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## Unexpected Modes of Gendered Inheritance: How Royal Women Bequeathed Knowledge and Power in Sixteenth Century Europe through Letters, Translations, and Memoirs

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Unexpected Modes of Gendered Inheritance:  
How Royal Women Bequeathed Knowledge and Power in Sixteenth Century Europe through  
Letters, Translations, and Memoirs

Senior Project Submitted to  
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by  
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## **Abstract**

During the sixteenth century, western European women were rarely able to inherit property, money, or titles. Even for noble women privileged with education, monarchies favored male heirs, and women rarely ruled as regents. It was even more rare for a woman to inherit from another woman. Such restrictions required women to work within rigid gender roles and develop more unconventional modes of inheritance. Rather than passing on material goods or a title, women could pass on certain social inheritances, such as personality traits or religious and educational teachings to their daughters. In order to examine these social inheritances, I have turned to the writings of royal women during the sixteenth century to determine what these social inheritances were and how they were passed from generation to generation. The writing of letters amongst royal women convey that education and religion were important social inheritances that women could transmit through letter writing. Translations and memoirs are two other genres of interest that could connect women across time and geographic region to either transfer or reveal social inheritances. Sixteenth century western Europe, despite aforementioned restrictions, was a place where many women rose to power and were often related through blood relation or marriage. By examining the relationships between these women through the lens of social inheritance, this project seeks to place them in direct conversation with one another in a way the history books have often failed to do.



To Nana and Grandpa.



## *Acknowledgements*

It seems fitting, given the subject of this project, to first thank my amazing mom. Thank you for showing me from a young age that a woman can be ambitious, nurturing, kind, brilliant, and have a sense of humor all at the same time, even when the world tried to tell me otherwise.

I would also like to thank my wonderful dad, whose love for history, literature, and writing passed directly on to me. Thank you for reading books to me when I was little, watching period dramas with me, and sparking my interest in this field.

Thank you to Hunter, the best brother I could ask for, my late grandfather, whose storytelling I will remember for the rest of my life, and my grandmother, who loves Mary, Queen of Scots as much as I do.

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Thank you to Mr. Brian O'Mahony, who made me realize in his United States history class that history could be more than memorizing dates and events, Professor Christian Crouch, who taught my very first history class at Bard, and Professor Robert Culp, whom I've never taken a class with, but who entertained my revelation only a year ago that I needed to major in history and made sure I was on track to do so.

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## Introduction

On the eve of her death, Mary Stuart (1542-1587), queen of Scotland from 1542-1567, began writing her final will and finished it on February 8th, 1587,<sup>1</sup> the day she was executed at Fotheringhay Castle. Protestant councillors viewed Mary as a threat, because based on her lineage, she was next in line to the English throne. During Mary's rule of Scotland and her subsequent imprisonment and execution, Elizabeth I (1533-1603) was the Protestant queen of England (1558-1603). Although English statesmen pretended that their dislike for Mary as a potential heir was due to her Catholicism, the prospect of having another woman on the throne of England daunted them.<sup>2</sup> After all, womanhood and rulership were generally antithetical states of existence in early modern Europe, and Elizabeth had carefully crafted herself as the exception to this rule.<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth had never married or given birth to an heir, so the threat of the throne passing from woman to woman was pressing.<sup>4</sup> After Mary fled the threat of the Scottish Protestant nobility, the English government imprisoned her for eighteen years before beheading her for alleged conspiracy. The execution of male political adversaries, of course, did occur, but Mary's womanhood played a role.

Mary had once held immense power: she was the queen regent of Scotland, born of James IV and Marie de Guise, the next legitimate heir to the throne of England, and she had her own male heir. Nevertheless, the threat of her power, success, and inheritance was too

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<sup>1</sup> Agnes Strickland, *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots: And Documents Connected with Her Personal History*. Vol. 2. H. Colburn, 1843, 142.

<sup>2</sup> Anne McLaren, "Gender, religion, and early modern nationalism: Elizabeth I, Mary Queen of Scots, and the genesis of English anti-Catholicism," *The American historical review* 107, no. 3 (2002): 740.

<sup>3</sup> Carole Levin, *The heart and stomach of a king: Elizabeth I and the politics of sex and power*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Anne McLaren, "Gender, religion, and early modern nationalism," 740.

formidable. Mary lost the crown she had, and she failed to inherit the crown she could have had. Regardless of these circumstances, on the eve of her execution, Mary managed to sit down and pass on a material legacy to those in her life by writing a will, some of whom were women, including Mairie Paiges, whom she listed as her god-daughter.<sup>5</sup> Mary left Mairie, a figure who is otherwise lost in history, some money and asked her cousin to hire Mairie.<sup>6</sup> Mary could not gain the inheritance that she wanted, but she could still take the time to pass on inheritances to her own heirs.

Mary's situation begs several questions about the nature of feminine inheritance, but it also provides some answers. First of all, the will itself highlights her belief in the importance of her own legacy. Mary stated that she did not have "any means of making my will," yet she made the effort, with her death looming before her, to settle her affairs and desired that her will should be treated as legitimate.<sup>7</sup> The futures of those in her life mattered to her, but it also seems that she cared greatly about her own legacy, and this was a final act of holding onto some of her power. She could not control the fact that she was going to die, but she could attempt to control who her heirs were. Inheritance, in a way, was a means of asserting control after death. It is unclear in my research whether or not any or all of Mary's wishes were fulfilled, but her purpose matters.

It is also important to point out that Mary was an exception, both due to rank and education. Many women during this time were illiterate and could not write, and most would never have wills made in their own name. Thus, if Mary seems limited in the world of inheritance, others were even more so.

Lastly, Mary's history displays the importance of searching beyond conventional methods of inheritance when examining historical women. Her situation highlights the restrictions,

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<sup>5</sup> Mary, Queen of Scots. *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots*, 146.

<sup>6</sup> Mary, Queen of Scots. *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots*.

<sup>7</sup> Mary, Queen of Scots. *Letters of Mary, Queen of Scots*, 142.

whether formal or informal, placed on feminine inheritance at the time. Women were less likely to inherit from ancestors, and they were less likely to bequeath their own inheritances to their descendants to carry on a legacy in the form of title, wealth, or material goods. They were, as Mary's story shows, so restricted that one of the most powerful women in Europe died partly due to the threat of her potential inheritance.

Such an understanding of how few avenues women possessed for inheriting or bequeathing inheritances offers the impression that women- even royal women- were at the mercy of their circumstances. Crucially, women found ways to navigate gender roles and discover methods to pass on what this study will call "social inheritances." Social inheritances will be defined as anything immaterial that was passed on between generations, such as a character trait, a form of knowledge, or any other kind of teaching. The term "social inheritance" in academic literature seems to be used primarily in the field of psychology.<sup>8</sup> However, for the sake of this paper, the term social inheritance will be employed in a broader sense, although the psychological definition of the term is not unrelated

In this paper, I will be analyzing what kinds of inheritances passed between royal women of sixteenth century Europe, as shown through their writings. I will specifically be examining several women, hailing from England, Spain, Italy, France, Scotland, and Navarre, who were all either connected through marriage or blood to examine the nature of social inheritance in mother-daughter relationships. Although wills such as Mary's may seem like the most logical place to search for how inheritances passed between women, social inheritances were not bound by law, and could be navigated or passed on through other writings of women such as letters, translations, and memoirs. Even if these forms of writing do not convey an inheritance being

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<sup>8</sup>Manol Manolov, Ivan Stoyanov, Zlatinka Georgieva, and Petya Trifonova-Dimitrova, "Social Inheritance in the Context of Psychology," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 7, no. 7 (2019): 50-59.

actively passed on, we can still infer things about inheritance. Nevertheless, in order to understand how social inheritance functioned, it is important to first lay the groundwork for how legal and political inheritance functioned in early modern Europe before discussing social inheritances.



1. Map of Europe in the year 1500, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon

By the sixteenth century, the position of women had regressed, as women tended to experience greater freedom during the middle ages despite the emergence of some new and

important ideas regarding gender.<sup>9</sup> According to Merry Wiesner-Hanks, in the absence of the pope, Protestantism placed more power in the hands of men as the heads of their households, giving more power to royal men who would become the new heads of their churches.<sup>10</sup> Catholic states such as France also attempted to centralize power during this time, strengthening pre-existing gendered structures.<sup>11</sup> These drastic changes in the world of religion tended to fortify repressive ideas surrounding gender that were already in existence.<sup>12</sup>

Considerable changes also occurred in European law during the early modern period, for in southern Europe during the thirteenth century and later in Northern Europe during the sixteenth century, countries were encouraged to alter their law codes to conform with Roman Law.<sup>13</sup> Certain countries, however, due to greater centralization as they became Protestant and secular leaders gained control of legal matters such as marriage.<sup>14</sup> Despite the aforementioned decline in women's rights, in some ways, law altered to favor women.<sup>15</sup> In the early modern period in most countries, unmarried women and widows could own land and appear in courts, as well as create their own wills and be executors of other wills and serve as witnesses.<sup>16</sup>

However, the institution of marriage placed many restrictions on women, for upon marriage, a woman became entirely under the rule of her husband and anything she earned became his.<sup>17</sup> During the sixteenth-century, both Protestant reformers and Catholic counter-reformers sought to take control of marriage.<sup>18</sup> While marriages were once agreements

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<sup>9</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 255

<sup>10</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 243.

<sup>11</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 244.

<sup>12</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 255.

<sup>13</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 30.

<sup>14</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 30.

<sup>15</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 30.

<sup>16</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 31.

<sup>17</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 31.

<sup>18</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The prospect before her: A history of women in Western Europe, 1500-1800*, Vintage, 2011, 62.



simply made in the presence of witnesses, marriage eventually had to happen in a church for it to be binding.

English law was particularly restrictive, as women were not even considered to be individual legal entities but simply as extensions as their husbands could not have wills separate from their husbands.<sup>19</sup> Marriage contracts, however, could give women some power in the case of dowries, as the husband had to use the money or property throughout his lifetime, but upon his death, the woman and heirs would receive back the property or something of a similar value.<sup>20</sup> In some parts of Europe, the wife would receive one half or one quarter of the estate of her dead husband, although it was not legally her, and as soon as she died, it would all be passed on to the heirs.<sup>21</sup>

When it came to inheriting political power, women were also very limited. By the early modern period, women's political power was becoming more formally limited. The Salic Law was adopted in France, which excluded women from the line of succession; and while women in Navarre, Scotland, England, and a few other countries could succeed to the throne, these women were exceptions.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, women outside of the royalty and nobility could hold no formal political position whatsoever.<sup>23</sup> The republics, such as Florence and Venice functioned as oligarchies and only allowed women to wield power through their male relations.<sup>24</sup> Monarchies, however, allowed women to hold formal positions of power due to the role of succession and the importance of birth and marriage which, as Natalie Davis says, was highly political.<sup>25</sup> This

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<sup>19</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," *History of Women in the West. Vol. 3*, Harvard University Press, (1992), 170-171.

<sup>23</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 170-171.

<sup>24</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 170.

<sup>25</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 170.

power, on the other hand, often pivoting around the biological processes of pregnancy and birth, could somewhat reduce women to their physicality, making them pawns in politically motivated marriages. In these courts women may not have usually held as formal power as men did, but they were at least privy to political conversations.<sup>26</sup>

Despite such daunting restrictions, women were not at the complete mercy of their circumstances when it came to navigating inheritance. By bending gender roles to their will, they could sometimes gain power in unexpected ways and through unexpected means.<sup>27</sup> Catherine de' Medici (1519-1598), who was queen consort of France from 1547 to 1559, ruled as regent for a short period of time. Elizabeth I reigned over England as one of the most revered rulers. Women, however, in order to be respected as rulers, had to acquire particular strategies when it came to their gender, as women were thought of as being highly "disorderly" and not possessing the pragmatic qualities of men.<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth I adopted the image of the Virgin Queen, emulating masculine qualities as a ruler while still existing as a woman to both legitimize and protect herself from criticism.<sup>29</sup> In contrast, rulers such as Catherine de' Medici leaned into their roles as mothers and widows as a means of establishing a sense of legitimacy through more conventionally gendered terms.<sup>30</sup> Thus, as Natalie Zemon Davis and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks demonstrate, the importance of gender in the formation of a monarch created unfortunate yet fascinating dynamics that required women to discover unique ways to generate influence in a political sphere that excluded them, especially when it came to inheritance.

This project will explore methods by which women were able to work within this restrictive structure and pass on more unconventional social inheritances to their children. Out of

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<sup>26</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 170.

<sup>27</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 172-173.

<sup>28</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 253.

<sup>29</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 251.

<sup>30</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women in Politics," 170-172.

the early modern period, I chose the sixteenth century in particular due to the large number of women who reigned as queen regents around the same time. Despite the more oppressive setting of the early modern world, a variety of women, by chance, were in power and offer case studies for exploring what kinds of inheritances they passed on.

It is important to note though that due to the current COVID 19 pandemic, my search for primary sources was restricted to digital sources, which has undeniably shaped my project. Although I could have explored questions of inheritance in other time periods, countries, and social classes, my decision to examine European queens was partly one of convenience. European queens have the largest online presence when it comes to digital sources. While it was very simple to discover bilingual versions of the works of Marguerite de Navarre through Bard College's library, along with various translations of Marguerite de Valois's memoirs that were open access, it was difficult to even find any digital primary sources of non-European rulers such as Queen Nzinga of Ndongo and Matamba (1583-1663), who is actually one of the more thoroughly discussed African queens in the literature on female rulers. The literature, moreover, surrounding queenship and early modern gender itself is Eurocentric, and it is difficult to find a reliable number of secondary sources as well. The only places I could find a comprehensive list of rulers from Asian and African nations during the early modern period was from unreliable sources such as Wikipedia, which I used as a tool simply to discover names and search for more information in scholarly resources. Most of these names, such as Rahofohy and Rangita of Madagascar, yielded little more than a birth year or a brief sentence in the secondary literature, let alone the primary digital sources I was searching for. Sources such as Wikipedia may not have reliable information, but the information is at least accessible and more abundant than in scholarly works.

Thus, the Eurocentrism that is pervasive in the obtainment and distribution of primary sources has affected the literature and, in part, affected my selection of historical queens from France, England, Scotland, Italy, Spain, and Navarre. Nevertheless, while Eurocentrism is an issue in historical gender studies, there are still a vast array of questions and aspects of these European women's lives to be explored, particularly given how many women were in power in such a narrow time period and on such a small stretch of land. Examining gendered social inheritance through the European monarchy may not be very representative of all women in the early modern world, but I believe it could sharpen our comprehension of how women were able to pass on knowledge through correspondence in particular. As the most powerful women of western Europe, they could provide magnified examples of inheritance solely due to the greater influence they possessed in their respective countries. Moreover, despite being some of the most well-remembered female historical figures, there is still a great deal of work to be done in unpacking the misogyny surrounding their historiography to view them as complex figures who were oppressed but also exercised power when they could.

