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Queen Catherine's Material Body
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"Wealhtheow stepped forth, mindful of courtesy. The queen of Hrothgar, adorned in gold, greeted the men in the hall. The noble woman first offered the ale-cup to the lord of the land of East-Danes."

Wealhtheow, her name meaning *Treasure-Bearer* in Anglo-Saxon serves as an important symbol in the epic *Beowulf*; for centuries England's queens have been instrumental in creating an image for the monarchy, one tied not only to their clothing and jewels but also to their physical bodies, given over in service to the crown. Women's bodies have long been the subjects of similar valuation, but none more importantly than queens'. In the sixteenth century when the wealth and status of a person could be read off of their backs more easily than most people could read books, how a King clothed or did not clothe his Queen spoke to her power. One notable exception was Catherine of Aragon¹ who many popular historians² and contemporaries partially dismiss as the tragic, "ugly"³ first wife of Henry VIII. In truth, Catherine carefully crafted her material image regardless of Henry's interference. Drawing largely off of compiled inventories, paintings, letters and state papers, and building upon recent scholarship by Maria Hayward for my research, I shall attempt to add to the work Michelle Beer started in her essay "A queenly affinity? Catherine of Aragon's estates and Henry VIII's Great Matter", in which Beer explains Catherine's fear and loss through Henry's repossession of her landed estates. While Henry was able to take away many of Catherine's estates and her revenue from them, the material goods she brought with her from Spain played a crucial role in her relationship with England as a whole.⁴ Through an in-depth study of Catherine of Aragon's garments, material goods, and the

¹ Henry VIII's first wife, a daughter of the Spanish monarch's Ferdinand and Isabella of Castile. Catherine was a devout catholic, but after almost 20 years of failing to give Henry a son, he put her aside in favor of the younger Anne Boleyn. Henry's Divorce from Catherine signaled his break with the powerful Catholic church and set himself as the Head of the English Church.

² Claire Ridgeway <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaC9L-p4tdA>
5.35min

³ Guistinan

⁴ Beer, Michelle. "A queenly affinity..."

connections she forged with them, historians must acknowledge the success of Catherine's fight to be treated and remembered as Queen and for her daughter to have that same privilege.

Defining Royal Authority through Dress

First, it is important to note what dress meant to the rest of Europe, and more specifically what clothing meant for Henry VIII and his court, before considering Catherine's relationship to clothing and material goods. As Henry's Queen it was Henry's duty to care for Catherine's image and when, in later years, he neglected her it is important to illustrate why clothing was repeatedly used as the medium for that neglect. In contrast to the move toward rich simplicity established by other European monarchs such as Charles V and Francis I⁵, Venetian ambassador to the English court, Sebastian Giustinian, looked at the clothing of the English king to determine his power. At the turn of the sixteenth century, the memory of the War of the Roses was still fresh and England was viewed as a warring island nation with little wealth. In March of 1515 Sebastian Giustinian, Venetian ambassador to the English court, wrote favorably of his meeting with Henry's rival, the French King Francis I, stating that "we found him seated in a hall, under a canopy, very richly dressed all in white baukin...the moment we entered the door-way, he rose from his seat as did all others, cap in hand"⁶ He goes on to give a listing of all the other people present with the king, who seem to need little introduction; Giustinian is simply pleased at his warm welcome. Giustinian's reaction to Francis' simplistic clothing indicates a certain balance of power wherein Francis does not need to prove himself to the Venetian ambassador, rather the Venetians need the French to help them retain the Duchy of Milan⁷ in the peace between France, Spain, and Venice.

⁵ painting, artstor

⁶ 51, Translated by Rawdon Brown, Vol 1. Dispatches of Sebastian Giustinian...

⁷ 49, Giustinian Vol 1...

Therefore Francis' elegant and humble meeting with them proves his goodwill and potentially his willingness to assist them.

Henry, well aware of the importance of rich dress, boosted England onto the wider European stage through the performative quality of his dress; not necessarily in good taste or elegant, but undoubtedly *expensive*. The royal wardrobe made Henry's garments out of the finest materials, and also was used to outfit his retainers in a similar fashion, all from the King's pocket. Unlike his letters about his reception by the French king, which highlight Francis' elegance yet focus more on political factors, Giustinian swiftly tallied up Henry VIII's attire upon meeting, to Henry's benefit. In one sentence he manages to convey the importance of clothing richly in sixteenth century European courts.

His Majesty was dressed as a knight of the Garter, of which order he is the superior, and wore a very costly doublet, over which was a mantle of violet-coloured velvet, with an extremely long train, lined with white satin; on his head was a richly jeweled cap of crimson velvet, of immense value, and round his neck he wore a collar, studded with many precious stones, of which I never saw the like.⁸

Giustinian judges Henry's value immediately through his clothing. He is dressed as the highest member of a prestigious order, which indicates Henry's rank and following; he not only wears costly materials, but a lot of them, so he has significant wealth; lastly he has access to jewels Giustinian has never seen before, so Henry must have significant foreign connections because most gems would have been imported to England during that time period. Therefore, simply by summing up Henry's apparel on one occasion Giustinian gives a hoard of valuable information which he can supply to the Venetian Doge and completes Henry's performance by reporting about his wealth. Even more than clothing however, the appearance of Henry's queen also acted as an important indicator of his power. As much an ornament as any jewel, the Queen reflected

⁸ 78, Translated by Rawdon Brown, Vol 1. Dispatches of Sebastian Giustinian

some of the same signs Giustinian notes on Henry's person with additional symbols for foreign alliances and fertility.

