

# Tudor queenship: rethinking how power affect Catherine of Aragon and Elizabeth I with foucauldian theories from a feminist perspective

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**Abstract.** In the annals of English history, the Tudor Dynasty is one of the most captivating eras. Within this dynastic tapestry, few women figures have left as indelible mark as Catherine of Aragon, the first wife of King Henry VIII, and the Virgin Queen Elizabeth I. One that steps into the sphere of marriage and reproduction, facing the conflict of showing political talent and being the beloved wife of King Henry VIII. The other, a consistent formal dominant of England, remained a virgin throughout her life. Although they had slightly different monarchical roles, they faced similar challenges to the power structure in medieval Tudor. Thus, it is valuable to examine their roles by reconsidering the relations between gender, power, and monarchy. Also, examining how they survive and resist while maximizing their autonomy of power could provide a novel insight into the collaboration of the study of gender history and sociology. This essay attempts historical sociology to scrutinize the role of their queenship in the centre of the patriarchal and PRQDUFKLFDO GRPDLQ RI WKH +RXVH RI 7XGRUV 7KHUH LV D QRWD approach to theories of power in gender study by feminists. One of the aims of this research is to fill the YDFDQF\ RI DSSOLFDWLRQ RI )RXFDXOW¶V WKHRULHV LQWR PHGLHYD category of gender and its symbolism concerning queenship in the historical period. Most importantly, to redefine, reclaim, and reevaluate the meanings and values of women figures throughout the traditional historiographical pattern of queenship, which the male chronological historians have largely created at the time. It is found that the two queenships sprout comprehensive sociological meanings of a parallel consideration of gender, power and body in such particular political spectrum of monarchical field.

## 1 Introduction

There is a positive turning point of focusing on Catherine of Aragon from other famous Tudor figures like Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn parallelly. However, as Theresa Earenfight highlights, scholars oversee her pivotal contribution in shaping future sovereignty models for Mary Tudor and Elizabeth I. Meanwhile, the exploration of queenship has been lacking, as evidenced of feminist scholarship.

patriarchal disciplinary power operates. This perspective aligns with Foucauldian theories, emphasizing the relevance of discursive practices.

In queenship studies, Anna Riehl Bertolet covers a wide spectrum of early modern queenship, while Theresa Earenfight employs Foucauldian theories to interweave power and gender within the context of Tudor over her virginity has constrained her gender portrayal Queenship. Retha Warnicke delves into the role of noblewomen and gender politics, underscoring the impact of motherhood on Tudor Queenship.

Examining two prominent female figures, Catherine of Aragon and Elizabeth I, separate studies have emerged. Theresa Earenfight advances Catherine of Aragon as a multifaceted queen. However, neglecting her broader queenship role. The conventional

of femininity highlights how an idealized image of motherhood has upheld patriarchal gender distinctions. The body emerges as a pivotal focal point for gender, power dynamics, and queenship, acting as a site where

the overarching gender paradigm. This is evident when contrasting the late 15th-century Boleyn and Catherine Howard, revealing the misogynistic discourse of femininity. Retha Warnicke's study on Elizabeth I's queenship sheds light on the intricacies of queenship, while Foucauldian theories enrich the exploration of

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power dynamics. Unravelling the constraints of traditional gender roles provides a more comprehensive understanding of these iconic women and their impact on history.

## 2 Explaining power and gender theories of Michel Foucault

### 2.1. Definitions and categories of power by Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault disentangles the characteristics of power. The dynamics of power are deeply rooted in Western history by its discursive nature. In this way, his elucidation of power suggests relevant and fresh angles to examine the gender and power of the Tudor case. The queens have both tried to maximize their autonomy while being stimulated by patriarchal discipline both socially and biologically. They both face the controversial reflexivity identity in the House of Tudor domain. In this case, the duty of motherhood becomes a crucial historical reason. Monarchy itself is a language of power and manipulates power as well. He notices that it is a typical institution of power that developed in the House of Tudors. It interplays womanhood and femininity. In the chapter on Power, Body, and Experience, the biological sex of females inevitably interprets presumptions about femininity as symbolic expression and performance, for example, being a faithful subordinate and pious wife of the king. These gendered significations are rooted in social practices. Warnicke elevates the prime duty of noblewomen to future succession. To date, the understanding of gender expands to the apparatus of production upon the biological sexes. Such a scheme of fertility reveals communication with the social body, the family space and the independent agency, but in contact with power. The rule for reproduction runs identically in monarchical families, especially for queens, consort, and regnant. Catherine of Aragon in Tudor Dynasty