In order to investigate these questions of inheritance surrounding women in power, the most logical place to start is their own writings. To understand what kind of social inheritances queens passed to their daughters, I decided to first look at letters, which would contain direct, written interactions between the individuals of interest. In this sense, I also selected historical figures in part based on convenience, exploring women who had the most available letters addressed either to daughters or mothers. The research revealed that letters were not just a method of examining what social inheritances women passed on, but were in themselves a mode of social inheritance. This discovery prompted me to retain a focus on letters, but I also studied other genres of women's writing that were more common, including translations. Then, I moved

on to the memoir. I have categorized the chapters of this project roughly by genre of writing. Overall, through a combination of chance, choice, and circumstance, I have focused on the letters, translations, and memoirs of sixteenth century western European queens as a way to understand historical women's social inheritance.

I also searched the scholarly literature for inspiration and arguments to both support and complement my own findings. Major works on women and gender, such as those employed earlier in the introduction, tend to thoroughly cover political and legal inheritance; however, there appears to be a lack of exploration regarding more unconventional or immaterial forms of inheritance, particularly in relation to women's writing.

While there are a generous number of books and essays about women's letters, few scholars discuss them through the lens of inheritance. In one article that briefly touches upon this subject, Carolyn James examines motherhood through the letter writing of the duchess of Ferrara Eleanora d'Aragona and her daughters Isabella and Beatrice.<sup>31</sup> James argues that Beatrice and Isabella both looked up to their mothers and sought to invoke her qualities in their own lives, partly through obedience of her wishes.<sup>32</sup> James also argues that Eleanora would have wished to pass on her "robust approach" to life on to her daughters.<sup>33</sup> Thus, similar to the historical analysis I am doing in this project, James' work focused on understanding motherhood through letter writing, mentioning a kind of immaterial inheritance passed from mother to daughter, even if James does not label it as such.

Other similar works include Susan Broomhall's piece on the correspondence of Catherine de Medicis and Elisabeth de Valois, which explores specifically the "epistolary strategies" that

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<sup>31</sup> Carolyn James, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Dynastic Politics and Motherhood in the Letters of Eleonora of Aragon and her Daughters," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 4, (2015), 528-547.

<sup>32</sup> Carolyn James, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" 541.

<sup>33</sup> Carolyn James, "What's Love Got to Do with It?" 541.

allowed the two women to navigate their relationship.<sup>34</sup> Another analysis of a later example of letters between royal mothers and daughters is found in Larry Wolff's writing on the letters of Maria Therese and Marie Antoinette.<sup>35</sup> While James' work relates more to how the letters speak to the relationship between the two women, Wolff provides a greater understanding of how epistolary analysis should occur, believing that nonfiction letters have a fictional aspect, as the writers craft personas for themselves.<sup>36</sup> Wolff's piece also explores the ways in which Maria Therese employed letters to cross both time and space and exert a level of control over her daughter through her very specific and gendered demands and wishes.<sup>37</sup> In my work I am especially interested in the implications of any advice mothers might give their daughters on personal matters, for as Wolff's work implies, by offering a certain course of action, a mother was, in a sense, passing on her own qualities by suggesting that her daughter act in a way that she might. Understanding what these qualities are will be central to the first chapter.

When it comes to translation, there are a couple of different works that will be central to my second chapter, including Anne Lake Prescott's assessment of Elizabeth I's translation of a poem by Marguerite de Navarre, which explores the ways in which Elizabeth incorporated her own ideas into her translation.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, in "Translation/Historical Writing," Chris Laouratis explores the means by which translations were transformative pieces of work that allowed women to exert power through their choice of translations.<sup>39</sup> Memoirs of the early modern

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<sup>34</sup> Susan Broomhall, "'My daughter, my dear': the correspondence of Catherine de Médicis and Elisabeth de Valois." *Women's History Review* 24, no. 4, (2015), 548-569.

<sup>35</sup> Larry Wolff, "The Hapsburg Letters," edited by Dena Goodman and Thomas E. Kaiser *Marie-Antoinette: writings on the body of a queen*, Psychology Press, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Larry Wolff, "The Hapsburg Letters," 26.

<sup>37</sup> Larry Wolff, "The Hapsburg Letters," 25-43.

<sup>38</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I: Marguerite de Navarre's Miroir and Tudor England," *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985.

<sup>39</sup>Chris Laouratis, "Translation/Historical Writing," Palgrave: Macmillan, 2010.

period, however, have received even less attention than letters and translations, in part due to the fact that very few memoirs, let alone memoirs by women, were written during this time. The majority of work on women's memoirs has specifically been focused on Marguerite de Valois. In Chapter 3, I use Marguerite's memoir as a way to examine social inheritance, and I primarily draw upon Cathleen M. Bauschatz's "Plaisir et Proffict"<sup>40</sup> and "Marguerite de Valois and the Problematics of Female Self-Representation" by Patricia Francis Cholakian.<sup>41</sup>

In combination with these particular works on women's writing that have emerged in the past decades, I will also be grappling with a historiography that has, for the most part, minimized and objectified the handful of women that it explores. Not only do historians of the past have a limited understanding of queens as individual historical figures, but there is an even greater lack of understanding surrounding the relationships between them. As stated, this was a time when many women held power in Europe and were connected through familial or political relations, yet these relations often remain unexplored outside of rivalry. Historians have a tendency to only explore individual "women worthies," a term coined by Natalie Zemon Davis: 'Who were the great women artists/musicians/scientists/rulers?...'<sup>42</sup> As Merry E. Wiesner explores, by attempting only to explore women who made contributions to particular movements or designated time periods, inevitably, due to the greater freedoms of men to make such contributions, women are left behind.<sup>43</sup> Nuances regarding historical women's lives are lost, and women like Elizabeth I become isolated figures. As a result, relationships between women remain underexplored.

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<sup>40</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict" in the Reading and Writing of Marguerite de Valois," *Tulsa studies in women's literature* 7, no. 1 (1988): 29.

<sup>41</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Marguerite de Valois and the Problematics of Female Self Representation," *Renaissance Women Writers*, (1994): 67-81.

<sup>42</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 3.

Although this particular issue will be tackled more in Chapter 2 of the work, this issue lies at the heart of why I have chosen to specifically focus on relationships between women.



## Chapter 1

### Queen Consort Mothers and their Queen Regent Daughters: The Role of Renaissance Humanist Education and Religion in Maternal Inheritance through Letter-Writing

At the age of ten, Jeanne D'Albret (1528-72), heir to the throne of Navarre, an independent kingdom in northern Spain, was a captive of her uncle, Francis I, King of France (1494-1547).<sup>44</sup> Jeanne held a key position on the map of early modern Europe, and Francis wished her to marry whomever he chose.<sup>45</sup> The arrangement of marriages between individual heirs was crucial to political relations,<sup>46</sup> and the inheritance of a throne was an inheritance of divine right.<sup>47</sup> Two years later, in 1540, her father Henry II agreed with Francis that Jeanne could marry a new ally to France, the duc of Clèves.<sup>48</sup> The marriage was annulled in 1540 when the duc of Clèves betrayed Francis.<sup>49</sup> One of the documents submitted as evidence that the marriage was not consummated was Jeanne's own writing of protest against the marriage, dated 1545.<sup>50</sup> Jeanne affirmed that she never consented to the marriage and stated that both her father and her mother, Marguerite de Navarre (1492-1549), forced her into it and that her mother even threatened to beat her to death.<sup>51</sup>

Jeanne's story, the story of the future queen regent of Navarre, provides a rather bleak understanding of the lives of even the most privileged women in early modern Europe. Even the

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<sup>44</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," *A New History of French literature*, Harvard University Press. Edited by Denis Hollier, (1998), 1527.

<sup>45</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 1527.

<sup>46</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 1527.

<sup>47</sup> Conal Condren. "Reason of state and sovereignty in early modern England: a question of ideology?" *Parergon* 28, no. 2 (2011), 22.

<sup>48</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 1527.

<sup>49</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 1527.

<sup>50</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 1527.

<sup>51</sup> Jeanne D'Albret. "Margaret of Navarre" *A New History of French literature*. Harvard University Press. Edited by Denis Hollier. (1998), 1527.

rare woman who could inherit a title would often fall under the thumb of dynastic politics. The history of Mary, Queen of Scots and Lady Jane Grey of England, who died after nine days of being queen of England, show that a potential inheritance could be a threat to a person's life. However, royal status and inheritance of a future title in the case of Jeanne D'Albret threatened her life in a slightly different way. She was the heir to the throne of Navarre, but due to the patrilineal nature of the society she was in and the evident power of the king of France, her family reduced her to her title and her ability to produce a future heir. Her family treated her as a strategically placed object that could maximize their power and produce future members of the royal line. This appears to have been less likely to happen to future queen regents than future queen consorts, but Jeanne's situation shows that it happened to queen regents as well.

Jeanne's situation also provides interesting implications for mother-daughter relationships, parenthood, and childhood in the early modern world. Based on the anecdote of Jeanne's arranged marriage, it would seem that she and her mother had a fraught relationship. However, as letters from Marguerite to her daughter will later reveal in this chapter, the situation was much more complicated. In this chapter, I will be exploring social inheritance both given and depicted in letter writing between queens and their daughters. Beyond exploring inheritance through letter-writing, it is important to understand how letter-writing itself functioned for women in the early modern period.

There was a low level of literacy amongst women during the 1500s, as an estimated 1 percent of English women could sign their name in the year 1500.<sup>52</sup> Writing letters in particular required time, education, and expensive resources, including a pen knife, candles, and paper.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> David Cressy, *Literacy and the social order: Reading and writing in Tudor and Stuart England*, Cambridge University Press, 2006, cited in Lynne Magnusson, "Letters." *The History of British Women's Writing: 1500-1610*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 131.

<sup>53</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 131-132.

Letters would likely be sent by a servant given the absence of post offices.<sup>54</sup> Compared to other genres of writing, however, women produced many letters during the sixteenth century.<sup>55</sup> Letters should, therefore, be an important historical resource when studying women and should be considered when addressing women's writing during the period.<sup>56</sup> The latter decades of the 1500s saw an increase in female literacy, although the seventeenth century witnessed an even greater explosion.<sup>57</sup> When it came to illiterate women of the poorer class, however, even if a lack of education and ability to write limited their participation in letter writing, it did not necessarily fully exclude them from it.<sup>58</sup> Messages could be sent through other people who were somewhat literate, and distance was a barrier, but a town carrier or an acquaintance could deliver messages.<sup>59</sup> Letter writing was not a very private venture for the non-elite and elite alike.

In the case of the noblewoman's letter-writing, it is important to remember that, even if the letters might seem as though they were private, noblewomen used a scribe at times, and were often in the company of other people, even when they were writing and reading personal letters.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, the resources of a noble woman would have provided her with a level of confidentiality that a woman of the merchant class would not have possessed.<sup>61</sup> One person would likely have been delivered her mail without any address on it, making it more anonymous, whereas a merchant woman's letter would likely have been passed around to successfully meet a final destination.<sup>62</sup> Overall, in assessing the letters of these queens, it is

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<sup>54</sup> Stewart, Alan, and Heather Wolfe. *Letter Writing in Renaissance England*. Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004, cited in Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 131-132.

<sup>55</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 131-132.

<sup>56</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 132-133.

<sup>57</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 132.

<sup>58</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 137.

<sup>59</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 137.

<sup>60</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 141.

<sup>61</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 141.

<sup>62</sup> Lynne Magnusson. "Letters," 141.

important to understand the unique mechanisms by which letters were sent and received, as these processes likely affected the contents of the letters themselves.

In the case of royal women, as the letters and certain scholarly sources will suggest, I find that mothers could bequeath education and religious teachings to their daughters and remain within prescribed gender roles. These teachings could provide daughters with influence and power, particularly within the context of Renaissance humanism and the Reformation. Thus, while women, particularly consorts, did not pass on titles or property themselves, they could pass on inheritances of a religious or educational nature. Though the Reformation, in some ways, strengthened certain patriarchal structures,<sup>63</sup> and although some aspects of humanist education hindered women,<sup>64</sup> elite women in particular were able to take advantage of both the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation to become influential and to pass this influence on to their daughters.

Marguerite de Navarre and Jeanne D'Albret will be the first of two mother-daughter pairings of interest in this chapter. Born to Charles de Valois-Orléans, comte d'Algoulême, and Louise of Savoy (1476-1531), Marguerite de Navarre, also referred to as Marguerite d'Algoulême, was the queen consort of Henry II of Navarre and an important figure in the French Renaissance as both an author and a patron. Marguerite is best known as an author in the Renaissance, but she also held a powerful place in the court of her brother. Combined with her intelligence and education, she was highly instrumental in spreading Christian humanism and ideas surrounding reform of the Catholic Church. Both members of the reformation and counter reformation, even the pope, sought her out for her influence.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 255

<sup>64</sup> Joan Kelly, "Did women have a Renaissance?" Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977.

<sup>65</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, "Calvin's letters to women: The courting of ladies in high places," *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, (1982), 75.

Letters both to her mother and her daughter are accessible. One particularly fascinating form of correspondence that Marguerite participated in was the writing of verse letters.<sup>66</sup> Alone, these letters require a certain level of literary analysis and do not provide conclusive evidence. They do, however, provide interesting insight into the nature of these mother-daughter relationships and have implications for social inheritance. Within the historical context of Marguerite's life, as provided by other scholarly works, they offer interesting glimpses on perhaps some of the types of inheritances women might have passed on. Verse letters are particularly fascinating due to the depth of emotion portrayed through the use of symbolism and metaphor that perhaps would not have been otherwise conveyed. Marguerite, who was a famous Renaissance writer, may have found that it was easier to navigate her relationships with the women in her lives through a kind of literary veil.

Marguerite wrote one particular letter of interest in 1530 when her mother Louise of Savoy journeyed to southern France to visit her grandchildren, sons of Marguerite's brother Francis I, King of France, after their long imprisonment in Spain.<sup>67</sup> Marguerite could not go due to her pregnancy.<sup>68</sup> As the editors of the collection describe, this verse letter from Marguerite to her mother from this time contains both disappointment at her inability to attend as well as an overflowing joy over the return of her nephews.<sup>69</sup> In her disappointment over not being there, Marguerite envisioned Louise visiting with the king and queen of France and lamented her absence, regretting that she could not be "a small part of that perfect triangle."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings: a bilingual edition*. Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp, editors, University of Chicago Press, (2008), 43.

<sup>67</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 42-43.

<sup>68</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 42-43.