Princess Catherine of Aragon's material goods and physical value

Royal status was readily visible through dress in the sixteenth century, where, for example, a single shirt for a courtier cost more than a common man made in a year, thus the value and movement of cloth and similar ornaments is vital to a study of the sixteenth century⁹. The expense of clothing at the Tudor Court reflected itself nationally and internationally, specifically through the investiture of clothing in women's dowries. While men's inheritances tended to be stable, ownership of family property for example, women's wealth, if existent, tended to be in the form of moveable goods, especially in the form of clothing. Some women even exercised personal ownership of certain items from their trousseaus, which was highly important. Foreign princesses carried enough clothing and jewelry to their husbands to feed a small city. Indeed, Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII's first wife, on numerous occasions of hardship, pawned her jewels and wardrobe in order to feed her retainers.

On the evening of November 6th 1501, after a six-day, storm-tossed sea voyage, which threatened to drown the princess and her impressive dowry, Henry VII and Prince Arthur rushed to examine the Spanish Infanta Catalina de Aragon whom Arthur was to marry. The marriage negotiations had spanned many years as the Most Catholic monarchs of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, had to be persuaded to send their youngest daughter to the backward island nation of England along with a portion of her highly contested dowry: the first installment of which was over four times what Ferdinand and Isabella paid to Christopher Columbus. According to Amy

⁹ Man's shirt, Victoria and Albert Archives

Licence, in an excerpt from her biography of Catherine of Aragon, "Henry [VII] was delighted with what he saw"¹⁰, having been afraid perhaps of the arrival of some deformed princess, unsuitable for childbearing. This princess would do. According to contemporary accounts by Edward Hall and evidenced in numerous portraits, the young Catherine was pleasingly plump, with a ruddy complexion, and beautiful hair. Although she was described as small and ugly in later years by Giustinian, in 1501 her physical attractiveness and marriageability remained uncontested. In the subsequent negotiations for Catherine of Aragon's marriage to the Crown Prince Arthur, the fate of Catherine's jewels and ornaments foreshadowed how the marriage and Catherine herself would later be treated, both upon Arthur's death and later when Henry VIII attempted to divorce Catherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn. This early marriage treaty illuminates rising tensions about the value of goods in an increasingly global economy and illustrates how important Spain's jewels and material goods were to England.

A Spanish Infanta carried with her all of the trappings of state, since for the monarchs of Castile and Aragon, the marriage with Prince Arthur of England assured yet another of their children a throne, they were willing to pay dearly for that privilege:

The Princess has taken to England gold and silver of the value of	2,259,233	maravedis.
Further paid in gold and silver	2,885,925	maravedis.
Jewels	732,000	maravedis.

¹⁰ Amy Licence

¹¹ England needed the Spanish alliance and the legitimacy a wealthy princess could give them, but Henry VII was also fully prepared for the princess not to pass muster in terms of what items she brought with her and her physical appearance. Her worthiness as a spouse for his son depended on both her physical body and the ornaments that adorned it, which became virtually indistinguishable from each other the longer Catherine stayed in England. Catherine came to England fully clothed to represent her nation; her jewels were the Spanish crown's and their presence added to England's growing status, and so it is no wonder that Catherine's body and ornaments were so disputed.

One issue over Catherine's dowry between Ferdinand of Aragon and Henry VII arose because, in the marriage negotiations, Henry VII claimed Catherine's jewels and ornaments even in the event of her husband Arthur's death, a fact Ferdinand and Isabella were quick to rebuke, yet did not manage to gain favorable terms on.¹²

According to the first treaty, the ornaments, &c. of the Princess, which were to be discounted from her marriage portion, were to remain in her possession. The second treaty leaves this point doubtful, for it is said in it that Henry [VII] is to receive the ornaments.¹³

Catherine's jewels symbolized more than wealth: in the sixteenth century royal jewels held an almost magical significance¹⁴; to a sixteenth-century person, royalty's spiritual and physical strength resided in the crown jewels to a significant degree. Catherine's jewels were intended by Ferdinand and Isabella to be used as a safeguard for their daughter, as a dower portion in the event of her husband's death, which was how most dowries were intended to function. The fact

¹¹ Calendar of state papers Vol 2, Spain 18 May

¹² Jewels, ornaments, &c. of the Princess are to be discounted from the last instalment of the marriage portion, that is to say, two years after the consummation of the marriage. It has been impossible to obtain more favourable terms, and King Henry has for a long time been utterly unwilling to discount them at all. (December 1500, Vol 1)

¹³ November 1500

¹⁴ From decorating reliquaries for saints, to holding assumed medicinal and historical significance not to mention their extreme material value.

