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“God and Posterity Will Show Me Favor”: A Search
for the Historical Lady Jane Dudley in Light of Her
Later Portrayals

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A Note on the Names

Several of the historical figures discussed had names that vary in spelling between texts. For consistency, I have chosen to always spell their names one way, even within quotations from sources that use the alternate spelling. These include Catherine Parr, Catherine of Suffolk, Catherine Grey, Anne Askewe, and Guildford Dudley.

It was and is common to refer to members of the nobility by their title rather than their last name, i.e. Henry Grey, Marquess of Dorset, is sometimes referred to as “Dorset” rather than “Grey.” Because titles often changed several times during a lifetime, I refer to noblemen by their last name rather than by title for consistency’s sake. The only exception I make is John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, whom I call Northumberland because the literature refers to him that way vastly more often.

With the exception of Kings, I generally refer to men by their last name. Women I generally refer to by their first name, as last names changed with each subsequent marriage. When using their full name, I choose the last name current to the events discussed. The exception is Henry VIII’s sixth wife, whom I call Catherine Parr, using her maiden name throughout. She is most commonly known as Catherine Parr, and Queen Catherine could be taken to mean several different women.

I most often refer to the young woman who reigned for nine days in the summer of 1553 as Jane Dudley, as this was her name when she came to the throne as well as the name she died under. I call her Jane Grey only when I am speaking specifically of her time before her marriage.

Introduction

Born Lady Jane Grey in either 1536 or 1537, the girl who would have the shortest reign in English history was not meant to rule. She was the first daughter of Henry and Frances Grey. Henry was then the Marquis of Dorset; he would later be Duke of Suffolk, and Frances's parents were Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and Mary Tudor, younger sister of King Henry VIII and once Queen of France. This did place Jane in line to the throne, but, given that the King had a healthy young male heir and might have more, it seemed quite unlikely that a more distant female relative would ever reign. However, there were at one point thoughts that Jane might marry the next King Edward VI, and the Greys turned their daughter's wardship over to Thomas Seymour, placing her in his and Catherine Parr's household in hopes he could make it happen. He couldn't, and the most notable things about the first sixteen or so years of Jane's life were her education, her correspondence with various reformers, and her staunch Protestant beliefs. She eventually married Guildford Dudley, son of the Duke of Northumberland, but it was, due to her succession and its consequences, a very brief marriage. Shortly afterwards, she found herself on the English throne for nine days, was imprisoned for the next few months, and was executed on Tower Green.

The basic facts of Lady Jane Dudley's upbringing, adolescence, and marriage are relatively clear, as are the steps that placed her on the throne, debates about the motivations of other parties notwithstanding. It is the meaning of her life that is interesting, combined with the desire of hundreds of historians, religious writers, propagandists of various persuasions, and Jane herself to shape her into a package that may be quite different from the reality. From the final months of her life into the next several centuries, the question of who Jane Dudley is/was becomes far more open-ended. Later chapters will examine this, but it is first necessary to lay

out the basic facts of how the young noblewoman found herself being proclaimed Queen in July 1553.

Under King Henry VIII and by an act of Parliament, the succession had been set to pass first to Edward then, supposing he had no heirs, to Mary and after her to Elizabeth, in spite of the proclaimed illegitimacy of both daughters. During his own reign, Edward VI began to have thoughts of his own about the succession, most likely before he fell terminally ill—indeed, his early plans seem to make the most sense only if he planned to live at least a few more years.¹ While the date of the first version of the new succession, and the motives behind it, are debatable, Eric Ives suggests that it was likely drafted sometime in April or May 1553.² This first version, written in Edward's own hand, originally willed the crown, "for lack of issue of my body," to any future sons of Lady Frances Grey, Jane's mother.³ If, at the time of Edward's death, Frances still had no sons, then the throne was to pass to (future) sons of Jane, then to (future) sons of her younger sister Catherine, then to (future) sons of the youngest daughter Mary, then to (future) sons of any further daughters born to Frances, then to the (future) sons of Lady Margaret Clifford, then to male children born to Jane's (future) daughters.⁴ This was Edward's original "deuise for the succession," and it bordered on ridiculous. There were no actual heirs mentioned—the crown was left to a male child not yet conceived. Yet there would soon be a second version, likely dating to June 1553,⁵ which consisted of a slight edit to the original. It had previously read, "to the Lady Frances's heirs male...to the Lady Jane's heirs male..." but was now altered to read, "to the Lady Frances's heirs male...to the Lady Jane and

¹ Ives, Eric, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 139-140.