<sup>69</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 44.

<sup>70</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 45.

The editors of Marguerite's letters, Rouben Cholakian and Mary Skemp, indicate that the triangle refers to Louise of Savoy and her two children, Marguerite and France's King, Francis I.<sup>71</sup> However, Marguerite seems to have referred to her brother the king and the queen, Claude of France (1499-1524). Earlier, Marguerite mentioned that she referred to the queen of France as her mother's daughter,<sup>72</sup> so Marguerite perhaps felt that she was being replaced in some way by her brother's wife as the daughter of Louise. Historian Leah Middlebrook discusses the ways in which Louise, Marguerite, and Francis participated in this metaphorical *trinité* as a reflection of their own divinity and the divinity of their relationships to one another as a means of claiming authority.<sup>73</sup> In this case, however, Marguerite appears to have felt left out of this trinity.

While Marguerite's brother became the king of France, Marguerite had to leave her homeland to become the queen consort of Navarre and be separated from her family. Thus, as discussed earlier, these letters were vital to their communication. Marguerite's letter was melancholy over the separation from her family back home. Regardless, she was insistent upon the affection that her mother expressed to her, likely in a previous letter and called the bond between them "eternal."<sup>74</sup> In order to understand this motherly love and affection that Louise supposedly participates in, it is helpful to examine the nature of parental relationships in the early modern period, particularly between mother and daughter.

The understanding of childhood during the early modern period has changed somewhat over time.<sup>75</sup> While some historians originally believed that childhood was not really treated as a distinct category of life during the early modern period due to the harsh nature of the methods

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<sup>71</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 397.

<sup>72</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 54.

<sup>73</sup> Jean Middlebrook, "'Tout mon office:' Body Politics and Family Dynamics in the verse épîtres of Marguerite de Navarre." *Renaissance Quarterly* 54, no. 4-Part 1 (2001): 1108-1141.

<sup>74</sup> Marguerite de Navarre. *Selected Writings*, 47.

<sup>75</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 42.

depicted in child raising manuals and the way that children were dressed, more recent scholarship has challenged these ideas.<sup>76</sup> Parents often did show considerable affection for their children and some of their harsher actions were sometimes implemented with the aim of protection.<sup>77</sup> Records indicate, however, that with the exception of early modern London, girls were abandoned more often than boys, and parents were more likely to wish for the birth of a boy.<sup>78</sup>

Interestingly, however, up until the age of four or five, very few gender roles were imposed on children in comparison to modern conceptions of childhood.<sup>79</sup> However, it is clear that from this point, gender roles were often quite strict, as children began to train in various gendered skills for their future lives.<sup>80</sup> One event, however, that marked the beginning of adulthood for a girl was menstruation.<sup>81</sup> People had know idea what the purpose of menstruation was medically, but they believed that it related to purification of a woman's blood, which was connected to the humoral theory of the time.<sup>82</sup>

A mother was the primary force in pushing an understanding of gender roles onto her children.<sup>83</sup> It was her responsibility to inform her child about what should be done in order to survive.<sup>84</sup> However, this relationship might have been different amongst a higher class woman, who would have had a variety of servants and tutors and governesses to help her, although she would have likely overseen the general content of her daughter's education.<sup>85</sup> In some cases,

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<sup>76</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 43.

<sup>78</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 43.

<sup>79</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 43.

<sup>80</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 43.

<sup>81</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 44.

<sup>82</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and gender*, 44.

<sup>83</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The prospect before her*, 214-215.

<sup>84</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 215.

<sup>85</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 219.

however, the relationship between the mother and the daughter was one of the closest, likely due to the proximity they could have within a home<sup>86</sup> and the more limited company they kept than men.<sup>87</sup> The goal of the mother was to help raise a virtuous and chaste daughter who could marry well, lest the mother should die before the daughter met adulthood.<sup>88</sup> This fact will become important when considering what traits mothers would have wanted to pass down to their daughters.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the role that parents played in orchestrating marriages could predict their subsequent role in those marriages.<sup>90</sup> When a woman was married, the control of her life and any property or dowry she had did not necessarily transfer directly from her family to her husband.<sup>91</sup> This transferral, in fact, could depend on her parent's approval or disapproval of the marriage.<sup>92</sup> Due to investment in the children themselves, the preservation of a marriage did go beyond simply wanting to keep reputation and wealth intact.<sup>93</sup> Overall, even after Marguerite's marriage, despite physical separation, her mother still would have been an active force in her life.

It is difficult to know, due to the absence of a letter from Louise to Marguerite, but it seems in a way that Marguerite, by writing these words, was not just defining a bond that it is already there, but reaffirming that bond and the expression of her feelings in a way that transcended their separation. It is, overall, a very bittersweet letter, as Marguerite on the one hand, emphasized that she felt joy for her mother. Nevertheless, the tone of Marguerite's words seems to have been one of deference and sadness than one of joy. On one hand, certain instances of Marguerite's writing implies a metaphorical kind of merging of their identities through this

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<sup>86</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 220.

<sup>87</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 220.

<sup>88</sup> Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 229.

<sup>89</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, "Parenting was for Life, Not Just for Childhood: The Role of Parents in the Married Lives of Their Children in early Modern England," *History* 86, no. 283, 317.

<sup>90</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, "Parenting was for Life," 323.

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, "Parenting was for Life," 323.

<sup>92</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, "Parenting was for Life," 323.

<sup>93</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, "Parenting was for Life," 323.



bond that they have formed in some instances, as Marguerite appeared to be attempting to exist through her own mother: “But the fire, pure and unlimited, / allows me to live through you, / in you, / and for you.”<sup>94</sup> In this sense, the fire was the joy she felt for her mother, but it was not a joy for her own situation in life. Perhaps Marguerite not only sought to experience joy for her mother’s sake, but wanted to live through her mother with the hope that someday she might be in the same position, socially or otherwise.

Another interesting moment in the letter occurred when Marguerite said that her mother’s “many virtues”<sup>95</sup> have defeated the unfortunate situation she escaped from, yet this bad fortune was now following Marguerite. Marguerite’s language again was rather contradictory and both implied that her mother’s good fortune came to haunt her (as she cannot go to France) and that her mother’s good fortune over the return of the heirs to France was her own. Marguerite also placed the blame for missing this event on her own pregnancy with her son. Throughout the letter, Marguerite appears to have regarded her own pregnancy in a surprisingly negative light.

Despite the pressure that was likely placed on her to have children to continue the lineage of her husband as rulers of Navarre, however, her bond to her mother and her current family appear to have outweighed any future family or heirs she may give birth to. Perhaps Marguerite’s own world as the queen of Navarre with a two-year-old Jeanne D’albret and an ongoing pregnancy, felt rather unstable in comparison to the idea of her mother being secure with her newly rescued adult children back home. In a way, Marguerite portrayed a kind of bitterness, not toward her mother, but toward her situation. She even stated: “I feared neither sea nor wreckage, / neither the advances nor the assaults of the enemy, / and yet, / am I obliged to surrender / and put myself at the mercy of a child?”<sup>96</sup> Marguerite thus seemed to understand her role as queen

<sup>94</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 326.

<sup>95</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 53.

<sup>96</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 53.

consort and her duty to produce an heir, but this was not necessarily a role that she accepted with open arms. She herself pointed out the irony of having to stay home due to a pregnancy, despite the great things she had accomplished in life. She even stated that she found it embarrassing.

Nonetheless, she commended Louise in fulfilling her responsibilities as a mother, and named her mother as her “only solace.”<sup>97</sup> Marguerite seems to have admired her mother’s maternal abilities and the important role they had played in preserving their family. Louise of Savoy was not simply a mother of the king, but an important figure in her own right, acting as regent of France twice during his reign. While Marguerite may have admired the qualities of her mother that were often admired in women at the time, the letter makes it clear that Marguerite understood Louise’s role in keeping the future of France safe itself.

Thus, by writing this letter, despite the circumstances, both marriage and childbirth, that separated Marguerite from her mother, letter-writing was a way for her to establish her bond with her mother and transcend time and space to be with her. It was a way for her to understand her own emotions and feel the experiences of her mother and find both sadness and solace in them. Although Marguerite’s letter may not explicitly suggest anything about the nature of feminine inheritance, it does speak to the complexities of emotion that could be conveyed in these letters and the ways in which letter-writing between literate women could connect them when circumstances separated them. Moreover, perhaps Marguerite, by stating that she would live through and for her mother, desired to adopt the characteristics of strength and virtue that she so admired. In addition, through her analysis of Louise’s characteristics as a mother, perhaps Marguerite wished to emulate some of her maternal characteristics. Her mother had had the duty of bearing the future heirs to the throne of France, and despite Marguerite’s own personal feelings regarding her pregnancy, Louise’s resilience may have given her some personal strength.

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<sup>97</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 53.

Though the story about Jeanne D'Albret's first marriage at the start of this chapter might imply that Marguerite did not emulate the qualities of her own mother when it came to her own child, a letter written in the spring of 1549<sup>98</sup> certainly complicates this idea of. Perhaps Marguerite's feelings during pregnancy were ones of disdain toward her future children as this was not a path that she necessarily wanted, but her relationship with her daughter seems to have evolved into something else. Her verse letter to Jeanne also speaks to the separation between mother and daughter, except in this case, Marguerite was the mother figure.

The letter is more abstract than the previous one, employing an imaginary scene to express to Jeanne that Marguerite was missing her. The start implies that Marguerite had not written to her in awhile. Personified "Love" called upon Marguerite, forcing her to get up in the night and write to her daughter. In a certain sense, both duty and affection seem to play a role in Marguerite's motivation to write a letter to her daughter. Marguerite called Jeanne an "unfortunate princess" and "Love" told Marguerite she could not stop her writing until Jeanne reached her "happy destination."<sup>99</sup> The editor notes that this destination would have been her new home with her husband, Antoine de Bourbon, duc de Vendôme.<sup>100</sup> In this sense, Marguerite was attempting to provide her daughter with some sense of comfort until she reached the next stage of her life. As a mother, preparing her daughter for marriage and even arranging that marriage was a duty.

Nonetheless, while the previous portions of the poem suggest that Marguerite was writing this letter out of a sense of duty that reflects this hierarchy, the tone of the poem shifted and the nature surrounding Marguerite began to called out to her, mourning the separation from her daughter and wishing for her to come back. Interestingly, it was a letter written about writing a

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<sup>98</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 48.

<sup>99</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 69.

<sup>100</sup> Marguerite de Navarre, *Selected Writings*, 39.

letter, and as a result, it contains even less of the formalities than her letter to Louise. Marguerite, by writing in this symbolic way, was in many ways subverting what would be expected of a mother. She was writing to comfort her daughter in her passage to the next stage of life, but while doing so, she was wishing for her daughter to be with her instead. Marguerite's letter to her mother and her letter to her daughter both encapsulate the bind that women found themselves in, trapped between needing to fulfill and pursuing true desires. Metaphor and symbolism revealed her true feelings.

Marguerite seemed to be aware of the inheritances that she should take from her mother- that of motherly duty and virtue- and aware of what she should give to her daughter. For instance, Marguerite also mentioned her daughter's virtue, which she had discussed in relation to her mother. As stated earlier, ensuring that a daughter was both virtuous and chaste was also a duty of a mother, so Marguerite possibly saw herself as passing on the teachings from her own mother, whom she also referred to as virtuous, to her daughter. Chastity was incredibly important in dynastic politics to ensure the integrity of dynasties. Nevertheless, while some of the inheritances that mothers passed on to their daughters may have conformed with expectations, some mothers, Marguerite included, could potentially have also passed down attributes and teachings that fit within prescribed gender roles but offered their daughter more power in the early modern world, particularly through education and religion.

Interestingly, Jeanne was not usually with her mother during her childhood, yet Marguerite ensured that she received an excellent education.<sup>101</sup> Though Marguerite was a Catholic all her life, as was her mother Louise, she was still interested in the reform, and Jeanne

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<sup>101</sup> Jeanne d'Albret, *Letters from the Queen of Navarre with an Ample Declaration*, Kathleen M. Llewellyn, Emily E. Thompson, Colette Winn, and Jane Couchman, editors, *ACMRs Publications*, (2016), 2

was introduced to many ideas relating to the Reformation in her youth.<sup>102</sup> Thus, though they may not have been together frequently, the letter and biographical information do suggest a level of intellectual connection between the two in which Marguerite likely passed on religious ideas and teachings to her daughter, which becomes more evident in an exploration of Jeanne's later life.

While Marguerite described Jeanne as having "virtue" and "sweetness" in her letter, historians describe Jeanne as, despite having poor physical health, being incredibly willful, as her protestation against her marriage to Guillaume de La Marck, duc of Clèves, attests.<sup>103</sup> Jeanne eventually had her later husband Antoine de Bourbon declared a joint sovereign of the land and maintained correspondence with both Elizabeth I and Catherine de' Medici, two of the other most powerful women in Europe at the time, and Elizabeth I was a particularly important Protestant ally to Jeanne.<sup>104</sup>

John Calvin was in conversation with many noblewomen due to their political influence, including both Marguerite and Jeanne, and Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell argues that Marguerite was particularly interested in Christian humanism.<sup>105</sup> Though Marguerite and Calvin eventually had a disagreement, several years after her death, Calvin sent a letter to Jeanne in January 1561 as a result of Jeanne's conversion to Calvinism in 1560, expressing what Jeanne's new obligations were.<sup>106</sup> Blaisdell states that Calvin's interest in noblewomen was not spiritual but rather political and that he wished for Jeanne to influence her husband and help to make other changes.<sup>107</sup> Blaisdell also argues that Jeanne had a very important role in helping to establish Calvinist influence in France.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Kathleen M. Llewellyn, Emily E. Thompson, Colette Winn, and Jane Couchman, 1.

<sup>103</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis, "Margaret of Navarre," 146.

<sup>104</sup> Kathleen M. Llewellyn, Emily E. Thompson, Colette Winn, and Jane Couchman, 1-9.

<sup>105</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, "Calvin's letters to women," 74.

<sup>106</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, "Calvin's letters to women," 76.

<sup>107</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, "Calvin's letters to women," 76.