that Henry VII continuously attempted to subvert that most important of clauses calls into question something greater than his desire to attain money and an upper hand over the distinguished Spanish royals; namely, whether he might have predicted his son Arthur's death. The terms of the treaty between England and Spain seem to allude to the fact that Henry VII did not want the money he made from Catherine's marriage to return with her to Spain if Arthur died. Indeed the fact that Henry VII was so eager to account for the jewels—a relatively small portion of the dowry considering what else Catherine brought—might cue his anticipation of Arthur's death. Arthur died in 1502, at Ludlow castle on the Welsh border, most likely prey to the illness known as the "sweating sickness". While historians¹⁵ disagree as to the mode of death and whether Arthur may or may not have had consumption or some other earlier illness, the terms of the treaty between Spain and England might allude to something more than a sudden illness.

The valuation of Catherine's dowry was in many ways linked to her value as a person and queen, therefore negotiations surrounding it are important to understanding her role and power. In letters negotiating the ornaments in Catherine's dowry, a certain economic disparity begins to appear, namely that Henry VII made the exchange rate in England artificially higher than in other European countries, a fact which later influenced his son Henry VIII's relationships with other foreign nations. This second issue with the marriage treaty pertains to the valuation of Catherine's ornaments, not simply their existence. As the Spanish monarchs write to Henry VII:

In the first treaty it is agreed that the ornaments, jewels, &c. of the Princess of Wales shall be accepted according to their just value. The second treaty, however, fixes that they are to be taxed by sworn jewellers in London, according to the price current in England, or according to what the said valuers, or other persons, might be prepared to give for them. It is not probable that either these valuers would offer as much as the ornaments and jewels are worth, or that other persons could be found who would be

¹⁵ Levin, Carole, and Nate Probasco. *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 42, no. 1 (2011): 165-66. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23076684>.

willing and able to pay their just value. Therefore it is better to say that the objects in question must be accepted for their real value.¹⁶ Henry VII did not accept Catherine's ornaments at their real value and instead attempted to wheedle even more money from the Spanish Monarchs by not clothing Catherine properly and forcing her to dip into her dowry in order to maintain her status after Arthur's death. While in the first negotiations Catherine's ability to produce an heir is not questioned, when later reexamining her jewels and wealth Henry VII calls into question her suitability for the role. Yet again Henry VII connects Catherine's physical self with her material possessions. The dowry negotiations covered what would happen to her wealth when she bore a child and Henry VII wanted to insure that even the portions he could not claim would eventually be passed down to England through her hoped-for sons and their potential spouses. When Arthur died, those hopes were shattered, so Henry VII kept Catherine in England with a new betrothal to his second son, Henry VIII, only to break it off again at his pleasure. Henry VII called into question the value of the Princess' goods repeatedly and by so doing also doubted her physical importance. The constant evaluation of Catherine's goods devalued her physical presence because her physical body symbolized three important things: material wealth, an alliance with Spain, and a potential heir for England's throne. Her constant evaluation served as a reminder as to the interconnection between the queenly body and its raiment.

Catherine's jewels represented a comparatively small portion of her dowry, yet they were some of the most highly contested items throughout her time in England because of their material worth and jewels' traditional connections to royal power. The fate of her ornaments and jewels indicated how Catherine's body was valued during different periods of her life. After Arthur's death they became her lifeline. While she started out as a wealthy daughter of the well-connected Spanish monarchs Henry VII used different material methods to devalue Catherine's

¹⁶ British Library Online, Calendar of State Papers

worth, both physically and economically after Arthur's death. She wrote to her father, Ferdinand of Aragon to remedy her sorry state in England,

I have nothing for chemises; wherefore, by your highness' life, I have now sold some bracelets to get a dress of black velvet, for I was all but naked; for since I departed thence [from Spain] I have nothing except two new dresses, for till now those I brought from thence have lasted me, although now I have nothing but the dresses of brocade. On this account I supplicate your highness to command to remedy this, and that as quickly as may be; for certainly I shall not be able to live in this manner.¹⁷

By selling bits of her dowry, Catherine essentially sells off bits of herself, and demotes her personal value. She was property of the king while she remained in England, unmarried.

Meanwhile, both England and Spain vied for her goods irrespective of the consequences for the body that accompanied them. Because her husband died and with him her prospects of motherhood, Catherine's value in England had been greatly reduced. Henry VII had the control of much of her wealth, and although the Spanish alliance still mattered, it could not be cemented without a marriage: a marriage, that Henry VII is reluctant to uphold due to the fact that he had less to gain materially from Spain and Catherine was significantly older than the king-to-be, Henry VIII. Nevertheless, against others' advice, Henry VIII married Katherine after his father's death, but not without considerable cost.