### 2.2 Foucault's opinions on theories of the relationship of gender and power

This study primarily attempts to combine Foucauldian and feminist sociological theories on explaining Tudor Queenship. One deterministic link between Tudor queenship and Foucauldian power WKHRULHV LV ZRPHQ V ERGLHV P RW First, his theory of body has guided feminist scholars to rethink an approach of conceiving the body as a pattern without eliding its materiality with a presumption of biological gender essentialism. Second, it suggests a FRQIOLFW ZLWKLQ ZRPHQ V ERG RI C The body is more than a medium and centre of the study of women and power but provides a tridimensional space for applying sociology to queenship research. The aforementioned dual discussion over body and power has revealed the trend that the body here could bring P RUH SRV WLE OLVLV DQG FKR FHV case. The queens have both tried to maximize their autonomy while being stimulated by patriarchal discipline both socially and biologically. They both face the controversial reflexivity identity in the House of Tudor domain. In this case, the duty of motherhood becomes a crucial historical reason. Monarchy itself is a language of power and manipulates power as well. He notices that it is a typical institution of power that developed in the House of Tudors. It interplays womanhood and femininity. In the chapter on Power, Body, and Experience, the biological sex of females inevitably interprets presumptions about femininity as symbolic expression and performance, for example, being a faithful subordinate and pious wife of the king. These gendered significations are rooted in social practices. Warnicke elevates the prime duty of noblewomen to future succession. To date, the understanding of gender expands to the apparatus of production upon the biological sexes. Such a scheme of fertility reveals communication with the social body, the family space and the independent agency, but in contact with power. The rule for reproduction runs identically in monarchical families, especially for queens, consort, and regnant. Catherine of Aragon in Tudor Dynasty

arithmetic, canon and civil law, literature, history, and of patriarchal reproductive discipline and the derived philosophy. Catherine was also religiously pious in the Roman Catholic faith. Although the early stage of her marriage was peaceful, she was troubled by a series of failures of reproduction and only had one surviving child, Mary Tudor. Her life turns challenging after Henry became enamoured of Anne Boleyn in 1525, pushing her to the edge of divorce. Her story does not end immediately at the moment when her marriage is abandoned, and it goes on until her death on 7 January 1536.

### 3.2. Catherine's political position in Tudor Dynasty

Catherine of Aragon is related to his diplomatic intention. For the queen Catherine deploys multiplex political and diplomatic figure. Earenfight noticed that in the early stage of her marriage with Henry, she showed strong influence as an advisor to Henry in a series of her contributions. She is credited for her age experience and the social position of the network of her family and allies. The successful work of Anglerian diplomacy is highly valued by Henry. Besides, her remarkable role as regent at the Battle of Flodden in 1513 brought to govern England, Wales, and Ireland on 11 June 1513 and kept as a key negotiator in the running of the government. In this way, Catherine has gone beyond the boundary of motherhood and entered the sphere that male figures have traditionally dominated.

### 3.3. The role of gender of Catherine in power structure

Her portrait was vivid and multiple, just like how Earenfight described her. However, throughout the narrativity of the Tudor Dynasty, Catherine was often role is permanently attached to a male figure in history. In addition, there is an evident conflict between her motherhood and her political persona. During the Tudor whilst the birth of a male heir was crucial to solidifying their position and perpetuating the patriarchal line. Essentially, no matter how successful and helpful Catherine is in assisting Henry in the political and public sphere, all her creditability would be quickly challenged paper suggests that it is no longer an exaggeration to assert that the expectations of aristocratic women on the appropriate decorum of women in a patriarchal society have already gone beyond womanhood and femininity according to the English at that time. This sets a typical dilemma of women being disciplined at the centre of the monarchical and patriarchal domain, even as an aristocracy. Catherine displays multiple strategies, combining her sovereignty to fight against the pressure

## 4 Elizabeth I of Tudor Dynasty

### 4.1. The life and historical background of Elizabeth I

Born as the child of Anne Boylen, who was beheaded, Elizabeth went through a very different journey from her mother. She became the formal and the last ruler of England and Ireland as a queen regnant. Due to Henry VIII annulling his marriage with Anne Boylen, the restoration of the line of succession for the Tudor Dynasty was not realized until the Third Succession Act in 1543 when Elizabeth was ten. She succeeded to the throne after Edward VI and her half sister Mary in November 1558. Elizabeth I is credited in both political and religious fields. During the early stage of her reign, Elizabeth refused to yield the virtues of women with modesty, obedience, and simplicity manifested in the Second Book of the Homilies by her bishop.