² *Ibid.*, 138-139.

³ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 141.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 145.

her heirs male...”⁶ This created an actual, living heir: Jane Grey. This was soon copied out into a third document, signed by a now-dying Edward.

It is debatable whose idea all this was—Ives gives most of the credit/blame to Edward himself, who he claims set the whole process into motion, watched over it, and was not greatly manipulated or pushed.⁷ Jennifer Loach tentatively agrees, stating that the King was most certainly not “an unwilling participant” and citing Thomas Cranmer’s later claim that it was Edward who had attempted to persuade him of the new succession.⁸ Others have taken the more traditional view that John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland and soon-to-be father-in-law of Jane, was behind the change in the succession. They cite as his motive everything from raw ambition to his own religious beliefs to fear of what would happen to him under Mary’s reign.⁹

Regardless of who was responsible and why, the obvious effect was that Jane Dudley succeeded to the English throne at Edward’s death on July 6, 1553. Three days later, Mary Dudley, Jane’s sister-in-law and the wife of one of Edward’s close friends, arrived at Chelsea Palace, where Jane was currently staying, to deliver a summons to London. Mary had been ordered not to tell Jane she was Queen or even that Edward was dead and simply accompanied her up the Thames. Jane later claimed that she had no idea what was happening and was confused when, upon her arrival, some of the waiting noblemen knelt before her.¹⁰

Northumberland at last announced that Edward had died and had named Jane as his successor,

⁶ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 145.

⁷ See Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 147-149.

⁸ Loach, Jennifer, *Edward VI*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 164.

⁹ See Beer, Barrett L., *Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland*, (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 1973), 147-149; Cook, Faith, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2004), 114-116; and Luke, Mary, *The Nine Days Queen: A Portrait of Lady Jane Grey*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986), 219-255.

¹⁰ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 187.

and the privy councillors present all knelt. She fainted and wept, eventually saying, “The crown is not my right and pleases me not. The Lady Mary is the rightful heir.”¹¹ Northumberland insisted that she was wronging both herself and her house, her parents reminded her of her duty of obedience to them, and her husband attempted to convince her with “prayers and caresses.”¹² Jane told Queen Mary that she eventually began to pray, asking God “that if what was given to me was rightly and lawfully mine, his divine Majesty would grant me such grace and spirit that I might govern it to his glory and service and to the advantage of this realm.”¹³ She then agreed to take the throne.

After her uneasy acceptance, Jane and her party were brought further up the river to the Tower of London where she was received as a Queen and brought into the royal lodgings. Here, the lord high treasurer brought her the royal crown, telling her “to put it on my head to try whether it really became me or no.”¹⁴ She said no, later stating that “it had never been demanded by me.”¹⁵ She was then told that she “could take it without fear and that another should be made, to crown my husband.”¹⁶ Jane was not at all pleased by this suggestion, telling Guildford immediately, “I will not have you crowned King.”¹⁷ Thus ensued a lengthy argument with an angry, petulant Guildford and his mother, which ended with Jane agreeing to make him no more than a Duke, his mother telling him to leave for home, and Jane barring his exit from the Tower to avoid being publicly humiliated.

¹¹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 187.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁵ Quoted in Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 133.

¹⁶ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 189.

¹⁷ Quoted in Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 134.