Only by building up Catherine's apparent physical value again could Henry VIII restore Catherine's status in the eyes of the English people and therefore show her suitability to be queen. After Arthur's death, Catherine had to personally clothe herself and her attendants. In order to assure the people's faith in his own suitability as king, Henry needed to clothe her royally and make that expense sustainable through land grants from which Katherine could receive rents from. As Michelle Beer explains in her essay about Catherine's estates, "Catherine was well aware of her duty to provide patronage and rewards for those who had served her

¹⁷ 168, Letters of the Queens of England, edited by Anne Crawford

loyally, and she understood that nearly the whole apparatus of her queenship rested on her ability to fulfill those responsibilities"¹⁸. Henry VIII subsequently built up her wealth in order to make sure Catherine could fulfill her duties as Queen and would never give a poor appearance to the English because to do so would reflect poorly on him. With "An act for confirmacon of tres Patents made to Quene Katheryn for her Dower"¹⁹ Henry "assigneth to the moste excellent the Pryncesse Lady Katyn Pryncesse of Wales in full and hole satisfaction recompens and contentacion of all her Dowery and joyntre". Upon his ascension to the throne Henry was inclined to be generous and forgave Catherine's entire dower, even the ornaments, which she had spent to feed herself and her household. Henry sets her up with new jointure lands from which she shall receive annual monies. Henry's act was two-fold, on the one hand it gained him a stronger alliance with Spain and painted him as a hero for rescuing Catherine from her poverty, but on the other, he gifts her the lands necessary to uphold her status as queen, namely for one of her largest expenses: her wardrobe. Catherine must use the money allotted to her in order to appear richly dressed and fit into the court at Henry's side and to well-clothe her retainers, which she does from the beginning. Little did Henry know, that in granting Catherine full possession of her dower he also gave her the tools necessary for her to draw out the divorce and to ensure a dedicated English following for herself and daughter.

Unlike most English Kings, who usually waited until their wife was pregnant or had already given birth to an heir, Henry crowned Catherine immediately, and at his side, in style. Her retinue, all paid for by Henry, wore the richest of garments in royal colors.²⁰ In part,

¹⁸ 1, Beer, M. (2018). *A queenly affinity? Catherine of Aragon's estates and Henry VIII's Great Matter*. *Historical Research*, 91(253), 426–445. doi:10.1111/1468-2281.12230

¹⁹ 1509-1510 Statues of the realm pg 15

²⁰ Maria Hayward (2007) *Crimson, Scarlet, Murrey and Carnation: Red at the Court of Henry VIII*, *Textile History*, 38:2, 135-150, DOI: [10.1179/004049607x229142](https://doi.org/10.1179/004049607x229142)

Catherine's crowning acted to honor Spain, but it also served as a way for Henry to show off his new queen to the people. Unusually, Henry and Catherine had a joint coronation about which contemporary biographer Edward Hall writes:

Katheryne, sitting in her Litter borne by two White Palfriesthe Litter couered, and richely appareled in white Satyn Embrodered, her heire hangyng doune to her backe, of very great length, bewtefull and goodly to behold, and on her hedde a Coronall, set with many riche orient stones.²¹

For her coronation Catherine drew upon the old ordinances²² for how a queen shall be crowned—with her hair down and surrounded by both Spanish and English members of her household, "Virgins in White"²³ and priests bless the king and queen as they process past. Thus Catherine ushers in a new era for herself as the beloved queen of England. United with her husband, even before any heir is born, she gains the approval of the English people through her appearance, because while she might not be able to be heard by everyone in London, she can be *seen*. Catherine's procession required a performance of fertility, a marriage blessed by the church, a virgin bride in white, all of the traditional symbols of a fortuitous start to their reigns.

The visibility of Henry and Catherine was augmented by sumptuary legislation, which assured that they and their heirs could stand out in any crowd simply through clothing. Henry's sumptuary laws, laws regarding material excess also made clear just who stood at his side. He made provisions for their heirs to inherit, for her household, and for her place above other women in the realm. The Acts of Apparell in 1509-1510 detail the special privileges that were now available to Catherine as Henry's wife with the money necessary to buy sumptuous clothing. A person was forbidden in these laws:

²¹ 508, Hall

²² Little black book of palace ordinances

²³ 508, Hall

That he be use in his apparel any clothe of golde of purpoure coloure or Sylke but onely the Kyng the Qwene the Kyns moder the Kyns Chylder the Kyns Brethers and Susters, upon payne to forfeit seid apparell...and for using the same to forfeite xx pounde²⁴

With these laws Henry placed Catherine's body once again into a position of importance; how she dressed was important. She must be seen to be royal and fit for that status. Time and again the queen's garments and body became conflated with their primary function, to bear the next heir for England. In Henry's laws the whole family shares the material points of power- the rules about what they wore did not differ—even if their ability to afford their status symbols did.