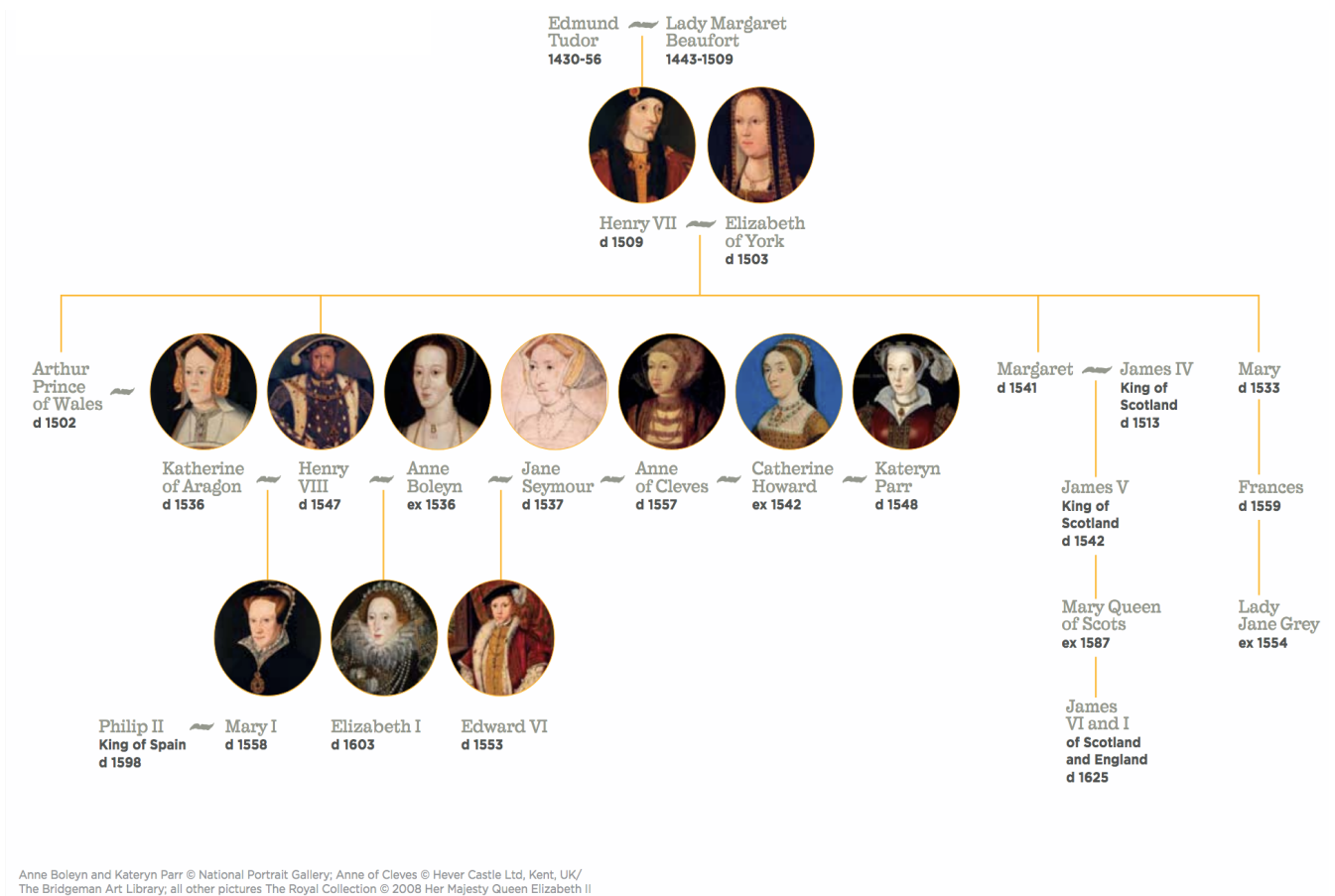
<sup>108</sup> Charmarie Jenkins Blaisdell, "Calvin's letters to women," 77.

Despite becoming joint ruler of Navarre with her husband, Jeanne did not collaborate with him on the religious transformation taking place. Due to the absence of the Salic Law in Navarre, Jeanne was able to inherit large amounts of land in addition to the crown, and she was able to initiate reform in Béarn, Navarre, and Guyenne. Pope Pius IV himself threatened to have her excommunicated.<sup>109</sup>

Overall, the nature of the verse letter and the history of these two women speak to an intellectual connection. Marguerite, through the importance she placed on education, her own reformist ideas, and her writings to Cavlin, likely passed many of her own qualities on to Jeanne, who would become a vital figure in the Reformation and take Marguerite's teachings even farther. Though Jeanne did not inherit a title or vast amounts of land from her mother, she did inherit an education and religious teachings that would shape the course of her life. Although the Reformation may have provided these elite women with unique power, educational and religious inheritance between women was not restricted to the reformers. Our next mother-daughter pairing to explore is Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) and her daughter, Mary.

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<sup>109</sup> Kathleen M. Llewellyn, Emily E. Thompson, Colette Winn, and Jane Couchman, 3-5.



## 2. The Tudor Dynasty Family Tree, Historic Royal Palaces, United Kingdom

At the age of fifteen, Catherine of Aragon, daughter of the famous rulers of Castile and Aragon, Isabella I of Castile (1451-1504) and Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516), moved to England to wed the Prince of Wales, Arthur Tudor, who died only months after their marriage. Catherine would then marry Arthur's brother, Henry VIII. Catherine gave birth to a daughter, Mary, but the couple struggled to have a male heir.

Catherine had an excellent education and sought to pass it on to Mary, as she believed that one day Mary would become queen of England.<sup>110</sup> Catherine even commissioned the 1529

<sup>110</sup> Anne Crawford. *Letters of the Queens of England, 1100-1547*, Stroud: Sutton, 2002, 175-176.

conduct book *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* by Juan Luis Vives,<sup>111</sup> who was a Spanish humanist who studied under Erasmus. Humanists, in general, believed that women were not lacking in intelligence or virtue, but rather, that they were easily led astray.<sup>112</sup> To them, education played an important role in making sure that women stayed on a virtuous path.<sup>113</sup> Humanists, as Valerie Wayne argues, were women's best educational advocates during the time; however, Wayne also argues that their reasoning was regressive in some ways, as this education was mainly performed for the sake of a woman's virtue.<sup>114</sup> Sir Thomas More, in particular, was an advocate for education to preserve virtue.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, an education with the aim of virtue is better than no education at all, and Catherine's belief in the importance of her own child's education was evidently influenced by humanist thought.<sup>116</sup> Catherine's emphasis on education and her wish to pass on knowledge to Mary is evident throughout her letters.

One notable letter between the two women transcribed in Anne Crawford's *Letters of the Queens of England* was written in 1525 after the first separation of Catherine and Mary. Catherine's nephew, Charles V, had broken off his engagement with Mary, and Henry VIII penalized Catherine by sending Mary to Ludlow Castle.<sup>117</sup> Crawford remarks that Catherine was encouraging yet despondent in the letter.<sup>118</sup> The letter was only a paragraph long, but Catherine expressed her sadness over the absence of Henry and her separation from Mary. She was, however, pleased that Mary was doing well and prayed to God that it remains that way. Catherine

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<sup>111</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence: Vives' *Instruction of a Christian Woman*," *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Marharet Patterson Hannay, the Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio, (1985), 15.

<sup>112</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence," 20.

<sup>113</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence," 20.

<sup>114</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence," 18.

<sup>115</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence," 18.

<sup>116</sup> Valerie Wayne, "Some Sad Sentence," 15.

<sup>117</sup> Anne Crawford. *Letters of the Queens of England*, 176.

<sup>118</sup> Anne Crawford. *Letters of the Queens of England*, 176.



also discussed Mary's education in Latin, for which Mary was transitioning to a tutor, one Master Federston. Catherine, according to the letter, was the one teaching Mary Latin prior to their separation. Though Catherine was pleased that Mary would be taught by a professional, she still wished to oversee her work. Thus, Catherine wanted to play an active role in Mary's education, even through their separation.<sup>119</sup> In contrast to Marguerite and Jeanne's separation, Catherine and Mary were separated by force and not necessity, but the balance that Catherine strikes between expressing her own feelings and providing comfort for her daughter is reminiscent of Marguerite's writing. Education, in this sense, appeared to be the solace and distraction that Catherine gave to her daughter to keep her occupied and alive in the world.

Despite Catherine's careful preparation for her daughter for the role of queen, all did not go to plan. Henry broke with Rome, annulling their marriage. After the birth of Elizabeth Tudor, Henry VIII ordered Mary to take the oath to the Act of Succession, which would deem her mother no longer the queen of England and herself illegitimate. Mary was incredibly resistant but eventually submitted, partly at her mother's wish.<sup>120</sup> Catherine's support of Mary possibly saved her life.

Though Catherine was unfailingly loyal to Henry when it came to her actions, another letter to Mary displays a fine-tuned balance of both quiet resistance and acquiescence for the sake of her own survival and that of her daughter.<sup>121</sup> In April of 1534, Catherine wrote to Mary with the knowledge that Henry wished to declare Mary illegitimate, revoking her title of Princess of Wales and her position as heir. Catherine, instead of referring to Henry as the one who wishes this to be, referred to God. During this time, the people viewed sovereigns as ruling with divine right, so Catherine likely saw any action of Henry's as an action of God, despite the effect that it

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<sup>119</sup> Catherine of Aragon, *Letters of the Queens of England*, edited by Anne Crawford, 177.

<sup>120</sup> Anne Crawford. *Letters of the Queens of England*, 176.

<sup>121</sup> Catherine of Aragon, *Letters of the Queens of England*, edited by Anne Crawford, 177-178.

might have on herself and her daughter. On the other hand, this could have been, in some ways, a rhetorical method of Catherine's to make her daughter agree to his wishes in order to save her from death. Catherine stated that if Mary followed the wishes of God, she would not be killed, reminding Mary to follow the commandments.

Catherine told Mary that once a letter was sent from the King requesting this of her, that she must obey him "in everything, save only that you will not offend God and lose your own soul."<sup>122</sup> In a way, Catherine both attempted to save her daughter but also implied a disapproval of Henry's actions. While Henry may have had a connection to God, the existence of Mary proved the consummation of their marriage, which in the eyes of Catherine, would likely make their marriage unbreakable and his marriage to Anne Boleyn (1507-1536) one of illegitimacy. Thus, Catherine was caught in a paradox.<sup>123</sup>

She encouraged Mary to give a short and simple answer of obedience to the King and said that she would send her some religious works in Latin, as well as suggesting that Mary should focus on her music. By doing so, Catherine appears to have attempted to again divert Mary's attention from politics and, despite not being together, give her religion and education to focus on instead. Catherine essentially told Mary to bide her time, encouraging her to be "chaste," as is her duty through her love of both her mother and God.<sup>124</sup> Catherine, similarly to Marguerite, revered chastity and virtue in a woman, and saw them as traits worthy of instilling in her daughter. Nevertheless, due to Mary's precarious situation, not marrying and remaining

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<sup>122</sup> Catherine of Aragon, *Letters of the Queens of England*, edited by Anne Crawford, 178.

<sup>123</sup> Marilee Hanson, "Letter of Catherine of Aragon to her daughter, Princess Mary April 1534"

<a href="https://englishhistory.net/tudor/letter-katharine-aragon-daughter-princess-mary-april-1534/">https://englishhistory.net/tudor/letter-katharine-aragon-daughter-princess-mary-april-1534/</a>, February 24, 2015, Although not a scholarly source, this article presents an interesting commentary that inspired my own interpretation.

<sup>124</sup> Catherine of Aragon, *Letters of the Queens of England*, edited by Anne Crawford, 178.

chaste was essential in this moment when her inheritance of the throne had been taken away to prevent her from ruin and ensure her survival. Catherine appeared to not only be attempting to pass on her own “virtue,” but also a kind of integrity and strength through self-improvement, religion, and education that would keep her busy. Unfortunately for early modern women, inaction was often key to survival and Catherine likely knew this.

Through her religious beliefs, Catherine saw the legitimacy of both herself and her daughter and may have implied that God would eventually bring that legitimacy to fruition if they simply kept their heads down and waited. Though Mary’s reign would not have the success that Catherine might have wished, Catherine’s predictions were not wrong, as Mary died the queen regent of England. Overall, while the letters display that Mary inherited a strong education from her mother, religion was deeply tied to this education and Catherine’s legacy. While Henry broke with Rome, Mary later attempted to reinstate Catholicism as the country’s religion, becoming known throughout England as the infamous Bloody Mary.

Since Catholic influence did not come from her often absent and preoccupied father, it is likely that such religious influence came through maternal inheritance from her mother, partly through these letters, which were their only means of contact through the final years of Catherine’s life. These religious beliefs provided both women with fortitude, and before Mary’s punishment of Protestants during her reign, popularity with the people of England.

Regardless of their stances on the reform of the church, the letter writing history of Marguerite de Navarre and Catherine of Aragon displays similarities when it comes to the educational and religious inheritances these women bequeathed upon their daughters. Both queen consorts were tasked with educating the future heirs to their respective countries, each woman playing a vital role in ensuring the proper education of her daughter. While Marguerite de

Navarre may have been separate from her daughter, her letter both to her mother and her daughter speak to the importance she placed on family ties. Her verse letter to Jeanne highlights the contradiction between her longing to be with her daughter and her wish for her daughter to reach the next portion of her life. While the letter itself does not imply a great deal about the inheritance of education or religious ideas, it reinforces the notion of a strong intellectual and emotional bond between mother and daughter and supports the religious and political ideas that Marguerite likely passed on to her daughter.

The inheritance of religious and educational ideas, however, is even more prominent in the letters of Catherine and Mary. While Marguerite's letter and her earlier treatment of Jeanne speak to a more fraught relationship despite an intellectual connection, Catherine and Mary likely had an even stronger bond. While a glance at history displays that Catherine had great influence on Mary's religious ideas, these notions were fostered through a strong education tied to humanist thought, which posited the importance of a woman's education for the sake of her virtue. While education and religious teachings for the sake of virtue may not seem entirely subversive, women such as Mary I and Jeanne D'Albret, with the inheritances of their mothers, were able to find power within the structures of their prescribed gender roles and gain influence throughout Europe.

## Chapter 2

### A Web of Inheritance: Exploring Maternal Inheritance through the Relationships of Elizabeth I

In studies of royal women in sixteenth century Europe, it seems particularly challenging to discuss one or two queens in relation to each other without acknowledging a variety of others. Some of the most famous and infamous women in European history were in power during this time, including those mentioned in the first chapter: Catherine of Aragon, Mary I, Marguerite de Navarre, and Jeanne D’Albret. Other female rulers of the time included Anne Boleyn, Catherine Parr, Mary, Queen of Scots, Elizabeth I, and Catherine de’ Medici, along with many more outside of western Europe such as Rangita and Rafohy of Imerina, Madagascar<sup>125</sup> and Rani Abbaka Chowta (who ruled from 1525-1570) of Ullal, who successfully warded off Portuguese colonization in the 1520s.<sup>126</sup> Unfortunately, as discussed in the introduction, it is difficult to find scholarly work written in English about female rulers outside of Europe even in relation to Europe, which presents limitations. Nevertheless, even when examining those more famous female rulers of Europe, who were for the most part all connected either by familial relation or circumstance, the relationships between them appear to be highly underexplored in the scholarship.

