuous history was not only aptly recorded but more ornately and aesthetically rendered in order to preserve, and rightly dignify, the paradigm shifts and cultural changes that came before her time. English heritage and nationality remain at the forefront of the world and the developments and doctrines of royal supremacy can be seen in the current framework of England's constitutional monarchy. While the majority of other monarchies have remained as reliquaries or symbols of times past, the English monarchy's presence and power is enduring. Queen Elizabeth II (r. 1952 – 2022) was the longest reigning English monarch in history and her virtuosity, sharp mindedness, and forbearance continue the legacy of her predecessors, namely Queen Elizabeth I. In upholding the tradition that was historically divinely ordained upon the monarch, the royal family of the United Kingdom has maintained its lofty presence within the English and international communities. While we cannot speculate what England would have become if Henry VIII had not initiated the separation of the nation from the papacy, it is without question that the English Reformation and its subsequent theological, political, and aesthetic developments drastically altered the trajectory of English history and succeeded in providing the nation with a definitive, idiosyncratic, and iconic cultural identity.

"I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be
long or short shall be devoted to your service"

Queen Elizabeth II
1926 – 2022

Works Cited

Ackroyd, Peter. *Tudors: The History of England from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I*. New York, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012.

Aston, Margaret. *Broken Idols of the English Reformation*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Bombi, Barbara. *Anglo-Papal Relations in the Early Fourteenth Century: A Study in Medieval Diplomacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Bossy, John. *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Clark, James G. *The Dissolution of the Monasteries: A New History*. Padstow, Cornwall: Yale University Press, 2021.

Cummings, Brian, ed. *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Doran, Susan, and Christopher Durston. *Princes, Pastors and People: The Church and Religion in England, 1500-1700*. 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2003.

Doran, Susan, and Thomas S Freeman. *The Myth of Elizabeth*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Dyrness, William A. *The Origins of Protestant Aesthetics in Early Modern Europe: Calvin's Reformation Poetics*. 1st ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

Frye, Roland Mushat. *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963.

Gent, Lucy, Paul Mellon. *Albions Classicism: The Visual Arts in Britain, 1550-1660*. Studies in British Art, 2. New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the Yale Center for British Art by Yale University Press, 1995.

Hadfield, Andrew. *Literature, Politics, and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance*. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Happé Peter. *John Bale*. Twayne's English Authors Series, Teas 520. New York: Twayne, 1996.

Hass, Andrew, David Jasper, and Elisabeth Jay. *The Oxford Handbook of English Literature and Theology*. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Hill, Christopher. *Reformation to Industrial Revolution: 1530-1780*. London: Verso, 2018.

Hutton, Ronald. "The Making of the Early Modern British Fairy Tradition." *The Historical Journal* 57, no. 4 (2014): 1135–56.

Jenkins, Simon. *England's Cathedrals*. London, United Kingdom: Little Brown, 2016.

King, John N. *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Reformation: Europe's House Divided 1490-1700*. New York, NY: Puffin Books, 2005.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Thomas Cranmer: A Life*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Thomas Cromwell: A Revolutionary Life*. New York, New York: Viking, 2018.

Marius, Richard C. "Henry VIII, Thomas More, and the Bishop of Rome." *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 10 (1978): 89–107. https://doi.org/10.2307/4048429.

Marshall, Peter. "(Re)Defining the English Reformation." *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 564–86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27752571.

McCoy, Richard C. *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.

Moyle, Franny. *The King's Painter: The Life and Times of Hans Holbein*. Croydon, London: Head of Zeus Ltd., 2022.

Rex, Richard. *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*. 2nd ed. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Shakespeare, William. *The Life of King Henry the Eighth*. Edited by Jonathan V. Crewe. New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2018.

Shakespeare, William, Mowat, Barbara, and Paul Werstine, *Hamlet*, (New York: Washington Square, 1992).

Sharpe, Kevin. *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660*. New Haven Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010.

Sharpe, Kevin. *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Shagan, Ethan H. *The Rule of Moderation: Violence, Religion and the Politics of Restraint in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Shuger, Debora K. *Political Theologies in Shakespeare's England: The Sacred and the State in Measure for Measure*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001.

Sidney, Philip. "The Defense of Poesy." 1595. WordPress. Accessed February 21, 2023. https://bidoonism.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/philip_sidneys-defense-of-poesy.pdf.