### 4.2. The political and religious position of Elizabeth I

Elizabeth I contributes to the ruling legitimacy. This enlightens how it replenishes her self-conception. It is worth noting that Elizabeth I is credited in both political and religious fields. During the early stage of her reign, Elizabeth refused to yield the virtues of women with modesty, obedience, and simplicity manifested in the Second Book of the Homilies by her bishop. The court pressured Elizabeth, forcing her to accept such a secondary title. This reflects the intellectual norms of the monarch as the head does not include the perception of blasphemy that a woman fits this role in the sixteenth century. Norman Jones suggests it stimulates Elizabeth to seek the title of Governor instead of negotiating the social acceptance of a female head of the church. However, historical evidence also explains that Elizabeth insisted on playing an active and severe role in rejecting relinquishing the power over the church that she admits belongs to her by right. The religious functions as a sacred monarch, beyond the Supreme Governor. Furthermore, the strategy of Elizabeth reveals an interpretation of the relation of the monarchy and its derived symbolic value. The monarchical depiction reflects divine representation on primarily demonstrated in her coronation. She possesses strength in prestige in her coronation in London. She has flexibly continued kingly practices and women and royal touch. Royal touch is a representative example, as it traditionally belongs to the power of kings. The power to cleanse and cure people from diseases could gain much discourse on her self-representation as the Virgin Queen. Thus, she overlaps her role with the

Virgin Mary to fill the vacancy of the public imagination of such a divine figure.

#### 4.3. The role of gender of Elizabeth I in power structure

(OL]DEHWK ,¶V ERG\ LV XQGHUV project, which requires long-term shaping. She invokes a fluidity of gender performance to satisfy her different SROLWLFDO QHHGV /HYLQ¶V Z H[DP LQDWLRQ RI KHU µKHDUW D flexible display of combining masculinity, femininity and virginity helps her to rule and consolidate governance ruling. This fits well into the medieval political, theological concept of the two bodies. It is thus LQWULJXLQJ WR GLVFRYHU +HDW gendered identities, both with sovereignty and power at the same time. The strategy also benefits her to expand her right to natural rule. In a modern way, Elizabeth is probably in the category of an androgynous or a gender fluid, but she has already managed to reconstruct the gendered form in the sixteenth century.

Unmarried status helps to expand the gendered definition as well, but also troublesome to Elizabeth socially and from the discipline of her councillors. Levin points out that the cross-dressing phenomenon shows sexual freedom instead in the medieval drama of the Elizabethan era. It fueled the charge on women who ZRUH PHQ¶V FORWKHV DV PRG discovered by R. Mark Benbow5] However, the metaphor of Queen Elizabeth in drama under 6KDNHVSHDUH¶V GHVFULSWLRQ J of gender in Renaissance culture vividly displayed in the bodies of heroines in courts, and this is also laid the IRXQGDWLRQ IRU (OL]DEH¶V consolidated her shape perception by the power of language in drama, melding and crediting her femininity that has been traditionally challenged by societal norms.

### 5 Comparing Catherine and Elizabeth's sovereignty

First, to scrutinize the queenship of Catherine of Aragon and Elizabeth I, it is crucial to clarify that Catherine lays fundamentally as the queen of Henry VIII whilst Elizabeth I is the queen and the formal ruler of England. +LVWRULFDOO\ LW PHDQV WKD FRQVRUW ZKLOVW (OL]DEH¶V , Catherine got married to Henry VIII as the widow of his brother and as the first wife, while Elizabeth is the daughter of Anne Boylen, the second wife of Henry.

In A Lifetime of Power, Theresa Earenfight JHQHUDOL]HV-reign and generates public and political masculine forms of power, while queens consort exercises private and familial feminine forms of SRZHU¶ 7KLV XQGHUVWDQGLQJ LV,ORW HYHQ DVVHUWLYH HQRXJK as power does not seemingly hold in their hands permanently. Power does not even belong to a queen regnant, as she is still expected to give up governance and return to motherhood. Essentially, the disciplinary power of patriarchy and the monarchical paradigm locks

women and restricts their bodies in the sphere of reproduction.