There are exceptions to this rule, such as *Silent By For the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay, which contains a series of essays that draw clear connections between Tudor women<sup>127</sup> and will serve as my main scholarly source for this chapter. Nevertheless, throughout popular culture and

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<sup>125</sup> Suzy Ramamonjisoa, “Empowerment of women & democracy in Madagascar,” (1993), 119.

<sup>126</sup> Zahied Rehman Ganie and Shanti Dev Sisodia, “The Unsung Heroines of India’s Freedom Struggle,” *American International Journal of Social Science Research* 5, no. 2 (2020), 19-25, np.

<sup>127</sup> Margaret P. Hannay, *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985.

even in general scholarly works, the relationships between these women appear to be absent or obscured by their relationship to men. For instance, the entry in *Encyclopedia Britannica* on Catherine of Aragon mostly discusses her in relation to the men around her, only mentions her in relation to Mary I once, and does little to discuss her extensive education<sup>128</sup> or religious convictions unless in reference to Henry VIII. While the information appears to be accurate, it does not present the full picture and portrays Catherine as little more than a victim of circumstance. Although she was a victim in some ways and an encyclopedia entry cannot explore everything, our perception of these European queens and more generally women, becomes skewed.

In contrast to Catherine's entry, Anne Boleyn's encyclopedia entry labels her as "arrogant." The entry also chiefly discusses her in relation to men but does so in a way that somewhat demonizes her. The entry does directly call Anne a "victim" when it comes to her later execution on the basis of adultery allegations, but still labels specific men in her life as the cause of her victimhood rather than discussing the larger, gender-based phenomena behind it. An encyclopedia entry is not necessarily a place for such exploration, but again, the entries point to some of the issues found within portrayals of these women, even in works that are supposed to be objective. Women such as Anne Boleyn and Mary, Queen of Scots often are depicted to have fallen or have some dramatic "downfall," as illustrated simply by the titles of "The Fall of Anne Boleyn" by George Bernard<sup>129</sup> or popular history book *Mary Queen of Scots' Downfall: The Life and Murder of Henry, Lord Darnley* by Robert Stedall.<sup>130</sup> This project began with a recounting

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<sup>128</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 175-176.

<sup>129</sup> George W. Bernard, "The Fall of Anne Boleyn," *The English Historical Review* 106, no. CCCCXX (1991): 584.10.

<sup>130</sup> Robert Stedall, *Mary Queen of Scots' Downfall: The Life and Murder of Henry, Lord Darnley*, Pen and Sword, 2017.

of Mary Queen of Scot's "downfall," but addressed that downfall in the context of her writing of a will, which was an act of agency. Very few accounts of Mary's history offer her agency.

Interestingly enough, one of the more thought-provoking pieces I have found to counteract this obsession with the downfall of powerful women has been an article with the Hollywood Reporter by Robyn Bahr called "Critic's Notebook: The Obsession With Female Royalty Is Really an Obsession With Female Trauma."<sup>131</sup> The article, written in the wake of the release of another film about Mary, Queen of Scots, points to the disproportionate number of films created about queens in recent years in comparison to the mere handful made about kings. It is unclear whether or not Bahr has any academic background on the subject, but the article regardless raises some very interesting questions. Bahr may not be a historian, but popular culture and history seem to be in conversation when it comes to queenship.

Bahr believes that filmgoers and makers are not interested in the power of these queens but rather the loss of such power. While I believe there is some truth in this, Bahr's reasoning is slightly one-dimensional. Bahr implies that it is the tragic lives of the queens themselves that lead to an obsession with their trauma rather than the fact that historical portrayals of queens have failed to offer insight into ways that women navigated and often overcame the tragedy of their circumstances. Bahr states that "female rule almost always implies some form of tragic circumstance." Bahr accurately lists some of the obstacles these women faced but falls into similar patterns of victimization, implying that these queens were either isolated from other women in their lives or controlled by them. I believe that such a simplification rests at the heart

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<sup>131</sup> Robyn Bahr, "Critics Notebook: Obsession with Female Royalty is an Obsession with Female Trauma," Hollywood Reporter, 2018, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/critics-notebook-obsession-female-royalty-is-an-obsession-female-trauma-1171713>

of the issue. In order to provide women with the full range of historical exploration they deserve, we must not view them in isolation, but in conversation with one another.

In *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, there is notably only one single mention of Anne Boleyn, and it is in the editor's notes. I will explore Anne Boleyn's absence and presence in Elizabeth's life more later in the chapter, but the absence of her birth mother for most of her life makes Elizabeth an interesting figure to study in the world of maternal inheritance. Elizabeth also provides a particularly interesting perspective on queenship, as Elizabeth did not marry, and European society had a difficult time reconciling her womanhood with her rulership.<sup>132</sup> Instead of having an heir, Elizabeth would eventually evolve into a kind of mother to the people<sup>133</sup> while also being known as the Virgin Queen. This chapter, however, will focus on her relationships before she was queen.

In the last chapter, I explored two very strong, royal mother-daughter relationships and the ways in which letter writing could reveal certain social inheritances passed from mother to daughter. Elizabeth's situation, in some ways, reveals that inheritance of ideas and qualities discussed in Chapter 1, such as virtue, education, and religion, could occur through maternal figures, but as one particular article by Anne Lake Prescott implies,<sup>134</sup> there could also be a chain of inheritance and influence between women, shaped in particular by the dynastic and religious intricacies that tied together many powerful women of sixteenth century Europe. These connections, moreover, can be explored through letter writing and translations.

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<sup>132</sup> Carole Levin, *The heart and stomach of a king*, 3.

<sup>133</sup> Carole Levin, *The heart and stomach of a king*, 3.

<sup>134</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I: Marguerite de Navarre's Miroir and Tudor England," *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985.



In an essay “Translation/Historical Writing,” Chris Laouratis refutes Joan Kelly’s theory in that the humanist movement set women back in her famous essay on women in the Renaissance by discussing the importance of making translations, which elite humanist women would participate in.<sup>135</sup> Translations were not simply a second-rate form of writing reserved for those without ideas, but a means of transformation, as the root of the words suggests, and this could transcend a transformation of language.<sup>136</sup> Laoartis considers a translation to be any form of transformation, not just a linguistic one.<sup>137</sup> The changes made to these texts allowed women to exhibit control over what they were producing and in some cases, attempt to influence those who would be reading their work.<sup>138</sup> Religious translation allowed them to play a role in the narrative of nation-building.<sup>139</sup> Elizabeth I’s translations, in particular, are of note. Elizabeth’s translations themselves, I argue, are important not only due to the translations themselves, but also due to the web of maternal inheritance that enabled them.

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<sup>135</sup> Chris Laoutaris, “Translation/Historical Writing,” 296.

<sup>136</sup> Chris Laoutaris, “Translation/Historical Writing,” 296.

<sup>137</sup> Chris Laoutaris, “Translation/Historical Writing,” 297.

<sup>138</sup> Chris Laoutaris, “Translation/Historical Writing,” 297.

<sup>139</sup> Chris Laoutaris, “Translation/Historical Writing,” 297.



3. Elizabeth I when a princess (1546), by William Scrots, Windsor Castle

Princess Elizabeth's own mother Anne Boleyn was executed by her father Henry VIII in 1536 when Elizabeth was only two years old. Henry VIII, as mentioned in the last chapter, had been previously married to Catherine of Aragon. However, a growing desire to marry Anne Boleyn and a desire for a male heir led Henry to request an annulment on the grounds that he had wrongfully married his brother's widow, but the Pope refused the request. Henry married Anne regardless, becoming the true head of the Church of England, eventually having his marriage to Catherine annulled by archbishop Thomas Cramner. Anne, however, ended up in a similar

situation as Catherine, producing a female heir but not a male, and Henry eventually had her tried and executed on the charge of supposed adultery. Henry married Jane Seymour very soon after Anne's execution, and though he would have three wives after her, she provided the male heir he had been looking for in the future Edward VI (1537-1553), but Jane died in childbirth.

Throughout these tumultuous ongoings, Elizabeth was declared illegitimate and later placed third in line to the throne after her half-sister Mary and half-brother Edward. Historians do not know the effects of such a childhood on Elizabeth, but she was apparently very serious for her age. Though Elizabeth supposedly never discussed her mother, she was not without maternal figures. One of these figures was her father's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves (1515-1557). Queen Anne was somewhat uneducated, which may have contributed to Henry's dislike for her.<sup>140</sup> Henry VIII eventually divorced her, and she was placed in quite a good situation with her own income in England. Anne developed good relationships with both Mary and Elizabeth and even made Mary the overseer of her will, bequeathing jewels to both her step-daughters when she died.<sup>141</sup>

Arguably the most influential maternal figure in Elizabeth's life, however, was her other step-mother Catherine Parr,<sup>142</sup> who was Henry VIII's last wife. Catherine was very well-educated and had strong theological interests.<sup>143</sup> She believed that her queenship would be an opportunity to enact reform in the court, some of which might have been "a little too advanced" for Henry VIII.<sup>144</sup> John N. King provides an overview of Catherine Parr's role as a patron in relation to

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<sup>140</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 202.

<sup>141</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 202.

<sup>142</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 212.

<sup>143</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 211.

<sup>144</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 211-212.

Protestant humanism.<sup>145</sup> According to King, Parr led a group of aristocratic Protestant women to popularize Protestant humanism by advocating for “devotional manuals and theological translations” that could be read by literate common and elite people alike.<sup>146</sup> This movement greatly contrasted the actions of women such as Margaret Beaufort, who was a patron of medieval texts.<sup>147</sup> King himself employs language that implies a kind of inheritance in these actions, stating that future generations of aristocrats would adopt this “unique blend of patronage and piety” under the reign of Queen Elizabeth.<sup>148</sup> Thus, Catherine Parr’s patronage of humanist texts not only gave these texts new readership, but appeared to have, in some ways, changed the role of women at court.

However, Catherine Parr not only had an effect on humanism and Protestantism through this large movement as King argues, but as Anne Crawford suggests, also had a great personal influence on the very four individuals who were next in line to inherit the throne of England (counting Jane Grey is).<sup>149</sup> One of Catherine’s other greatest accomplishments, Crawford argues, was to bring together Henry’s three children under the same roof and play a role in their education.<sup>150</sup> She reorganized Edward and Elizabeth’s education in particular but asked Mary and Elizabeth to both make translations of Erasmus<sup>151</sup> (1469-1536), who was a Dutch humanist. As discussed in Chapter 1, education was a way for women to achieve greater virtue through Christian humanism, as argued by Valerie Wayne.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of these works on

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<sup>145</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety: The Influence of Catherine Parr,” *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985.

<sup>146</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43.

<sup>147</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43.

<sup>148</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43.

<sup>149</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 212.

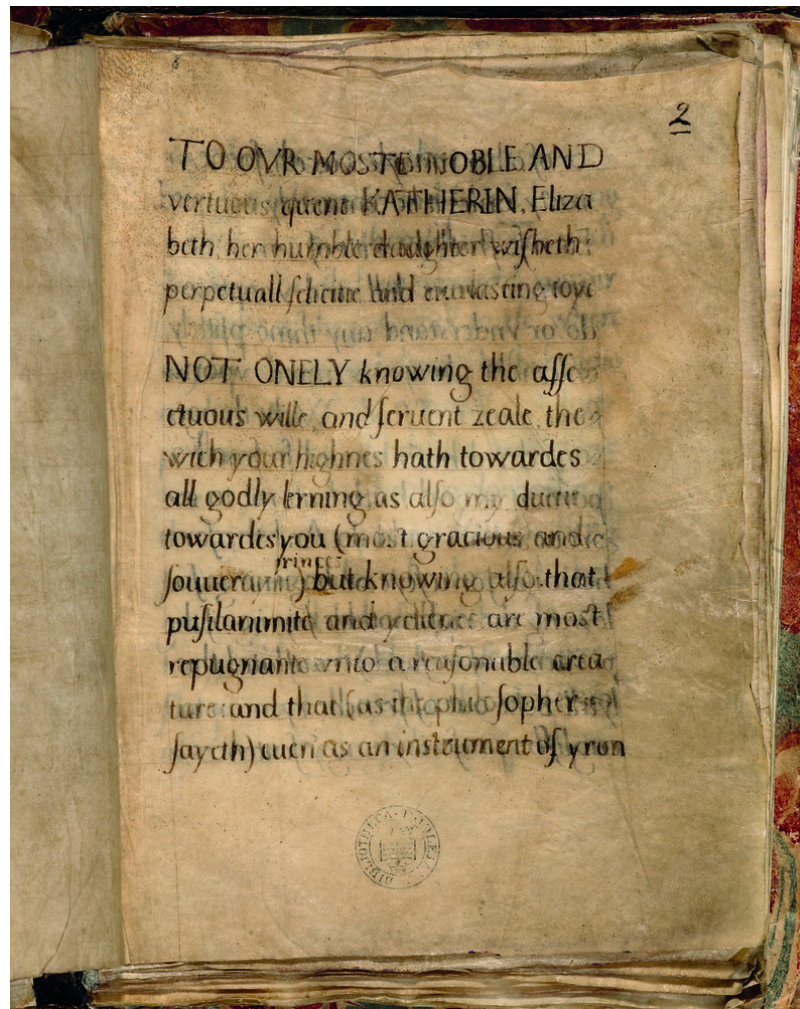
<sup>150</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 212.

<sup>151</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 212.

<sup>152</sup> Valerie Wayne, “Some Sad Sentence,” 18.

Catherine Parr have discussed her influence, but this chapter is interested in the inheritances that Catherine Parr, an integral member in a web of powerful women, and other women related to her, passed on. Influence and inheritance may possess similarities, but social inheritance implies the passing on of a trait or specific knowledge- something more contained than influence- through generations. Although the translations of Elizabeth are of interest, this chapter is primarily concerned with the context of those translations that drove this inheritance, including the dedicatory epistles, some of which were addressed to Catherine.

Elizabeth was an avid lover of language from a young age, and some of her notable works were her translation of Marguerite de Navarre's poem *Le miroir de l'âme*, her translation of Catherine Parr's "Prayers of Meditations," and her translation of John Calvin's *Institution de la Religion*. Interestingly, each of these translations was either a gift to Catherine Parr herself, or to her father, Henry. Each of the translations has a dedicatory epistle to the receiver of the gift. All of Elizabeth's choices of translation- or the choices of those who selected work for her to translate- align closely with the religious beliefs or intellectual interests of both her father and step-mother. Marguerite de Navarre may have died a Catholic, but she was still interested in reform. The influence of Catherine and Henry in her translation of Catherine's Prayers of Meditations is more obvious, as the translation was a gift for her father. Elizabeth, based on her father's past, likely knew of her precarious political position, and translating the work of Catherine Parr, her father's wife, was perhaps an act of asserting legitimacy. In the dedicatory epistle preceding the translation, Elizabeth addresses Henry, stating: "I am bound unto you as lord by the law of the kingdom, and as lord by the law of nature, and as my father by divine law..." Assessing this beyond its formalities, Elizabeth was proclaiming, in a way, her own legitimacy, if not as an heir than at least as his daughter.