Jane was now firmly established as Queen, despite her own initial doubts about the situation. But what of the people's reaction? The Genoese merchant Baptista Spinola, who witnessed Jane's arrival at the Tower, reported, "She is now called Queen, but is not popular, for the hearts of the people are with Mary, the Spanish Queen's daughter."¹⁸ He cited religion as the reason for their displeasure: "[Jane] is very heretical and has never heard Mass, and some great people did not come into the procession for that reason."¹⁹ A week later, the Bishop of London, Nicholas Ridley, preached a sermon in loyalty to the new Queen Jane, declaring that neither Mary nor Elizabeth had any rights and that, if Mary became Queen, she would disastrously force England to return to the Catholic Church. He was booed so loudly he could barely be heard.²⁰ Most ominously, Northumberland had observed a few days earlier as he marched out of the city to meet Mary, "The people prece [press] to se us, but not one sayeth 'God spede us.'"²¹

Yet far more significant than the lukewarm response of the public was Princess Mary's reaction. She proclaimed herself Queen, and Northumberland led a force out of London to bring her in.²² This had originally not looked like a difficult task, but in the course of a few days there were uprisings in Mary's name in multiple counties, Mary had raised her own forces and found support among much of the nobility, and the English artillery fleet sent to prevent the Habsburg Emperor's forces from coming to her aid changed sides to defend her. Realizing he had no chance of victory, Northumberland headed back to London where everything had already begun to fall apart. By July 19, the majority of the Privy Council had declared for Queen Mary. The

¹⁸ Ibid., 131.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 138.

²¹ *The chronicle of Queen Jane and of two years of Queen Mary, and especially of the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt*, by a Resident in the Tower, (London: AMS Press, 1850), 8.

²² The force was supposed to have been led by Henry Grey, Duke of Suffolk, but Jane "with weeping teares made request to the whole councell that her father might tarry at home in her company," and Northumberland was sent out instead. *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 5.

city of London was overflowing with joy: *The chronicle of Queen Jane and of two years of Queen Mary, and especially of the rebellion of Sir Thomas Wyatt* speaks of people throwing caps in the air and money out their windows, countless bonfires, churchbells ringing, and much “banketyngs and synging in the streete for joye.”²³

Scholars debate why Mary received the dramatic support that she did. Some writers, often those who wish to make Northumberland the clear villain of the story, argue that the people hated him and detested his government and therefore rejected the claimant he backed.²⁴ Others cite religious beliefs—Loach, for example, states that nearly all the nobles and gentry who supported Mary were Catholic, and contemporaries saw the struggle primarily in religious terms.²⁵ Ives lands somewhere in the middle, arguing that there was a mainly Catholic core supported by “Protestants and neutrals for a wide variety of reasons.”²⁶

In any event, Lady Jane Dudley had lost the throne. Henry Grey went to his daughter’s chambers and tore down the royal canopy, informing her, “You are no longer Queen.” She replied that she more willingly took her royal robes off than she put them on and said, “I willingly relinquish the crown.” She later told her attendants, “I am glad I am no longer Queen.”²⁷ Both of Jane’s parents were allowed to leave the Tower and quickly abandoned her. Guildford and his mother²⁸ were held and imprisoned, and his father the Duke of Northumberland was soon brought in and executed, converting to Catholicism just before his death.

²³ *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 11-12.

²⁴ For example, see Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 141-142.

²⁵ See Loach, *Edward VI*, 172-179.

²⁶ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 237.

²⁷ Quoted in Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 141-142.

²⁸ The Duchess of Northumberland was released by the end of the summer.

Jane and Guildford were both tried in November and found guilty of treason, a crime which carried a death sentence. Yet few truly expected them to die—this was likely a mere formality; Queen Mary was inclined toward mercy, and imprisonment was generally expected to be their worst fate. It was not a particularly rough fate. Jane lived in the home of the gentleman jailer, Nathaniel Partridge, and was allowed to have attendants with her. Although she was not permitted any exercise or outdoor air until mid-December, she was not kept in anything near a prison cell, and she eventually received the privilege of walking in the garden. There is a story that she was able to speak with Guildford during these walks; it is possible, and if they did not speak she was certainly able to see him from a distance at times.