Both Henry and Catherine used impressive clothing, especially in the first years of their reign, to symbolize their virility/fertility and wealth. In fact their court became so immersed in its own grandeur that members began to have difficulty keeping up with the monarch's material consumption. Spanish ambassador Mendoza's translated letters to Ferdinand of Aragon illuminate his difficulties:

Both the King and Queen are young and lately married, and he is, as Spanish ambassador, obliged to appear at all kinds of festivities in a style befitting his high position. Has been obliged to borrow money, and to give bills of exchange for six months salary, amounting to four ducats a day. Begs his bills may be paid.²⁵

Mendoza shows the impossibility of keeping up with Henry's expenditure as well as the necessity of clothing performance to his status. Similarly, the Venetian ambassador Giustinian²⁶, a few years later complains of the expense in clothing himself in the English fashion. Catherine's great boon therefore, is that she is able to provide for herself and for her household from the king's wardrobe and even sets up a smaller equivalent for herself. Henry's generosity to Catherine allowed her to live in splendor even after he tired of her. Their coronation was not the only thing Henry shared with Catherine. Henry gifted numerous items to Catherine over the

²⁴ Statutes of the Realm Vol. 3 pg 8

²⁵ 29th of May 1510. Volume 2 State Papers

²⁶ Giustinian first year

years, separate from her own expenses. Maria Hayward notes "Clothes were also made for the queen at the king's expense and recorded in Worsley's²⁷ wardrobe book. Worsley recorded deliveries of 45 lengths of cloth to Catherine on 20 different occasions between 31 December 1516 and 19 May 1520."²⁸ These clothes likely would have been used to outfit both Catherine and some of her ladies. Catherine also inherited Margret Beaufort, Henry VIII's grandmother's jewels upon her death, and most likely would have also gained Elizabeth of York's. This would have combined the English and Spanish royal jewels on one person, therefore conferring their symbolic and spiritual power. The result: a woman's body loved by her husband, representing the impressive powers of Spain and England, and clothed as a queen.

Queen Catherine's Physical Body: for want of a son

Despite Catherine's successful transition into the image of queenship, her body still stood as a sign for England's lack of male succession. She writes to her father Ferdinand of Aragon about the stillbirth of her first child and that:

"When in labour [she] vowed to present to St. Peter the Martyr, of the order of the Franciscan Friars, one of her richest head-dresses. Sent it by one of her maids, the niece of the treasurer Morales, who wishes to become a nun of the same order. But the father of that lady retained her letter to the Prioress, as well as the head-dress, declaring before a public notary that it belonged to his daughter. Begs he will reprimand the father of the niece of Morales for such a want of respect."²⁹

Here, Catherine makes a connection between birth and a sort of sumptuous sinfulness. She wished, in the pain of birth to give away an expensive present, likely hoping that by relinquishing it to God he would forgive her and allow a healthy birth. That her gift was intercepted provides a view of how material goods were both valued and how possession was

²⁷ Master of the Great wardrobe

²⁸ pg 178 Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII

²⁹ Calandar of State Papers, March 1510

usually linked to men. Although Catherine failed to birth a live child, she still carried her first child to term; evidence suggests Henry's passion for Catherine did not wane for long and his desire to outfit her splendidly continued. In February of 1510, Henry gave Catherine a gown "which was made from crimson cloth of gold. The gown was furred with ermine, for which 15 ½ timbers and 12 wombs of ermine were supplied"³⁰ This gown symbolized multiple different cues about the Queen's body. First, Catherine had just given birth to a stillborn daughter, but because the swelling of her stomach did not go down, doctors of the time believed she had only miscarried one twin. Thus, Henry's rich gift serves to sympathize over their lost child, but also reinforces Catherine's status, because ermine was only allowed to the highest nobles. The fur lining would also have served to keep her warm in the cold English winter and hopefully protect the second child they believed she was carrying.

Of course certain clothing could also be used for other symbolic purposes as Catherine was well aware of as evidenced by her actions at the battle of Flodden. In 1513, while Henry was at war with France, the heavily pregnant Catherine acted as regent in England, one of the few occurrences of an English queen to do so. At the Battle of Flodden³¹ her troops protected England's borders and defeated the Scots in a landslide victory, killing numerous nobles and King James IV himself. While she was not present at the battle itself, she gave the orders and was travelling north in order to join her troops and rally more men. After her victory she writes to Henry in France, "My husband, for hastiness, with Rougecross I could not send your grace the piece of the King of Scots coat which John Glynn now brings. In this your Grace shall see how I keep my promise, sending you for your banners a king's coat...and now go I to our lady at

³⁰ 178, Dress at the Court of King Henry VIII

³¹ <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Flodden>

Walsingham, that I promised so long ago to see."³² By removing the coat of King James, who was allied to France, and sending it to Henry, Catherine cements her loyalty to England and mocks the French with the addition to Henry's banners. She connected this victory and Henry's safety later in her letter to a pilgrimage she would take to the shrine of the Virgin Mary, a famous site for would-be mothers and those longing for children. Thus, she joins her triumph and symbols of ruler ship—through the coat—to Henry's safe return and a healthy birth of the child she expects. Unfortunately her victory came at a steep price. On the 8th of October, worn out by the travel and constant worry, Catherine delivered a premature son. However, with her gift of the King's coat to Henry, Catherine symbolized her importance as more than simply a brood mare for England.