4. Elizabeth dedicatory epistle to Catherine Parr prefacing *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* translation (1544), Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford

Of particular interest to certain historians, however, is the translation by Elizabeth of the poem *Le miroir de l'âme pécheresse* by Marguerite de Navarre that Catherine received as a New Years Eve gift<sup>153</sup> (1492-1549. *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose, contains a note to Catherine, which she wrote to preface this

<sup>153</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 61-62.

translation on December 31st, 1544.<sup>154</sup> The eleven-year-old Elizabeth cited Catherine's great "wit" as well as an enthusiasm for "Godly learning" as one of the reasons for making the translation<sup>155</sup> and appeared to have great admiration for her step-mother.<sup>156</sup> Elizabeth recognized Catherine's love for education and sought to emulate it. Thus, this dedicatory epistle reveals another instance of a kind the educational inheritance that Chapter 1 explored, yet in this case, that inheritance is from a maternal figure instead of her own mother.

Elizabeth, furthermore, did not appear to admire Catherine only because of her love of "Godly learning." Elizabeth, as stated, also pointed out Catherine's "wit" as being a desirable quality. The Oxford English Dictionary entries regarding the term "wit" imply that the usage of the term during the early modern period is somewhat synonymous to its usage today. Very generally, it can be "denoting a faculty," but more specifically, it relates to the mind itself, and even more specifically, relates to "the faculty of thinking and reasoning in general."<sup>157</sup> Thus, wit implies a certain rationality, which contrasts many of the accepted notions regarding women, as women by nature were not meant to be rational beings.<sup>158</sup>

Elizabeth more than once mentioned this wit in the people around her, including women. For instance, while Elizabeth stated her devotion to her stepmother and her great admiration for stepmother as both reasons for partaking in the act of translation, she also stated that "pusillanimity and idleness are most repugnant unto a reasonable creature and that (as the philosopher sayeth) even as an instrument of iron or of other metal waxaeth soon rusty unless it

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<sup>154</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, edited by Leah S. Marcus, Janel Mueller, and Mary Beth Rose. University of Chicago Press, 2002, 5-8.

<sup>155</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 67.

<sup>156</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 5-6.

<sup>157</sup> "wit, n.," OED Online, December 2020. Oxford University Press, <https://www-oed-com.ezprox.bard.edu/view/Entry/229567?rskey=KjM1aL&result=1> (accessed February 26, 2021).

<sup>158</sup> Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 253.

be continually occupied, even so shall the wit of a man or a woman wax dull and unapt to do or understand anything perfectly unless it be always occupied upon some manner of study."<sup>159</sup> Thus, Elizabeth displayed her belief that she was a “reasonable creature” and mentioned both men and women when it came to the need to retain wit and keep the mind sharp. Elizabeth valued the minds of women not simply for Godly learning, although this appeared to play a role, but for the importance of a sharp mind and its inherent value.

At the age of eleven, Elizabeth believed that intelligence was an important quality in both men and women. Parr was possibly quite instrumental in Elizabeth’s ideas surrounding intellect and gender. King argues in his piece on Catherine Parr that Elizabeth was where Catherine Parr’s “intellectual influence” found its greatest effect as a result of Princess Elizabeth’s humanist education, which matched the education of Prince Edward, and he also points out Elizabeth’s translation of Marguerite de Navarre in support of this claim.<sup>160</sup> Before the 1540s, almost no women were as well educated as men, but during the time of Catherine Parr, many tutors began to teach noble daughters and sons under her influence.<sup>161</sup>

Elizabeth’s preface to her translations also reveals a kind of vulnerability that is evident throughout her letters to Catherine in particular. Elizabeth humbly criticized her own translation but was certain that Catherine would correct it well and not judge her too harshly. Elizabeth’s words seemed almost vulnerable when she expressed her desire for no one but Catherine to read it until it was corrected.<sup>162</sup> In addressing her note to Catherine, Elizabeth even referred to herself as Catherine’s “humble daughter.”<sup>163</sup> In a previous letter to Catherine written in July of 1544,

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<sup>159</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 6.

<sup>160</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 51.

<sup>161</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 43-44.

<sup>162</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 6-8.

<sup>163</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 5.



Elizabeth stated that she was “bound to serve you but also to revere you with daughterly love.”<sup>164</sup>

All of Catherine's step-children, including Mary, who was of an entirely different faith, loved Catherine very much, and Crawford remarks that Edward, whose own mother died during childbirth, perhaps loved her as a mother.<sup>165</sup>

Despite the absence of her own mother throughout her life, Elizabeth did not necessarily lack inheritances from Anne Boleyn. In fact, Elizabeth may have used the 1533 edition of Marguerite's book from Anne's library to make her translation of the poem, as Anne and Marguerite had been acquainted.<sup>166</sup> Similar to Marguerite, Anne was an advocate for reform<sup>167</sup> who was brilliant and well-educated.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, it is interesting to note that Anne Boleyn was the only English Protestant woman who played a strong role in patronage before Catherine Parr.<sup>169</sup>

Thus, Elizabeth's education with regard to her translation of Marguerite's poem would have potentially been affected by three powerful, educated women interested in reform. Prescott in particular addresses this exchange between Marguerite, Catherine, and Elizabeth in her work on Elizabeth's translation; however, the idea that this may have been Anne Boleyn's book adds another layer.<sup>170</sup> Therefore, this translation connects many influential women, starting with Marguerite's writing of the poem, Anne Boleyn's potential ownership of the book, Catherine's education of Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's eventual translation, which would eventually be sent back to Catherine.<sup>171</sup> Thus, while Elizabeth was reading men such as Erasmus, the women

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<sup>164</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, 5.

<sup>165</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 211-214

<sup>166</sup> Elizabeth, I, *Elizabeth I: Collected Works*, np.

<sup>167</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 184.

<sup>168</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 180.

<sup>169</sup> John N. King, “Patronage and Piety,” 44.

<sup>170</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, “The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I,” 62-65.

<sup>171</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, “The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I,” 61-62.

around her also appear to have had a great effect on her education. This effect, in some ways, could be viewed as a kind of social inheritance. Although these women were not passing down their own titles to Elizabeth, they still had important things to offer. While letters were the focus of inheritance in the last chapter, other writings, such as translations, can also be very revealing of the influences in Elizabeth's life as well.

In translating Marguerite's poem, Prescott argues that Elizabeth sought to both please her stepmother and that Catherine could pay a kind of "homage" to Marguerite, a woman of similar reformist ideas and power.<sup>172</sup> It was unknown who selected the work for Elizabeth to translate but it was possibly Catherine or someone older, whom Marguerite was known to, that would have suggested it.<sup>173</sup> Moreover, Henry VIII and Marguerite had a good relationship, partly due to her Reformist sympathies.<sup>174</sup> Marguerite's *Miroir*, according to Prescott, explores many themes regarding faith and seeks to understand the unconditional love of God through different kinds of familial love. Marguerite discussed her own sin, but believed that "God will save her not through her merits but through the divine love that enters her and works within her to love itself in return."<sup>175</sup>

Prescott goes through the various differences between Elizabeth's translation and Marguerite's original, some of which are possibly intentional and revealing of Elizabeth's ideas regarding her family and her parents.<sup>176</sup> Some interesting alterations include the replacement of the word *father* with the word *mother* when discussing parental love.<sup>177</sup> Prescott marks the most interesting error, however, as occurring when Marguerite's text explores the killing of adulterous

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<sup>172</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 64-65.

<sup>173</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 64.

<sup>174</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 65.

<sup>175</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 63-64.

<sup>176</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 68.

<sup>177</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 69.

wives at the hands of their husbands. Elizabeth replaced the word *them*, referring to the adulterous wives, with the word *hym* or *him*. Prescott believes that, considering that Elizabeth crossed out the *hym* and replaced it with *them*, she may have been placing a judgment on the idea of adultery in relation to the circumstances in her own life. Thus, Prescott's article has interesting implications regarding this social inheritance, as it suggests through Elizabeth's altering of Marguerite's work<sup>178</sup> that social inheritance by education was not simply accepted by daughters but also altered, potentially challenged from a personal standpoint, and influenced by multiple women. Social inheritances, in this sense, are not necessarily that different from other kinds of inheritance. For instance, a piece of land would not be passed on to an heir fully intact. The heir, however, could decide to sell the land or alter it.

For Elizabeth, in order to establish her own legitimacy, it was likely important for her to accept most of the social inheritances, particularly as a woman. Therefore, although it is compelling to consider translation itself as a form of inheritance and a means of understanding Elizabeth's mindset, and Prescott's analysis displays an important subversion of some of the things Elizabeth was taught, it is perhaps the context of the translations themselves and their religious and educational benefits that are more relevant to women and inheritance in sixteenth century Europe. Not only did Elizabeth receive these religious teachings from Catherine, but she also received the work itself from Marguerite de Navarre in a book that was possibly owned by her own mother, Anne Boleyn. If the book had been owned by Anne, it served as a means of inheritance that Anne passed onto her long, long after her own death. The book itself was not a social inheritance, as it was a material object, but it was representative of Elizabeth's education. Thus, when it came to social inheritance between women, women did not necessarily bequeath social inheritances in a linear fashion, and women, as they do now, could have a variety of

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<sup>178</sup> Anne Lake Prescott, "The Pearl of the Valois and Elizabeth I," 68.

maternal influences in their life. This was particularly true for Elizabeth, given her father's many wives.

It is also notable that Catherine Parr was active in the life of yet another (brief) monarch of England, Lady Jane Grey (1537-1554). Jane was the great-granddaughter of Henry VII and granddaughter of Mary Tudor. She was queen of England for only nine days in 1553. Jane had an excellent education growing up, and at one point lived in the household of Catherine at the same time as Elizabeth.<sup>179</sup> Catherine was, at that time, also in charge of Jane's education,<sup>180</sup> and was thus the supervisor of the education of not just three but four future monarchs of England. Catherine, unfortunately, died shortly after the birth of her daughter in August of 1548.<sup>181</sup> Jane was left to be a ward of Catherine's fourth husband, Thomas Seymor, who was Lord Seymour of Sudeley, but he was eventually tried and executed for treason after attempting to marry Princess Elizabeth.<sup>182</sup>

Lady Jane spent a great deal of time at court after her father became duke of Suffolk in 1551, and she eventually married Lord Guildford Dudley, son of the duke of Northumberland. Due to Jane's zealous Protestantism, she became, in the eyes of these lords, to be an ideal selection for the throne in place of Elizabeth or Mary. Northumberland asked King Edward, who was dying at the time, to place Jane in line for the throne. As the story goes, although Jane was declared queen upon the death of Edward, support for her did not last, as popular support was for Mary. Mary became queen, and Jane was taken to the Tower of London and executed.

Carole Levin argues in her article "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr" that Jane was pronounced a victim in this situation by the English public and that historians also

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<sup>179</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 214.

<sup>180</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 214.

<sup>181</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 215.

<sup>182</sup> Anne Crawford, *Letters of the Queens of England*, 215.

seemed to accept the view that Jane was little more than a political pawn.<sup>183</sup> Levin, however, crediting biographer Hester Chapman with her different perspective of Jane Grey, argues that she was hardly the passive woman that historians made her out to be.<sup>184</sup> In fact, Jane Grey had strong religious convictions with a Calvinist leaning, as well as a great love for her studies.<sup>185</sup> Furthermore, Catherine influenced Jane Grey directly through Protestantism, as many of her beliefs, such as the importance of everyone reading Scripture, were eventually present in Jane's own writing.<sup>186</sup> Jane was one of the most well-educated women of her time and should be explored beyond her failed political career.<sup>187</sup>

Catherine Parr's influence on Jane showed that she was not only a member of a web of powerful women, but she also passed on her own religious teachings and education to a new generation of women rulers. As women were often responsible for the religious education of their daughters, Catherine, for however brief a time, filled a maternal role for Jane Grey. Thus, although Catherine Parr did not directly pass on her crown, through education and religious teachings, she was able to help instill the three succeeding queens of England with a rigorous education. Her position as a consort was different from their future roles as regents, particularly to Lady Jane Grey, who barely got a chance to rule at all, but her knowledge of the queenship possibly influenced what knowledge she decided to pass down to them.

While Chapter 1 of this thesis explored a more linear fashion of social inheritance, this chapter has demonstrated that maternal inheritance was not necessarily linear. In the world of English royalty during the sixteenth century, there were a variety of powerful European women

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<sup>183</sup> Carole Levin, "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr," *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, edited by Margaret Patterson Hannay, Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985, 92.

<sup>184</sup> Carole Levin, "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr," 92.

<sup>185</sup> Carole Levin, "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr," 95.

<sup>186</sup> Carole Levin, "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr," 94.

<sup>187</sup> Carole Levin, "Lady Jane Grey: Protestant Queen and Martyr," 106.

such as Marguerite de Navarre, Anne Boleyn, Catherine of Aragon, and Catherine Parr, who played a role in the religious and educational development of their daughters. They were not discrete individuals existing only in relation to men, but intertwined historical figures, often bound by marriage or blood. As a result, figures such as Mary I, Elizabeth I, and Jane Grey were subject not just to the inheritances of their biological mothers, but the inheritances of other women in their lives who were in charge of their religious and educational teachings. Moreover, although these daughter-figures may have sometimes altered their inheritances, these teachings could be a form of legitimacy that offered them authority and power in establishing themselves in relation to their ancestors.

### Chapter 3

#### Inheritance and Memory:

#### The Role of Maternal Inheritance and Legacy and in the Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois

In the first chapter of this thesis, I explored the various social inheritances that could be passed from royal mother to royal daughter through the writing of letters. I focused in particular on the epistolary relationship of Marguerite de Navarre and her daughter Jeanne D'Albret, as well as that of Catherine of Aragon and her daughter Mary Tudor. In Chapter 2, although I examined more letters, I focused on translation as a mode of inheritance in the context of Elizabeth I. Not only did Elizabeth's translation of Marguerite de Navarre's work display an educational and religious inheritance from her stepmother Catherine Parr, but it also displayed a web of inheritance between multiple women, including Anne Boleyn and Marguerite de Navarre herself.