Given Mary's reluctance to execute her younger cousin, Jane's imprisonment might have continued indefinitely, had it not been for an event in January 1554 that had little to do with Jane. As a result of the Queen's unpopular proposed marriage to Philip of Spain, there was an unsuccessful uprising of nobility known as Wyatt's Rebellion. Henry Grey was involved, and, although the name Jane Dudley had never been mentioned by any of the conspirators, there was a natural suspicion that he had joined up—or been talked into joining up—in hopes of restoring his daughter to the throne. Suddenly, it was clear to Mary what a danger Jane's continued existence might be.

Mary Luke cites the council of the Spanish ambassador Simon Renard here, suggesting that Mary herself was still unwilling to execute: "Flushed with the victory she'd never doubted God had given her, she was also mindful that His mercy might be extended to several of the prisoners who'd been led by false beliefs and false promises."²⁹ Renard was "appalled" when she pardoned four hundred prisoners from the rebellion, and responded to her mentions of mercy

²⁹ Luke, *The Nine Days Queen*, 385.

by lecturing her that she had been too lenient with the main players last July.³⁰ He then pressed some of her councillors, the Earls of Arundel, Winchester, and Pembroke, to speak to her—as three of the men who had originally proclaimed Jane, they were eager to get rid of her, and they advised Mary that not executing would be a sign of weakness.³¹ Faith Cook states that the Emperor Charles V, at Renard’s prompting, wrote to Mary that his son Philip could not marry her until Jane was dead, which “weigh[ed] heavily with Mary.” She already understood anyway that “it was no longer safe” to keep Jane alive.³² Ives also acknowledges the influence of Renard, “‘papist’ warnings about security,” and the Council, stating, “Mary was ultimately responsible for what was both a crime and a folly, but the guilt may lie elsewhere as well.”³³

In spite of her earlier (and possibly still lingering) hesitations, Mary decided to execute Jane and Guildford at the beginning of February 1554, setting the date for the ninth. She sent a priest, John Feckenham, to see Jane with the intent of converting her. What such a conversion would have done for Jane is unclear—she would not have been quite as much of a danger as a Catholic heir rather than a Protestant one, and it has been suggested that Mary implied, or Jane believed, that conversion might save her life. On the other hand others had converted on the eve of execution, including the Duke of Northumberland, and still lost their heads—Mary’s sending Feckenham might only have been in the hope that Jane’s soul might be saved before death. Regardless, Jane’s response to the priest’s sympathetic greeting did not imply she was particularly interested in whether or not she might save her life. “As for my heavy case,” she said, “I thank God, I do so little lament it, that rather I account the same for a more manifest declaration of God’s favour toward me, than ever he showed me at any time before. And

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 385-386.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 178.

³³ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 268.

therefore there is no cause why either you or others which bear me good will, should lament or be grieved with this my case, being a thing so profitable for my soul's health."³⁴ Feckenham explained why he had come, and Jane replied that it was too late and there was no time for a change of religion. Taking this to mean that, with a few more days, there was hope that Jane might become a good Catholic, Feckenham requested—and got—a three-day reprieve from Mary. When he returned to Jane with the news, she was not pleased—she had not meant at all that she wished more time to consider conversion, and she had no desire to prolong the agonizing wait for her execution. “She had taken leave of all earthly matters,” she told him, considering only “the eternal light.”³⁵

Feckenham persuaded her into a debate in the Tower Chapel of St. Peter-ad-Vincula, where he would be accompanied by several other priests. She agreed—it was, as Ives writes, “what she was good at.”³⁶ Jane's account reports that they discussed the way of salvation (faith versus works), the sacraments, transubstantiation, and the church's authority. She concluded her summary by writing, “[M]y faith had armed my resolution to withstand any assault that words could then use against me.”³⁷

Jane used the rest of the time before the February 12 execution to prepare herself for death, “pass[ing] much of the time in prayer, meditation, and reading her Bible, with thoughts of her family.”³⁸ There may be other letters which did not survive, but she certainly wrote to her father and her sister Catherine, as well as a brief epitaph for herself: “If Justice is done with my body, my soul will find mercy in God. [Latin] Death will give pain to my body for its sins, but

³⁴ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 268-269.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 269.

³⁶ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 269.