An indisputable distinguishment between them is marriage and reproduction issues under patriarchy. Catherine encountered six pregnancies, and the only surviving child was Mary Tudor. ,Q (OL]DEHWK¶ circumstances, Levin argues the queenship is controversial when involving the legitimacy of female rule during the age of religious instability, especially during the age of her succession. The misogynistic Scottish reformer John Knox reflects the social atmosphere of the time5]. Religiously speaking, it did QRW PHHW \*RG¶V ZHOO¶V HLW WKDW SRZHU VWLOO µUHWDLQV PXF masculinity in front of subjective monarchical political power. At least in the premodern era, such power was set in kingship rather than queenship. Catherine and Elizabeth both tried to challenge such gender essentialism. Catherine was required to bring a male heir to continue the line of Henry VIII, while Elizabeth was expected to get married immediately and transfer the power to governance to her future husband. According to the earlier surge of feminist thoughts on understanding motherhood, it is usually explained as the consequence of the compulsory heterosexuality under patriarchal domination and reinforcing strongholds of feminine LGHQWLW\ WKDW GHWH¶ Elizabeth ZRPHQ apparently holds more autonomy outside the marriage system, while Catherine gets married very early as the Spanish princess in diplomatic strategy. From the very beginning, they have experienced different destinies. However, it does not mean that Catherine is powerless, as she has been contesting actively and trying her best in her manipulation of power in detail above.

### 6 Explaining the effects of the power of Tudor Queenships by Foucauldian theories

#### 6.1. Explaining Catherine's queenship by Foucauldian theories

Theresa Earenfight presents a sequence of stages of her queenship throughout her life. With respect to power, it is found that power is generated in various forms and in different ways, in the case of Catherine after the death of Arthur Tudor, Catherine positively held the potential power of her identity before her marriage to Henry VIII. This is primarily contributed by her portrait of youth and beauty, the responsibility of her divine queenship, and her fruitful education foundation4]. In this way, her physical characteristics appear to be a prized quality and capital in such a political marriage. Besides, her privilege is rooted in the background of her natal family. Thus, Catherine, at this moment, does not need to use power intentionally built is more considered that her demonstration of power has already been automatically

working behind. In other words, the symbolic power of Catherine is rather successful at this stage.

Her power encounters a relatively transformation during the second stage of her life, after her marriage to Henry VIII. First, she possesses sufficient intellectual and social background from her education and family demonstration of gender performance, such a-post tree and stands well in politics. This not only shows how important her background socially supports her authority in the political domain, but also it reflects a great transformation of Catherine entering a public sphere that is traditionally male-dominated. Her brilliant diplomatic power is also credited to her contribution to the Anglo-Iberian relationship.

Nevertheless, despite the significance of the Battle of Flodden in 1513, her powerful portrait appears to be easily challenged by her failure to produce a male heir in the monarchical domain under the patriarchal paradigm. This also reveals how severe the reproductive role of motherhood affects and gradually threatens her queenship after six pregnancies.

The later stage creates more obstacles for Catherine as her main power changes from political to maternal. Her denial of his marriage to Catherine and marrying Anne Boleyn. Although she lost most of her power, she still showed a certain degree of resistance, and she was not powerless. Examining from a micro-perspective of the time of 1520-1532, Catherine flexibly manipulated her left queenship to survive and try to protect her marriage.

Her message that the Queen and the King share the same power as a king. People do not acknowledge examination of power in terms of its nature, scale, and sufficient experiences and understanding of the queen reveals the existence of power opposite that is pressured by Henry VIII and the competitive social intervention of Anne Boylen, the lady-in-waiting of Catherine, but as the next potential queen to take her place. In addition, she also makes use of her tragic portrait of a faithful wife at her legal trial on 21 June 1527. Such a display puts her on the same level of the severity of moral confrontation with Henry VIII as she gained more public support. She left the court despite a formal summon, also putting Henry under great pressure. Furthermore, she enhanced her determination by refusing to accept the cursory image of the queen. Although there have been many

The existence of power in the eventual period of her from her daughter, Mary. In such circumstances, though Catherine is seemingly imprisoned, it could also symbolically reflect that the potential power of Catherine still exists. The fact that Catherine is strategically placed as a hostage instead further signifies that her capital is real, and it would hardly vanish until her death.

## 6.2. Explaining Elizabeth's queenship by Foucauldian theories

For Elizabeth, it is crucial to rethink her unique gender portrait. The dual conflict of biological and social gender still remains debatable, especially in such a late medieval

context. According to Foucault, he tends to avoid simply defining autonomy with essentialism that is decided by discourse potential; rather, he believed that social construction is more convincing.