Translations and letters, however, present only two modes of writing that can convey the social inheritances passed between mother and daughter. The next obvious genre of writing to explore is the memoir. Not only could the memoir potentially depict mother-daughter relationships in a more direct manner than a translation, but it could enhance an understanding of social inheritance in relation to time. As Larry Wolff explores in the relationship of Marie Antoinette and her mother Maria Thérèse, letters have the power of transcending time and space.<sup>188</sup> Maria Thérèse was able to exert control over how Marie Antoinette spent her time from an entirely different space in the world.<sup>189</sup> Translations, on the other hand, could also transcend similarly. A woman could translate the words of someone who had been dead for many years. In

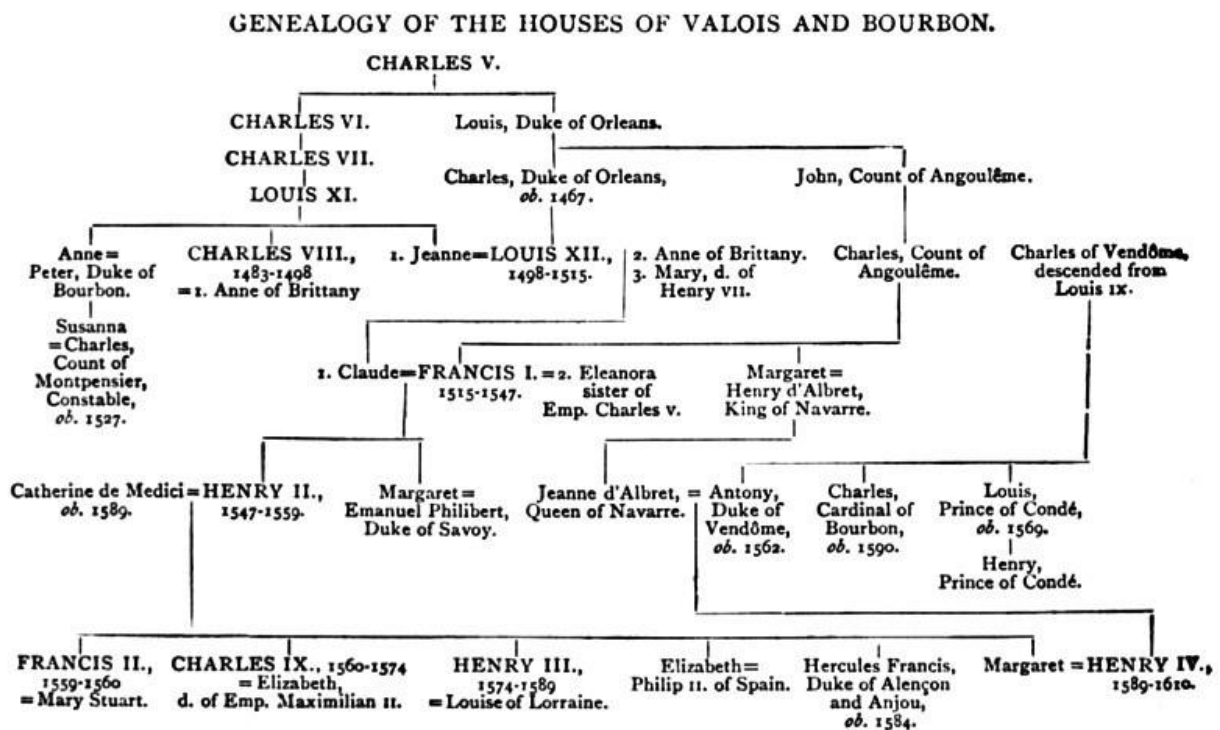
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<sup>188</sup> Larry Wolff, "The Hapsburg Letters," edited by Dena Goodman and Thomas E. Kaiser *Marie-Antoinette: writings on the body of a queen*, Psychology Press, 2003, 29.

<sup>189</sup> Larry Wolff, "The Hapsburg Letters," edited by Dena Goodman and Thomas E. Kaiser *Marie-Antoinette: writings on the body of a queen*, Psychology Press, 2003, 29.

the case of Elizabeth, the book that she translated from possibly belonged to her deceased mother. The translation also transcended geographic space by connecting her to Marguerite de Navarre.

Although letters display a more direct interaction, and translations can transcend both time and space as well, a memoir is written in retrospect of the events, and therefore, the memory itself may represent a more lucid understanding of how lasting a social inheritance might have been. One of the most famous memoirs written by a queen during the sixteenth century was *Mémoires*, written by Marguerite de Valois. Her memoirs will serve as the mechanism of inheritance for this chapter.



5. Sixteenth Century Valois and Bourbon Dynasty Genealogy, Arthur Henry, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century* (1903)

Marguerite was born to Henry II of France and Catherine de Medici (1519-1589) in 1553. Of particular interest to this chapter will be her relationship with her mother in the context of her



memoirs. Catherine de Medici was queen consort of France during Henry II's reign from 1547 to 1559. Three of her sons would become future kings of France, but she herself ruled as regent from 1560 to 1572. Catherine was born to Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne and Lorenzo di Piero de' Medici, the duke of Urbino. She received an excellent education in Florence and Rome and later married Henry, who was duc d'Orleans at the time. She was very popular in the courts of his father, Francis I and became queen consort of France and later regent following the death of her husband. Catherine, in the earlier years, enacted moderate policies during a time when Hugenots, a name for French Protestants, and Catholic extremists were battling for control of the country.

One of the actions Catherine took to encourage peace was to help arrange the marriage between Marguerite and Henry de Bourbon, the king of Navarre, who was a Protestant. He would later become Henry IV of France. He was also the son of Jeanne D'Albret, who featured heavily in the first chapter of this thesis. Shortly after the wedding between Marguerite and Henry occurred in 1572, the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre happened, during which Catholic extremists killed many Protestants. Henry of Navarre escaped death, and Marguerite stayed with him and attempted to bridge the gap between him and the leader of the moderate Catholics, her younger brother Francois. Her other brother Henry III banished her to a castle in Auvergne in the year 1586 for her actions, but she eventually obtained control of the castle with the support of the Guise's. She had a childless marriage with Henry of Navarre, now Henry IV, which they later annulled, although she retained her title. She lived out the remainder of her days in Paris, where she wrote her memoirs. Catherine died in 1589, and Marguerite's memoirs were written during the late 1590s but were not published until after her death in 1628.<sup>190</sup> They were dedicated and

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<sup>190</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict" in the Reading and Writing of Marguerite de Valois," *Tulsa studies in women's literature* 7, no. 1 (1988): 29.

addressed to the aristocratic writer Brantôme, who had written about her life during the 1580s.<sup>191</sup> Marguerite's own memoirs are, in fact, framed as a response to Brantôme's writings.<sup>192</sup>

Marguerite de Valois was one of the very first women to write an autobiographical work.<sup>193</sup> Historians, however, have a tendency to remember that Marguerite wrote, but they rarely talk about her writing itself.<sup>194</sup> In general, with regard to women writers, historians resort to biography rather than explorations of the actual writing.<sup>195</sup> Marguerite de Valois, as a result, is more well-known for her love affairs than anything else.<sup>196</sup> Cathleen Bauschatz argues that the purpose of her memoir was to both create a justification for herself and affirm her loyalty to Henry IV, but my analysis reveals that she was perhaps doing more.<sup>197</sup> Her memoirs, in particular, suggest an interesting relationship with her mother that appears to be underexplored even in the literature surrounding her memoirs.

Marguerite's relationship with her mother Catherine de Medici, in terms of history, is perhaps less important than her own depiction of that relationship. For a social inheritance to truly be received by the inheritor, it must be accepted but it must also be remembered, whether consciously or not. For instance, the alterations that Elizabeth made to her translation of Marguerite de Navarre's poem suggest that Elizabeth did not necessarily accept all of the ideas in the writing. Elizabeth's understanding of Marguerite de Navarre's work and her own relationships with her parents and step-parents also could have altered with time, thought, and other influences. Factual information about Elizabeth's politics and personality and the ways in which she herself passed inheritances on to other women could perhaps answer some of these

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<sup>191</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 29.

<sup>192</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 29.

<sup>193</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Marguerite de Valois," 67.

<sup>194</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 27

<sup>195</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 27

<sup>196</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 27

<sup>197</sup> Cathleen M. Bauschatz, "Plaisir et Proffict," 27

questions, but this would require further inquiry. Her memory of these maternal inheritances, and her memories of how she remembered those maternal figures, are vital to understanding how she might have transmitted those religious and educational ideas to daughter figures in her own life. Thus, although the understanding of her audience likely altered Marguerite de Valois' portrayal of her relationship with her mother, understanding how she wanted that relationship presented to the public for centuries to come could be key to comprehending what kind of social inheritances she accepted from her mother and how she accepted them.

In order to understand Marguerite's own perception of her mother and the inheritances taken from her, it is helpful to unpack Catherine de' Medici's identity and address how the Reformation and misogyny have affected the historiography regarding her life. Historians have linked Catherine inextricably to the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre.<sup>198</sup> In a piece entitled *Catherine de Medici: the Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen*, N.M. Sutherland explores the origin of Catherine's reputation as being an evil queen. Sutherland suggests that this all began shortly after the Massacre, as Protestant Pamphleteers, despite having Henry de Guise to blame, placed the responsibility fully on Catherine, after which 16th century historians followed suit.<sup>199</sup> Catherine's marred reputation was the result of prejudice against both women and Italians<sup>200</sup>

Xenophobia directed at Italians was common in Lyons and Avignon even prior to French wars of religion.<sup>201</sup> Those born in France believed that Italians held too much economic and political power, although initially, the majority of anti-Italian sentiment was directed at wealthier Italians residing in the Southeast of France.<sup>202</sup> However, as a larger number of Italian nobles

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<sup>198</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, "Catherine de Medici: The Legend of the Wicked Italian Queen," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* (1978), 46.

<sup>199</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, "Catherine de Medici," 45.

<sup>200</sup> Nicola M. Sutherland, "Catherine de Medici," 46.

<sup>201</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner, "Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France," *Renaissance Quarterly* 57, no. 2 (2004), 7.

<sup>202</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner, "Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France," 7.

migrated North around the 1550s, so did the xenophobia, and many of these nobles were, in particular, interested in the French court due to the presence of Catherine de' Medici herself.<sup>203</sup> There was, moreover, a streak of intersecting xenophobia and misogyny present among the Huguenots in particular, who believed that the rule of a woman, and a foreign woman in particular, was not right.<sup>204</sup>

Understanding Marguerite's perception of her mother in her memoirs is useful in relation to social inheritance, but her own personal understanding of Catherine de' Medici throughout the memoir is also helpful in challenging the more one-dimensional depictions of her. Naturally, with Catherine being her mother, Marguerite was likely prone to her own biases that must be acknowledged. By recounting her interactions with her mother, however, she was contributing to Catherine's legacy as well as her own. To retrace the steps of those legacies, this chapter will focus on the memoirs prior to Marguerite's marriage to Henry of Navarre, as Catherine was a central focus during this time in her life. The events ranged from 1565-82,<sup>205</sup> but this chapter will focus on her descriptions of her childhood from 1565-1572, when she was aged eleven to nineteen. Analysis of later sections of the memoir might reveal different aspects of their relationship, but I am chiefly interested in Marguerite's depiction of these earlier years, due to the prominence of Catherine in her life.

As explored previously in this thesis, although childhood may not have necessarily been ignored as a category of life, childhood was different during the early modern period.<sup>206</sup> It was not until the late eighteenth century that childhood was considered to be a more innocent period

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<sup>203</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner, "Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France," 8.

<sup>204</sup> Frederic J. Baumgartner, "Anti-Italianism in Sixteenth-Century France," 117.

<sup>205</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, Translator Unknown, New York: Merrill & Baker, 1800.

<sup>206</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, "Childhood and loss in early modern life writing," 2017, 116.

of life.<sup>207</sup> In Christian cultures, the concept of original sin played a strong role in ideas surrounding childhood.<sup>208</sup> Children were often viewed as embodying the naturally sinful characteristics of a human being.<sup>209</sup> In autobiographical recountings from the early modern period, authors often did not reflect on childhood as a distinct stage of selfhood. Childhood would often be part of a period of spiritual inadequacy that would then lead to an enlightenment and a rejection of sin.<sup>210</sup> Thus, childhood did not possess the same association with nostalgia and youthful innocence that it did in centuries to come.<sup>211</sup> However, early modern autobiographers, although not associating childhood with necessarily a time of joy, did sometimes express a certain feeling of loss for that portion of their lives.<sup>212</sup>

In depicting the years of her childhood, Marguerite did little to differentiate herself as a child, but she did, in these earlier years, depict her earlier childhood as a happier time in her life. Thus, while it is true that she did not discuss childhood at large, she did dwell on her life while her father was alive to a certain extent. Nevertheless, this is perhaps due to the general circumstances of her life rather than a reflection of childhood nostalgia. Any nostalgia over her childhood, however, is over in a matter of pages.

From the very beginning of the memoirs, Marguerite made the religious tension at court palpable. During this time, she had difficulty avoiding conversion to Hugenotism due to the pressure from the Protestant ladies and lords of the court.<sup>213</sup> Marguerite portrayed herself as having very strong convictions when it came to resisting conversion. It is also evident, from these beginnings, that the women in her life were incredibly important to her. She stated that she

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<sup>207</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 116.

<sup>208</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 116.

<sup>209</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 116.

<sup>210</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 117.

<sup>211</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 117.

<sup>212</sup> Katharine Hodgkin, 133.

<sup>213</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 31.

was “brought up in the Court of the Kings my father and brothers, allied in blood and friendship to the most virtuous and accomplished women of our times, of which society I have had the good fortune to bond with.”<sup>214</sup> Marguerite always had a family member ruling France, but here she placed an emphasis in particular on the women in her life, lending them an equal if not greater role in these early sections of her memoir. Looking back on her life, she saw them as integral members of her life story and chose to place them in the forefront of the narrative. Already, Marguerite’s narrative speaks to the importance of female relationships among the early modern elite and subverts historical accounts of women during the time that, as Chapter 2 of this thesis explored in particular, gives the impression that women were either in rivalry with other women or entirely isolated from them.

Such regard for the female companions in her life is reinforced by the brief but notable depiction of her relationship with her governess, Madame de Curton, who seemed to be one of the only supporters of her Catholicism. Marguerite’s brother, the future Henry III, would throw her religious books into the fire and replace them with Huguenot texts, while her governess would take her to Cardinal de Tournon “who gave me good advice, and strengthened me in a perseverance in my religion, furnishing me with books and chaplets of beads in the room of those my brother Anjou took from me and burnt.”<sup>215</sup> Her brother also threatened to whip her for not converting.<sup>216</sup>

Once Catherine heard of this, she “reprimanded his governors, insisting upon their correcting him, and instructing him in the holy and ancient religion of his forefathers, from which she herself never swerved.”<sup>217</sup> Marguerite’s reference to Catholicism as being the ancient

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<sup>214</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 30.