³⁷ Dudley, Lady Jane, “A Conference,” *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, (Ilfracombe, England: Arthur H. Stockwell Limited, 1951), 49-54, 54.

³⁸ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 271.

the soul will be justified before God. [Greek] If my faults deserve punishment, my youth at least, and my imprudence were worthy of excuse; God and posterity will show me favour. [English]”³⁹ Guildford asked to see her (he was to be executed on the same day, just before his wife), but she refused, stating that it would only make them more miserable. “We shall shortly behold one another in a better place,” she said.⁴⁰ Although some have seen this as coldness on Jane’s part or distaste for Guildford, Ives argues that it was more likely that she was struggling “to retain her own focus,” as the poise she displayed must not have come easily.⁴¹ Cook suggests that she feared a breakdown from either of them would give the appearance “that their faith had not sustained them to the last.”⁴²

Guildford was brought to the scaffold first, Jane watching from a window, and those present heard her say his name and the phrase “the bitterness of death.” Then Jane was led outside by the Tower lieutenant, accompanied by two of her ladies and Feckenham, whom she had asked to be with her. Witnesses reported that she was composed and read from her prayer book throughout her whole walk. In her final speech, she declared that her deed was unlawful but she believed herself innocent. She concluded with decidedly Protestant words:

I pray you all, good Christian people, to beare me witness that I dye a true Christian woman, and that I looke to be saved by none other meane, but only by the mercy of God, in the merites of the blood of his only sonne Jesus Christ: and I confesse, when I dyd know the word of God I neglected the same, loved my selfe and the world, and therefore this plague or punyshment is happely and worthely happened unto me for my sins; and

³⁹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 273-274.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 190.

⁴¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 274.

⁴² Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 190.

yet I thank God of his goodnesse that he hath thus geven me a tyme and respet to
repent.⁴³

Jane then asked the assembled to pray for her, but made certain it was not done in the Catholic way of praying for the dead: “Now, good people, while I am alyve, I pray you to assyst me with your prayers.”⁴⁴ Her speech finished, she recited Psalm 51, thanked Feckenham for his kindness, and presented her prayer book to the lieutenant, as she had promised. Then, after a moment’s hesitation, Jane knelt, tied the blindfold around her eyes, and fumbled for the block, eventually having to be guided to it. Stretching her head and neck across it, she said, “Lorde, into thy hands I commende my spirite!”⁴⁵ And it was finished.

Yet somehow, it was not finished. Jane did not and would not matter greatly in English history, but she would be written up, analyzed, revered, and sympathized with in a manner disproportionate to her actual importance. Much would be made of her life and death for hundreds of years, the “real” Lady Jane Dudley often left far behind. The purpose of this thesis will be to look at Jane herself, her life and death, and various portrayals, attempting to bring such later portrayals together with the facts of who she was, how she lived, and how and why she died.

⁴³ *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 57.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 59.

Chapter One

Lady Jane Dudley was manipulated in life and in death, portrayed as both an independent actor and a complete puppet, presented in a black-and-white hagiography of ideal Christian womanhood, and written off as a passive, voiceless mouse. This thesis attempts to reach a better understanding of Jane, examining how she saw and presented herself, how she was later portrayed, and how she might be most accurately seen. It is first necessary to look at her as an individual—not as the nine-day Queen, not as a prisoner in the Tower, not as a possible martyr to the Protestant cause—but merely as an aristocratic young lady. This first chapter will examine Jane the girl, through the prism of what could be expected for any young lady.

The first experience in every noble young woman's life was, of course, that of her natal home and the sort of parenting she received. The average Tudor-era parents were much more distant from their children than would be common or acceptable today, yet such distance was not seen as problematic. In her study of English aristocratic women of the period, Barbara Harris states that good mothering was considered important and “natural,” a part of God's will.⁴⁶ Women were expected to care about their children, love their children, take an interest in their health, assist in arranging good marriages for them, and “bond emotionally”⁴⁷ with them. However, none of this meant daily contact or intimate care, especially when the children were young. Mothers were generally expected to turn the care of infants and small children over to servants, and it was not uncommon for mothers who held positions at court to go months without seeing their offspring. Yet by the definitions of the time, daily involvement was not necessary

⁴⁶ Harris, Barbara, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

for, and had little to do with, good parenting.⁴⁸ Girls in great households often saw little of their parents, especially when they were young, but they did not usually feel neglected for it.