While Catherine fully understood the symbolism of clothing and how to exploit it for dynastic benefit, so did Henry. Later, once Anglo-French tensions had cooled, the meeting at the Field of Cloth of Gold between Henry VIII and Francis I provided a chance for England and France to attempt to outdo each other and in this meeting Catherine played a significant role. Although the meeting was allegedly for unification through Henry's daughter Mary Tudor and the Dauphin of France and the rules for the meeting were clear, each King took the chance to show off their Queen and their court in an attempt to one-up the other. Every article of their wardrobes were planned out and the two kings even sent garments back and forth before their meeting in order that they would *appear* as absolute equals at the field of cloth of gold. The two even agreed not to cut their beards before they met³³, a fact Catherine was not much pleased by. She convinced Henry to cut his, which was seen as her Spanish influence against the peace

³² Catherine's letter, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, Volume VI, Gilbert Burnet

³³ Giustinian

between their two nations, much to the disapproval of the French. The Field of Cloth of Gold provides a good example for how Henry upheld the status of his queen even when he was displeased with her and how importance appearance and material exchange were to the perceived power of a country more broadly.

Gift giving also played an important role in the Tudor household, both between Catherine and Henry and with their retainers. Catherine followed Henry's lead in using gifts to great effect and influenced the gift giving done by future queens as well. Maria Hayward explains:

Henry VIII, his queens and his children tended to give gifts of silver-gilt plate, the style and weight determined by the social standing and current favour of the recipient. A schedule of gifts to be given by Catherine of Aragon survives for 1522 and also includes a selection of gifts made from 'the Queen's store'. The choice of gifts appears to have been discussed in advance.³⁴

The existence of a "store" indicates the presence of an important extra part of Catherine's supply network. She used her land revenues from her dower in order to maintain the Queen's wardrobe, which consisted of several staff with experience creating, preserving, purchasing, and inventorying the cloth to be turned into garments for her and her retainers' liveries. Catherine furthermore had plentiful access to the larger King's Wardrobe in addition to the Tower's jewels and her own. The store likely acted as a receptacle for the gifts Catherine received as Queen to be re-gifted in coming years, often as return presents for even costlier gifts, a practice which represented net-gain for the crown. If Catherine was gifted gold plate, her return gift might be silver. However, in some ways, her gift to a person enormously outweighed its physical value because of what it represented: her favor, something which might be helpful later on in the solving of a land dispute, or a position in court for a family member. The importance of Catherine's gift giving should not be overlooked as it was the primary function of a queen to dispense treasure and "she used her resources to create connections and bonds of obligation and

³⁴ Hayward, gift giving

support with the English elite."³⁵ Especially in later years, these connections would prove immensely valuable.

Anne Boleyn: the material queen

Catherine's downfall started slowly and gifts were the medium; gifts were the easiest way for Henry to snub her subtly and to show favor to others, especially in the case of Anne Boleyn. While Catherine came to England with all the material splendor of Spain and continued to foster English-Spaniard relations throughout her tenure as Queen, as the daughter of a minor nobleman, Anne Boleyn had no such luck. In need of allies and the ability to project herself as a Queen Anne succored the support of France and used Henry's coffer and the reformation in England to give herself the material status of a Queen. A love letter from Henry shows the beginning of such status:

Seeing that I cannot be personally
present with you, I now send you the
nearest thing I can to that, namely,
my picture set in a bracelet, with the
whole of the device, which you al-
ready know, wishing myself in their
place, if it should please you. This is
from the hand of your loyal servant
and friend,
H.R.³⁶

Anne took pleasure in wearing Henry's gifts both to show her appreciation to the king and to lord over Catherine. In 1526, Henry jousted with the embroidered gold motto, "*Declare Je Nos*"³⁷, or "Declare I dare not" on his tabard, indicating a forbidden love he wanted made public. Clothing played a large role in Catherine's relationship with the Anne because neither woman could

³⁵ 2, Beer, M. (2018). *A queenly affinity? Catherine of Aragon's estates and Henry VIII's Great Matter. Historical Research*, 91(253), 426–445. doi:10.1111/1468-2281.12230

³⁶ Anne Boleyn Files, Love Letters of Henry VIII to Anne

³⁷ The six Wives of Henry VIII Alison Weir

confront the other publically. Nevertheless, given that clothing in the sixteenth century was a statement, the steadily filling coffers of Mistress Anne would have been an important cue easy enough for anyone to read. Anne theoretically was Catherine's lady-in-waiting, so any argument started by her would have resulted in her public embarrassment, and while Anne had Henry's favor, Catherine could not start anything for fear of Henry's interference. The animosity between Henry's wife and wife-to-be played itself out through the one thing both women had control over: material items. "In June 1530 Henry was still having Katherine make his shirts, to Anne's fury."³⁸ While Henry's elaborate gifts to Anne, many of them textiles or jewelry were displayed on Anne's body, Catherine continued to reign as queen and with the material wealth to evidence it. Unlike Catherine, Anne had to rely on the king for all of her expenses, which were numerous.