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The appeal above of Foucauldian analysis emphasizes the nexus of power and discourse. What is crucial about his theories is that they tie the -self possessed individual and the entire system of power

Examining the history of the body, it is found that the transformation of discourse reveals the changes in its target, objects, and range. He asserts that no power relation comes before the constitution of the domain of knowledge [2]. It is a complementary and non-contingent relationship. He categorizes power and knowledge into material and non-material fields [2]. It is believable that Foucault tries to explain that the body is not only received meanings from discourse but is also completely constructed by discourse.

She treated the royal touch process seriously and overcame the restriction that only kings could produce such power to cure people. Elizabeth adjusted the rule of royal touch independently, and in other words, she sent the message that the Queen and the King share the same power as a king. People do not acknowledge examination of power in terms of its nature, scale, and sufficient experiences and understanding of the queen

Elizabeth I. This novel knowledge stabilized the intellectual atmosphere for the Elizabethan subjects, bringing the science of truth with its produced discourses. These all spread her discursive power in terms of religious operation, as she has gone through the terms of being questioned as an exception and, eventually, her efforts being normalized as a queen. What is more, another significant establishment of produced by cultural narrativity. This also involves how the discourse of drama language and visual production, Shakespeare's descriptions and metaphors the image of the queen. Although there have been many

These concepts contribute to the element of the body in feminist studies, and Foucault admits such difficulties of abandoning gender essentialism in the History of Sexuality [2]. This still guides the way for the important branch of gender politics of queenship from both micro-social and micro-physics of power lying inside body politics. Power is

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## 6.3. Explaining Elizabeth's queenship by Foucauldian theories

Guided by Theresa Earenfight, scholars manage to distinguish different forms of power. The binary relation of kingship and queenship is found by Dynasty, the real social condition of English women was scrutinising the gendered construction of monarchy not improved practically. In some way, the queens did power. King represents a formal, normative, and the show an alternative of strength as a gifted and ideal strongest power in the monarchical system, whilst exceptional, but they are only representative in queenship represents a second power. This is also monarchical discourse. Essentially, it is not even highly related to the conventional bonding of exaggerated to say the monarchical system is further masculinity on kingship and femininity on queenship. consolidated and ties with patriarchal practices. For The king would not need to play the role of a father, but feminist scholars, it is thus important to first admit the queens are crucially glued by motherhood and, more privileges of noblewomen and deconstruct the precisely, the biopower of the reproduction mechanism monarchical paradigm. By comprehending and of patriarchy. Earenfight claims that power exercises deconstruct the facets of the Tudor queens, scholars will more than simply repressive; it is an inherently latent be expected to foster the strength of intersectionality of and potential force from a micro perspective. gender politics in queenship study which diminish the Monarchical power is displayed in diverse means. From stereotypical legacy of queens in gender history.

the example of Catherine of Aragon, it is found that power can be expressed as dynastic in familial means, as latent when involving an heir; it could be governmental and political as a regent, and it also produces special meanings for a hostage [4]. Earenfight defines her power as agency power, which means to play full use and capacity to affect her destiny. As demonstrated above, Catherine did not have the right to choose her husband, and was tied to marriage as a queen consort. Compared to Elizabeth, who intentionally kept single and a virgin, which means that Catherine has less freedom in the marriage system. Another noticeable question is the discourse of the description of the women rulers. For example, agency is often associated with a soft form of personal power akin to autonomy [4]. It is a second tier of power that traditionally lies in the sphere of femininity [4]. When examining the situation of noblewomen in the regime of patriarchy, scholars tend to use the discourse of influence, agency, and autonomy to reflect gendered gradations of power. Women rulers are stuck to such symbolic narrativity.

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### 7 Conclusion

To conclude, applying the concept of power to the cases of Catherine of Aragon and Elizabeth I in the Tudor dynasty offers illuminating perspectives to reconstruct the strength of queens in the systematic domain of patriarchy and monarchy in historical narratives. Michel Foucault has provided scholars with a novel way to dismantle gender norms.

It will be a weakness if scholars continue restricting dowager in the subordinated sphere. Rethinking herself with the support of Foucauldian sociology drags her out of misogyny and her so-called miserable fate. Besides, Elizabeth presents a powerful Queen regnant of the Tudor Dynasty, paving the way for the diversity of queenship ruling. Her gender fluidity has shown that she has already lived a postmodernist way of life. The body is not the prison of power. Those two brilliant women figures have challenged the patriarchal system in their own way.