When parents and children did have contact, it was often characterized by strictness from the parent and obedience from the child. “Good parents were strict parents,” Ives states.⁴⁹ Parents were supposed to be concerned with making sure their children received suitable guidance and correction and, eventually, with finding them an appropriate spouse. This was how love was shown and parental duty was carried out. Alison Plowden writes that this was an era “which believed implicitly that to spare the rod was to spoil the child, and expected unquestioning, reverential obedience from child to parent as a matter of course.”⁵⁰ Ives goes so far as to cite a treatise on women’s education which proclaimed, “Specially the daughters should be handled without any cherishing. For cherishing mars the sons but utterly destroys the daughters.”⁵¹ Parents who did not shower their children with affection did not feel guilty over it, and children whose parents were demanding of them likely did not find their experience uncommon among their peers.

However, affectionate feelings did develop and were not unusual in the Tudor period. Harris notes that this is evident in mothers’ reactions to the deaths of their children. She quotes Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk’s letter about her sorrow over her sons’ deaths (she could not see anyone “without some parts of those vile dregs of Adam to seem sorry”)⁵² as well Edward Hall’s

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ives, Eric, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 53.

⁵⁰ Plowden, Alison, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1986), 70.

⁵¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 53. Of course, this advice does not always seem to have been followed, and, as with much historical advice, the degree to which it *was* followed is questionable. For instance, many of the letters in Harris’s research come from families who do not seem to have attempted to avoid “cherishing” their daughters.

⁵² Quoted in Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 109.

chronicle documenting Queen Catherine of Aragon's grief over her infant's death: "Like a natural woman, [she] made much lamentation."⁵³ It also appears in mothers' comments about missing their children when separated.⁵⁴ There are records of affectionate memories from grown children, such as Frances West's memory of her mother's "special love and zeal"⁵⁵ long after her death and Edward, Lord Hastings's memory of "the manifold motherly kindness to him hitherto showed."⁵⁶ Additionally, men often made an effort to leave children sentimental possessions of their mothers' in their wills.⁵⁷ Harris furthermore cites the letters of Anne, Mary, and Katherine Basset, daughters of Lady Lisle, who wrote affectionately to their mother, saying how happy they were to hear from her and expressing their wish to see her again.⁵⁸ Mary warmly expressed her desire to be with her mother during the upcoming birth of a younger sibling.⁵⁹ This was not uncommon, but it was usually done in the other direction—mothers were known to travel some distance to assist their daughters when they gave birth.⁶⁰ Aristocratic women may have grown up without spending long hours at their parents' sides, but they generally harbored affectionate feelings toward them, especially as adults.

After experiences with parents, the other central part of a young aristocrat's life before marriage was education. In Jane Dudley's lifetime, classics were "the jewel in education,"⁶¹ and

⁵³ Quoted in Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 109 from Hall, Edward, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York*, (London: J. Johnson, 1548), 519.

⁵⁴ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 109.

⁵⁵ Quoted in Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 110, from Early Chancery Cases, Public Record Office, 918/17 (1533-44).

⁵⁶ Quoted in Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 110, from Henry E. Huntingdon Library, Hastings Collection, HAP Box 4, folder 29 (1489).