Smith, Alan G. R. *The Emergence of a Nation State: The Commonwealth of England, 1529-1660*. 2nd ed. Foundations of Modern Britain. London: Longman, 1997.

UK Parliament, "Act of Supremacy 1534 – UK Parliament", accessed November 27 2021, https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/religion/collections/common-prayer/act-of-supremacy/.

Vidmar, John. *English Catholic Historians and the English Reformation, 1585-1954*. Eastbourne, Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2019.

Warley, Christopher. "Reforming the Reformers: Robert Crowley and Nicholas Udall," in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, ed. Michael Pincombe and Cathy Shrank (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Wickham, Glynne William Gladstone. *Shakespeare's Dramatic Heritage: Collected Studies in Mediaeval, Tudor, and Shakespearean Drama*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1969.

Woolf, Alex. *The Tudor Kings and Queens: The Dynasty That Forged a Nation*. Bickels Yard, London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 2020.

Works Consulted

Armitage, David. *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Balmer, John M.T. "Scrutinising the British Monarchy: The Corporate Brand That Was Shaken, Stirred and Survived." *Management Decision* 47, no. 4 (2009): 639–75. https://doi.org/10.1108/00251740910959468.

Braddick, M. J. *State Formation in Early Modern England, C. 1550-1700.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Cressy, David. *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989.

Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C.1400-C.1580*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Fairfield, Leslie P. *John Bale, Mythmaker for the English Reformation*. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1976.

Goodman, Ruth. *How to Be A Tudor: A Dawn-to-Dusk Guide to Everyday Living*. Penguin Books, 2016.

Hackett, Helen. "Rediscovering Shock: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary." *Critical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1993): 30–42. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8705.1993.tb00482.x.

Hunt, Alice. "The Tudor Coronation Ceremonies in History and Criticism." Literature Compass 6, no. 2 (2009): 362-72. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-4113.2008.00620.x.

Johnson, Lauren. *So Great A Prince: The Accession of Henry VIII: 1509*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2017.

Kaufmann, Miranda. *Black Tudors: The Untold Story*. London: Oneworld Publications, 2018.

Kendall, Paul. *Henry VIII in 100 Objects: The Tyrant King Who Had Six Wives*. Yorkshire: Frontline Books, 2020.

Kietzman, Mary Jo. *The Biblical Covenant in Shakespeare*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Marshall, Peter. *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Morel, Anne-Francoise. "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Architecture: The Anglican Reception of Roman Baroque Churches." *Architectural Histories* 4, no. 1, November 16, 2016: 1–13. https://doi.org/10.5334/ah.75.

Norwich, John Julius. *Four Princes: Henry VIII, Francis I, Charles V, Suleiman the Magnificent and the Obsessions That Forged Modern Europe*. New York: Grove Press, 2018.

Phillippy, Patricia Berrahou. *Women, Death, and Literature in Post-Reformation England*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Pincombe, Michael, and Cathy Shrank. *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485-1603*. Oxford Handbooks. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Popper, Nicholas. "From Abbey to Archive: Managing Texts and Records in Early Modern England." *Archival Science : International Journal on Recorded Information* 10, no. 3 (2010): 249–66. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-010-9128-8.

Potgieter, Raymond. "Prayer Book Catechism: Past Its Sell-by Date?" *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 70, no. 3, April 17, 2014: 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v70i3.1993.

Powell, Raymond. “The English Church at the Frontier of Early Modern Catholicism.” *The Medieval History Journal* 14, no. 1 (2011): 101–27.

Prior, Charles W. A, and Glenn Burgess. *England’s Wars of Religion, Revisited*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011.

Robinson, Hastings, 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*. Translated by Hastings Robinson. 1. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1846.

Ryrie, Alec. *The Gospel and Henry VIII: Evangelicals in the Early English Reformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Streete, Adrian. *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Strozier, Robert M. “Poetic Conception in Sir Philip Sidney’s ‘An Apology for Poetry.’” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 2 (1972): 49–60. https://doi.org/10.2307/3506506.

Thomas, Alfred. *Shakespeare, Catholicism, and the Middle Ages: Maimed Rights*. Germany: Springer International Publishing, 2018.

Viladesau, Richard. *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Walsham, Alexandra. *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory In Early Modern Britain and Ireland.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Winstanley, Michael. “Shakespeare, Catholicism, and Lancashire: A Reappraisal of John Cottom, Stratford Schoolmaster.” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2017): 172–91. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48559613.