In 1532 Henry created Anne as Marquess of Pembroke, a role that granted her wealth and lands to rival the queen, who still reigned at his side. Anne's new status granted her not only the wealth to begin to establish a wardrobe which would make her recognizable as the most important woman in England, but also the political clout necessary to begin to establish the regional ties necessary as the queen, which meant that in 1532 for the first and only time, Henry was not spared the expense of outfitting two queens. Anne Boleyn's new status as *Marquess of Pembroke* made her a completely independent woman financially and politically completely outside of any man but Henry's jurisdiction; a Marquessate is the second highest peerage in Britain. Being a Marquess should not be confused with a Marchioness, the female equivalent. For all intents and purposes, Henry declared his wife to-be to have all of the honors of a man, including the legal status to wear types of cloth previously forbidden to her including items normally restricted to members of the royal family. This change is reflected in Henry's gift of

³⁸ Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

purple velvet³⁹ to Anne in 1532⁴⁰ and Goldsmith "Cornelius Hayes' bill included three dozen items of jewellery for 'Mistress Anne', costing almost £100. The largest item is a girdle of crown gold billed at £18 10s.4d., but the most intriguing is a Catherine wheel of gold set with thirteen diamonds at just under £4'.⁴¹ 1532 marked a significant year in Anne's shifting status, which for all intents was not fully visible as anything beyond Henry's infatuation with a new mistress until 1527 when he applied for a dispensation from the pope. The second part of Anne's rising status particularly enraged Catherine.

In 1532 Henry reset much of the royal jewellery for Anne, setting aside the best stones for her. He also stripped Catherine of Aragon of her jewels, this obviously did not please the former queen and she responded by saying that it would be a sin for her jewels to adorn 'the scandal of Christendom'.⁴²

Catherine's jewels, inherited from Elizabeth of York and Margaret Beaufort, were taken from her to adorn Henry's new choice, her replacement. Unfortunately, the jewels had been Henry's gift to Catherine, so although she managed to hold onto many of those she brought with her from Spain, her visible status was quite literally stripped from her. In contrast, an opportunity to advertise Anne's new visible status coincided remarkably well with another meeting between Henry and Francis I of France. Catherine was not invited on the expedition, during which Henry intended to promote his new consort Anne to the French in style, adorned with Catherine's jewels. Beyond any snub to Catherine made before, Henry's decision put the Queen's royal jewels on the international stage *not* clothing the Queen. It was a statement of intent, intent to marry Anne, which in turn deprived Catherine of jewels so symbolic of her political, dynastic, and even

³⁹ Ives

⁴⁰ 1 yd. purple velvet for Mrs. Anne, 41s. 8d. 23rd. John Crepye, jeweller, 97l. 17s. Stuff prepared for Mrs. Anne, 217l. 9s. 8d. 24th. (Privvy Purse Expenses 1531-32 Volume 5)

⁴¹ anneboleyn files Ives Pg. 251

⁴² Anneboleynfiles(Ives, pg. 158

reproductive identity and placed their power on a younger woman, a woman who, within nine months of her trip to France would give birth to a new heir for England.

Up until Anne's pregnancy, Henry's move to divorce Catherine found itself blocked on numerous levels, by the capture of the Pope by Catherine's nephew, by the lack of witnesses as to whether Catherine's marriage to Arthur had truly been consummated, and finally by the support English people had for Catherine herself. In response, Henry enacted his early version of a smear campaign: everywhere English people were encouraged to feel sorry for the young king trapped in marriage to an old, dowdy, and barren woman. The answer to the country's lack of a male heir seemed to appear in the gaily dressed Anne riding at his side on progress. To add insult to injury, in 1533 the tides shifted further. Henry removed the main sources of Catherine's revenue, striking a blow at Catherine's income for maintaining her wardrobe and retainers. The old acts of 1509 and 1510 had granted Catherine lands of her own to administer as *femme sole*.

As *femme sole*, Catherine could pursue legal actions in her own name without the consent of her husband. She would be represented in any legal matters as if she were a single woman or a widow. And importantly for her distribution of patronage, Catherine could enter into contracts or indentures regarding her lands without requiring her husband's consent. In declaring Catherine *femme sole*, Henry followed the established practice of other English kings towards their wives, including his father Henry VII.⁴³

Up until 1533 Catherine had been exercising that queenly right in order to represent herself in Henry's divorce court and maintain her appearance as queen materially. Without a strong source of revenue coming from her estates, she could no longer maintain the court she once had, nor outfit her ladies. Thus, she was reduced to the impoverished status she had held prior to her marriage to Henry, the widow of Henry's brother, princess dowager.

Catherine's financial independence before Henry's repossession of her estates played itself out most visibly in Catherine's wardrobe. For, as Maria Hayward points out, Catherine's

⁴³ Beer, M. *A Queenly Affinity*

patterns of spending changed dramatically in the years before Henry's remarriage. In those years, possibly in part to augment her wardrobe in the absence of gifts from Henry, Catherine spent significantly more money for clothing, up to 1000 pounds in difference.⁴⁴ Primarily however, she utilized her status as *femme sole* to continue her role and material appearance as the queen of England. Including her patronage of the Church and gifts to her servants—one of Catherine's duties as queen being to dispense largesse. Therefore, when in the laws of 1533, Henry deprived her of those estates, she took a hit and proceeded to remove herself at Henry's command. However, as pitiful as her ousting was, Catherine's actions up until her death utilize the last recourses left to her to fight against the edicts: the very dower goods so contested when she first arrived in England and the material items Henry himself had gifted her.