<sup>215</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 32.

<sup>216</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 32.

<sup>217</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 32-33.

religion of her brother's forefathers, as well as her affirmation of Catherine as a Catholic, has interesting implications when it comes to inheritance. Henry's forefathers were the previous kings of France, and Marguerite here implied a connection to these forefathers through religion. While Henry turned away from this religion, Catherine did not. As a result, Catherine was connected to these forefathers in a way that Henry was not. Perhaps Marguerite was not simply resisting conversion for religious purposes, but perhaps she resisted because Catholicism suggested a level of legitimacy. By becoming Protestants, in her eyes, her brother was distancing himself from his royal ancestors. Marguerite was, therefore, prescribing her mother with a kind of connection to those ancestors, and perhaps a royal legitimacy, that her brother did not have. As her pride in her mother's Catholicism during these sections suggests, it is also likely that Catherine's influence on her religion was strong, considering that many of the other royals at court were placing pressure on her and even threatening her with violence.

These interactions between Marguerite and her family display an interesting gender divide in her early religious life. While her brother and his friends attempted to convert her in a forceful way, her governess and her mother kept her attached to Catholicism, and she seemed to find reassurance in their presences. Marguerite's relationship with her mother during this period, however, slowly became more complicated. One particularly interesting moment occurred in the memoir when Catherine took Marguerite aside and told her that she no longer considered Marguerite to be a child and that she would like to "converse with you as I would with your brother."<sup>218</sup> Marguerite remembered this moment as a very joyous one and recalled that she avoided the company and activities of those her age, spending most of her time with her mother and engaging with her in long conversations.<sup>219</sup> Catherine emphasized her wish for Marguerite to

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<sup>218</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 44.

<sup>219</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 44.

speak freely with her and thus treated her as a kind of equal at the time.<sup>220</sup> Marguerite was trusted with the private affairs of her brother's life.<sup>221</sup> It appears to have been mostly under Marguerite's brother's influence that Catherine began to treat her this way, but the moment nevertheless marks an interesting shift in their relationship. Catherine had given Marguerite the option to lend her opinions and ideas, which would have been an uncommon privilege for a woman to have.

This, however, did not last. For reasons unclear, Marguerite's brother lied to Catherine, claiming that Marguerite was planning to marry a member of the Guise family, stating that Marguerite might betray them.<sup>222</sup> In her writing, Marguerite denied her claim, but Catherine did not seem to believe her. When Marguerite attempted to defend herself, Catherine "flew into a passion and commanded me not to make the least show of resentment at his behavior. From that hour she gradually withdrew her favour from me. Her son became the god of her idolatry, at the shrine of whose will she sacrificed everything."<sup>223</sup> Thus, Catherine's opinion of Marguerite appeared to vacillate with Henry's opinion. Although Marguerite previously stated that Catherine "doted on all her children,"<sup>224</sup> Catherine did appear to place her attention on Henry, likely given that he was the next heir to the throne. Marguerite expressed her great despair upon falling out of her mother's favor, which emphasized her regard and admiration for her mother. Nevertheless, Marguerite appears to have remembered this moment with a tinge of bitterness, and it is somewhat unclear how this altered her opinion of her mother at that point in the memoir.

Marguerite's fall from Catherine's good graces displays that, even if mothers were affectionate for their daughters, the male heir of a noble family would often come first, for he

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<sup>220</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 44.

<sup>221</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 44.

<sup>222</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 47.

<sup>223</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 49.

<sup>224</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 38.



carried the future lineage.<sup>225</sup> Marguerite, of course, would still have political relevance to Catherine, but Henry's path in life was clear and predetermined, and by tethering herself to her sons, Catherine would have influence over all of France and they would also be more likely to have success. Marguerite, on the other hand, would be placed in the most strategically effective marriage with Henry of Navarre that would be beneficial for the country and Marguerite. It is important to note that Catherine would not have necessarily have done this only as a move for power. She likely had Marguerite's future well-being in mind. The arranged marriage would have diminished Marguerite's freedom to choose her own path, but she also became a queen consort of Navarre due to Catherine's plans.

Throughout this early section of the memoir, however, it would seem that Marguerite was somewhat at the mercy of her circumstances and those around her. First of all, Marguerite's writing of her memoirs was an act of power in itself, for she gained control over her own narrative. "Marguerite de Valois and the Problematics of Female Self-Representation" by Patricia Francis Cholakian provides an interesting insight regarding Marguerite's portrayal of herself in her memoirs. When a woman wrote her own memoir or autobiography, she was making herself a subject of her own world and challenging her own objectification within society.<sup>226</sup> However, due to the disproportionate number of women writing their own memoirs compared to men, women did not have a variety of examples to draw upon during the sixteenth century.<sup>227</sup> It is important to remember that, as a result, the examples women drew upon were riddled with a variety of tropes written by masculine subjects.<sup>228</sup> For instance, men would tend to write about their careers in

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<sup>225</sup> James L. Boone III, "Parental investment and elite family structure in preindustrial states: a case study of late medieval-early modern Portuguese genealogies," *American anthropologist* ,88, no. 4 (1986).

<sup>226</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Marguerite de Valois," 67.

<sup>227</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Marguerite de Valois," 67.

<sup>228</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, "Marguerite de Valois," 67.

relation to larger historical events occurring around them.<sup>229</sup> As a result, women memoir-writers were in a difficult bind, either needing to place themselves as an object in the situations occurring around them, or to put themselves outside of the discourse surrounding memoirs, which would not help them become the writer they wanted to be.”<sup>230</sup> Cholakian, however, believes that Marguerite’s writing is somewhat of a combination of the two, wanting to place herself at the center of the narrative while still remaining “on the margins of history.”<sup>231</sup>

By presenting her own narrative, Marguerite perhaps was gaining back some of the power she felt she had lost throughout her life. Further than simply justifying herself to the public, she could define not only herself but the people around her who had a great deal of control over her life. One of the missteps in Cholakian’s own analysis of Marguerite’s memoirs, however, is the suggestion that Marguerite was little more than a bystander in the events of her life. Although Marguerite was not a major historical player, this conclusion is overly-simplified and gives very little credit to the ways Marguerite navigated restrictions placed on women.

Even if Marguerite did write this memoir to make herself an important figure in events she had less participation in, it is inaccurate to label Marguerite as having an inconsequential role. The people of court would not have been so fixated on converting Marguerite if she did not matter politically. Moreover, the way that Marguerite resisted the Hugenots at court, including their threatened violence, suggests that she was not a victim of her circumstances. Even if she was not a more active figure in the events of the Wars of Religion, she portrayed herself as having a quiet kind of resistance.

One instance of Marguerite's quiet resistance occurred when Catherine was working to arrange Marguerite's marriage to Henry of Navarre. Marguerite wished to fulfill her mother's

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<sup>229</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, “Marguerite de Valois,” 69.

<sup>230</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, “Marguerite de Valois,” 80.

<sup>231</sup> Patricia Francis Cholakian, “Marguerite de Valois,” 80.

will, but she also wished to marry a Catholic.<sup>232</sup> Nevertheless, once it was known that Catherine wished her to marry Henry of Navarre, Marguerite stated this: “I answered that my choice was governed by her pleasure, and that I only begged her not to forget that I was a good Catholic.”<sup>233</sup> Despite her willingness to perform the duty her mother expects of her for the betterment of their family through an important alliance, Marguerite still distinguished herself as an individual that could still exist, in part, outside of her marriage. It is a small moment, but combined with earlier moments in the memoir that display her resistance to Huguonism at court, it is clear that Marguerite did have the ability to make at least some choices, even if they were tempered by the opinions of her mother specifically. Catherine, however, did not immediately force Marguerite into the marriage, according to her recounting, but rather asked Marguerite’s opinion. Marguerite had likely internalized her duty to marry according to her parent’s wishes, but in her memoirs, she at least presented this moment as a choice to follow her mother’s wishes as long as she could retain her religion.

Marguerite’s memoirs show that, regardless of how women felt about their own situations and their relationships to the parental figures in their lives, inheriting certain teachings, particularly of a religious nature in this case, could foster a level of legitimacy that could allow people like Marguerite to build a legacy. As Chapter 2 discussed briefly, even if Elizabeth I had negative feelings about her father in some way, she likely would have set these feelings aside to give herself legitimacy in order to inherit his title as regent of England. Similarly, by allying her past self with the religion of her powerful mother during those formative years in the narrative, Marguerite has by default inherited some of the authority that her mother possessed as a political figure from a historical perspective. In Chapter 1, the futures of Mary I and Jeanne D’Albret

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<sup>232</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 53.

<sup>233</sup> Marguerite de Valois, *Memoirs of Marguerite de Valois*, 54.

reflect some of the religious perspectives of their mothers, showing that these religious inheritances were carried throughout a lifetime, for an inheritance can be accepted, but it might not necessarily be kept forever. Marguerite's memoirs, however, crossed time directly to display just how she wanted her formative years to be remembered. Although it is unfair to refer to her as a bystander, it is true that she was not as active in politics as her mother. Nevertheless, even if Marguerite did not have a large role in the history she was recording, she turned herself into a writer of that history, and used figures such as Catherine de' Medici to legitimize that history and create a legacy in the form of a memoir. Whether or not Catherine passed on her religious beliefs or personality traits to Marguerite as a child, by depicting herself as linked through religion to Catherine and her forefathers, Marguerite was, in multiple ways, her heir.

## Conclusion

For women, early modern Europe was a place of limited inheritance in all formal realms of life. The status of women and their ability to hold property often depended entirely upon their marital status, and even widows, who tended to have the most inheritance rights, were restricted. Philosophers of ancient times even believed that women were limited when it came to biological inheritance. For instance, Aristotle, whose ideas were highly popular in the middle ages and the early modern period,<sup>234</sup> believed that in the natural state, offspring would entirely resemble the father, and that offspring who resembled the mother were monstrous and unnatural.<sup>235</sup> Furthermore, when women of royal status were able to inherit a title or a throne, such as in the cases of Jeanne D'Albret and Mary, Queen of Scots, they could still be a pawn in dynastic politics. Nonetheless, women were not forever victims of their circumstances, and just as most oppressed people do, they found the ability to navigate oppressive structures to claim their own kind of power, however small. As a result, women were able to hold informal power, but they were also able to pass down as well as accept informal social inheritances from their mothers.

As Chapter 1 explored, royal women were particularly equipt to pass on educational and religious learnings, due to having the privilege of an education and being literate. By passing on religion and education, women were operating within gendered structures but still allowing their "heirs" to gain power through their inheritances. Jeanne D'Albret received a rigorous education and reformist influences from her mother, Marguerite de Navarre, both of which helped make her a very important figure of the Reformation. Mary I received a Renaissance

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<sup>234</sup> Charles B. Schmitt, "Towards a reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism," *History of Science* 11, no. 3 (1973): 159-193, cited by Mary Anne Cline Horowitz, "Aristotle and woman," *Journal of the History of Biology* 9, no. 2 (1976): 183-213.183-184.

<sup>235</sup> Sober, Elliot. "Evolution, population thinking, and essentialism." *Philosophy of Science*, 47, no. 3 (1980), 362.

humanist education and was highly religious, in part due to Catherine of Aragon's devotion to Catholicism. These inheritances, in particular, were displayed through the letter writing of Catherine of Aragon, who encouraged her daughter both religiously and academically. Mary's religious beliefs were impactful in her own life and English history. For both of these relationships, I have approached inheritance as a linear phenomenon that passes directly from mother to daughter. Formal linear inheritance was rare amongst women, as it was always preferable for a male to inherit. In some ways, formal linear inheritance was impossible between women, as the male line of inheritance was viewed as the direct path. Through these letters, mothers were able to create direct inheritances for their daughters.

Chapter 2 of the project, however, advanced the conception of inheritance beyond linearity. The translations of Elizabeth I, along with the dedicatory epistles she wrote, helped to show that inheritance was not necessarily direct or vertical in passing from mother to daughter. Multiple maternal figures could participate in the inheritances given to one daughter, and one maternal figure could also pass on inheritances to more than one daughter figure. While the inheritance of a title or land was more linear, social inheritance could function differently, in part due to how many powerful, connected women lived in Europe around the same time.

Moreover, these inheritances, as shown by Prescott's assessment of Elizabeth's translation, were not necessarily accepted fully. By altering Marguerite de Navarre's words, Elizabeth was potentially subconsciously rejecting some of the ideas presented to her, particularly regarding gender. On the other hand, however, Elizabeth's desire to make such a translation for her step-mother and exercise her own intellect perhaps displays an acceptance of inheritance. Even if Elizabeth did not accept all of Marguerite's ideas, she aspired to exhibit qualities that would please Catherine Parr. By creating the translation, Elizabeth was acting in a way that Catherine would have, by participating in education and keeping her mind sharp. By

making this translation, she was generating an informal legitimacy that tethered her both to her step mother and her father.

In order to explore further how queens might have accepted or shaped their inheritances later in life, Chapter 3 explored maternal inheritance in Marguerite de Valois' memoirs. Although Marguerite was, in many ways, not the most politically active person in her family, writing a memoir allowed her to establish her own identity and political power in retrospect, as well as reveal certain situations where she did have agency. This chapter, due to the length of her memoirs, only focussed on her early years from the age of eleven to nineteen, but even in those early years, Marguerite portrayed herself as being resistant to the many reformers in her court. By doing so, Marguerite allied herself with one of the most powerful Catholics around her, her mother Catherine de' Medici. Marguerite seemed in her memoirs to be influenced by the Catholicism of Catherine and other women around her who remained Catholic. Through the lens of inheritance, Marguerite's shaping of her own story showed not the values of young Marguerite necessarily, but the values she had at the time of writing. As a result, by writing herself as a Catholic along with Catherine de' Medici, Marguerite shaped her own legacy.

Overall, the historiography has failed women of the past, not only by rejecting their complexities, but by refusing to explore relationships between them. In many cases, as these writings have shown, despite the potential difficulties of motherhood in a dynastic context, a mother tended to be her daughter's greatest ally. If a woman's mother was dead, then another maternal figure could fill that role. Feminine social inheritance was a highly complex phenomenon that deserves more attention in history. It is well known how restricted women were in areas of formal inheritance, so it is vital to turn to more unconventional forms of social inheritance to redraw the relationships between women of the early modern period. The most logical place to turn for accuracy regarding women is the source: writing by women. Letters,

translations, and memoirs written by women all provide point-of-views that challenge a historiography that victimizes and villainizes women in equal measure. These genres, moreover, provide vital glimpses at how women passed on social inheritances, and further work should be performed in the field. This study has also displayed that historians have diminished even the most celebrated women of the past, so studies about inheritance and the complexities of feminine relationships, as well as a more complex understanding of queenship in general, is vital to the field of history.



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