⁵⁷ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 111.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

⁶¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 64.

thus it was not uncommon, according to Ives, for teenagers of her age and class to be able to produce the sort of fluent letters in Latin that she did.⁶² It was equally common for adolescents to be familiar with multiple languages, if not the full eight attributed to Jane. French “was an essential part of polite education,” there are records of contemporary students of Italian, Latin letters were not rare, and Princess Elizabeth’s Greek and Latin are generally acknowledged to have been quite good.⁶³ A knowledge of rhetoric was also to be expected.⁶⁴

Scholars who examine the generation just before Jane Dudley’s paint a rather different picture. Harris acknowledges that aristocratic young women were expected to be literate in English and often knew French as well.⁶⁵ Yet she notes that her research did not turn up any women who had studied Latin before Henry VIII became King.⁶⁶ K.B. McFarlane goes further, suggesting that it was relatively normal for members of the nobility to be illiterate, or nearly so. He refutes the traditional, “long-lived and widely held opinion” that the vast majority of them were distinctly uneducated, but he does allow that illiteracy, or at least a distinct lack of education, was no great rarity among the noble class.⁶⁷ Lawrence Stone concurs, stating, “[I]n general the nobility and gentry did not write...The upper classes conducted most of their affairs by word of mouth, and the records were kept by scribes.”⁶⁸ “A few,” he does allow, “experienced a bookish, classical education.”⁶⁹

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 64-65.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 256.

⁶⁵ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women: 1450-1550*, 34 and 36.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁷ McFarlane, K.B., *The Nobility of Later Medieval England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 228-247.

⁶⁸ Stone, Lawrence, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 675.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 676.

A young woman living in a great household at the beginning of the sixteenth century might not have expected too much in the way of education. However, by the time Jane Dudley and her peers began to be educated in the 1540s, there appears to have been something of an educational renaissance. Stone writes of “an astonishing explosion of higher education in England, and one that temporarily embraced even women” around this time.⁷⁰ He names several women—the “More, Cheke, and Cooke ladies,” Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth, Katherine Berkeley, and Jane Grey—who were wonderfully well-educated.⁷¹ Harris attributes this educational flowering to “the successful introduction of humanism to the early Tudor court.”⁷² She states that there were roughly two dozen classically-educated women during this period, yet she refers to this as “a remarkable departure from the norm” of previous generations.⁷³

A young noblewoman who lived exactly at Jane’s time could very well have had an exceptional education, depending on how much value she and her parents placed on the activity. Certainly not all female aristocrats were schooled in the classics and foreign languages, but some quite clearly were. For instance, the daughters of Sir Thomas More seem to have been exceedingly well educated: Erasmus commented very favorably on their abilities, said they made it clear that women were quite capable of learning, and praised their father for having them so well schooled.⁷⁴ According to Peter Kaufman, the More daughters “were avidly reading and discussing Livy.”⁷⁵ More apparently encouraged his daughters to excel beyond the men who

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Harris, *English Aristocratic Women: 1450-1550*, 38.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kaufman, Peter Iver, “Absolute Margaret: Margaret More Roper and ‘Well Learned’ Men,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 20 (1989): 443-456, 453.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

tutored them and felt it necessary to remind the brightest, Margaret, “not to surpass her husband.”⁷⁶

This brings us very neatly to the matter of marriage, the true purpose of an aristocratic woman’s life. The majority of marriages, at least first marriages, were arranged, and, as Harris remarks, the primary consideration in arranging a daughter’s marriage was financial.⁷⁷ To her own family, an unmarried daughter was a political and social asset, and through their marriages aristocratic women had a substantial role in transferring land and wealth between families. Once she married, the young woman would be completely dependent upon her new husband’s financial and political circumstances for her “position within the aristocracy, [her] standard of living, and [her] access to patronage and the court.”⁷⁸ There were therefore two central issues in choosing a daughter’s spouse: making certain that she would be secure socially and financially, and marrying her into a better situated family than she had come from. “The ultimate goal,” writes Harris, “was to secure sons-in-law from families with more [wealth and power] than their own [family].”⁷⁹

Stone characterizes parents as being so consumed with the arrangement of children’s marriages that they sometimes went so far as to nominate candidates in their wills, should they die before the child reached marriageable age.⁸⁰ Depending on the family, children were occasionally allowed to refuse an undesirable bride or groom, but this was not generally the case. Stone states that “a woman’s right of veto” was not common practice until sometime between

⁷⁶ Ibid., 452.

⁷⁷ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 43.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641*, 595.

1560 and 1640.⁸¹ The girls (and boys) of Jane Grey's generation were usually expected to marry whomever they were told to.