The Death of a Queen

Upon her death on January 7, 1536, Catherine's material goods were ripe for the taking. However, Catherine had long planned for the eventuality that Henry would ransack her possessions. When some of his lords came to take an inventory, they found many of the gowns and jewels she had brought with her from Spain, including a costly crucifix, had been gifted to members of her household and to her daughter Mary. Because going against the dead's wishes was a sin and Catherine was known as a pious woman, her wishes for material goods to be granted upon her death were upheld.⁴⁵ Catherine's gifts to her household before and after her death maintained her function as queen who cared for her retainers and insured their continued loyalty to her daughter. In addition, Catherine's bequests deprived Henry of her goods. Even with Catherine's death, the fight for commemoration continued to be waged through textiles and

⁴⁴ Maria Hayward, *Dress at the Court of Henry VIII*

⁴⁵ Maria Hayward & *Letters and State papers*

ornaments. Although Henry had taken the English royal jewels from her, queenly power was materially imbued in her clothing and jewels now gifted to her daughter, Henry's rightful heir.

While Catherine's allies fought for her funeral to be that of a queen, rather than a princess dowager, a side note penned by her Master Secretary an hour after her death and signed "Has no money"⁴⁶ ensured that Henry would bear the expense of her commemoration:

"The charges of the wardrobe." To provide cloth for 30 ladies and gentlemen mourners, and for the noblemen present, and for her officers.

"The rate of the liveries" for dukes or duchesses, earls, &c., cloth for themselves and for a number of servants according to their degrees.⁴⁷

Thus, Catherine was free of the financial burden of her own funeral and the wealth she had left could be used for greater causes, namely insuring support for her daughter. She manipulated Henry to grant her wishes in fear of his immortal soul and with her blessing that he might employ her servants and repossess any land or furniture she still maintained. However, she "desires the King to let her have the goods she holds of him in gold and silver and the money due to her in time past... To my daughter, the collar of gold which I brought out of Spain... That ornaments be made of my gowns for the convent where I shall be [buried] 'and the furs of the same I give to my daughter.'"⁴⁸ Catherine used spending on her daughter and the knowledge that Henry still remotely cared for their issue and wished for her to make a prosperous marriage to set Mary up to be a future queen by passing down material items and connections.

In some ways Catherine encouraged Mary's rematerialization, as the next pious and good queen of England. Even Henry materialized his daughter comparing her to his most precious jewels his pearl of the world. Without material wealth and ties to Spain and England—so like her mother—Mary was of little use to Henry, a fact Anne Boleyn was well aware of. Through her

⁴⁶ Has no money. Kymboltun, about 3 p.m. *Signed*.
P. 1. *Add.*: Master Secretary. *Endd.* 1536, January. State Papers

⁴⁷ Volume 10, Letters and State Papers

⁴⁸ Katherine of Aragon's Will letters and state papers Vol. 10, 1536 January

abusive treatment and removal of material goods from Henry's daughter Mary, Anne attempted to create a new princess in her daughter Elizabeth. If what was important to 16th century people were clothing and goods, then Anne could legitimize Elizabeth through material items. Her tactics failed due to Catherine's remade popular image. In a Preface to the State papers of England, James Gairdner notes that "The duke of Norfolk might take away Mary's jewels; (fn. 93) Fitzwilliam might go down and search her coffers; (fn. 94) they might force her into a litter and make her travel in her infant sister's retinue; (fn. 95) they might do all they possibly could to degrade her, and even make the people swear not to call her princess; but the fact that she was a princess by birth and by right appeared all the more strongly from these efforts to suppress it"⁴⁹

Conclusion

It was Henry's job to clothe his queen and children, which he did well for Catherine early on and for future wives, so that they could appear powerful at his side. Henry's control over Catherine's material resources, however, meant as soon as a queen was out of favor she was incredibly visible. Court progresses acted as a way of showing the people their rulers, so if Catherine failed to appear at Henry's side, or appeared in out-of-style clothing, a clear message was sent.

Catherine managed to a greater or lesser extent to escape the extreme degradation of not having suitably royal clothes to wear through her status as *femme sole*, retention of material goods, and the creation of a new image for a queen one not tied to goods, but to humility and strength against adversity. After Arthur's death Catherine was incredibly visible as an impoverished Spanish princess and the same was true of her after Henry's divorce. However, using her established ties to the English nobility, Spanish connections, and material wealth, in later life Catherine was able to avoid the extreme poverty she experienced the first time she was princess

⁴⁹ Preface', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 7, 1534*, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1883), pp. i-l. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol7/i-l> [accessed 2 August 2019].

dowager. Part of the reason Henry's move to devalue her through dress failed was because Catherine focused on the value of ornaments versus their performative qualities. Her fight gave her daughter a head start to the crown that was her birthright. Catherine utilized her intelligence to fight Henry up until the end, and her powerful public image ensured that English women would remember her reign for years to come. Her fight was a success in itself for women because it showed that women could utilize the small powers they had even to the detriment of men.

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