Despite the prevalence of arranged marriage, there were occasional love matches. Heirs whose fathers died when they were at least twenty-one were allowed to marry whomever they chose,⁸² and, although these men still might marry a girl for her money or her social standing, this was an opportunity to make a love match if they desired. Additionally, there were love matches that occurred in spite of the wishes of parents who were still very much alive. Stone observes that young people often had time to mingle "frequently and freely" when they had positions at court, away from parental supervision.⁸³ An unapproved love match was sometimes the result, as will be discussed later in the case of Catherine Grey and Edward Seymour. If one's parents were still alive, such behavior generally met with disapproval and sometimes outright disinheritance. Additionally, love matches were particularly common among widows. These women were now allowed to marry freely and, often familiar with courtly love and its accompanying literature, sought such affection from their suitors.⁸⁴ It was not uncommon for widows to marry beneath their station, something their peers generally regarded as "imprudent if not positively disgraceful."⁸⁵ This occurred with Jane's mother Frances Grey and her second husband and former servant Adrian Stokes.

For a young couple in their first marriage, consummation did not always occur immediately, for multiple reasons. The simplest was the frequency of the marriage of children, either to each other or to adults. Consummation was delayed until they were old enough to

⁸¹ Ibid., 596.

⁸² Ibid., 609.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550*, 165.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 166.

legally consent to the marriage (twelve for girls and fourteen for boys), as a marriage was not fully valid and could much more easily be annulled if it were still unconsummated.⁸⁶ Even once the husband and wife came of age, consummation did not necessarily follow. There was an argument that parents in their early teens produced smaller, more sickly children.⁸⁷ Some considered it harmful to the parents themselves—since sperm was considered a “vital fluid,” losing too much at a young age could “impair a man’s physical and intellectual development,” and there were worries that giving birth before age sixteen would be “dangerous and permanently damaging” to girls.⁸⁸ Yet early consummation was still considered important because it sealed the marriage legally. As a result, there was often a single consummation, after which the couple might be separated for several years.⁸⁹

Where does Jane Dudley fit in this sketch of a young lady’s life? It has often been stated in the literature on her that her parents were unloving, unkind, and overly harsh, generally mistreating their eldest daughter. She herself told Roger Ascham that “I think myself in hell” when she was with them and complained about physical abuse, stating that if she did not perform perfectly in all respects, “I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea, presently sometimes with pinches, nips and bobs and other ways (which I will not name for the honor I bear them.)”⁹⁰ Yet in light of their era, and the common distance between parents and children, several scholars argue that Henry and Frances Grey were not really so awful. Ives examines Henry Grey’s letter to Thomas Seymour, requesting that Jane be returned to the family, and concludes that this letter

⁸⁶ Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy: 1558-1641*, 652.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 656.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 658.

⁹⁰ Ascham, Roger, *The Schoolmaster*, ed. L. V. Ryan, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 36.

“was the essence of good parenting.”⁹¹ Grey worries what will become of his daughter “for lack of a bridle,” he wants someone “to correct and admonish her as a mistress and a mother,” and he believes Jane needs “the eye and oversight of my wife.”⁹² These were exactly the sort of concerns a Tudor-period father was supposed to have, Ives argues.⁹³ Given what is known about the strictness expected from Tudor parents and their primary responsibility to correct and admonish children, his analysis may be quite correct. Plowden concurs, writing that the Greys were not “so especially hard on” Jane, at least, not for their time.⁹⁴ Jane, she writes, had a tendency to be an impudent teenager “whose youthful self-righteousness must often have irritated her father and mother profoundly.”⁹⁵

Certainly Jane was never neglected, at least by Tudor standards—the fact that she had spent little time with her parents growing up and had been passed back and forth into other households was not at all uncommon, as Harris demonstrates. Her parents certainly attempted to do their duty in arranging a marriage for her and seeing to it that she received a proper education and upbringing. They were not, then, terrible parents and may be somewhat undeserving of the portrayal they have often received.

However, they were not particularly wonderful parents, even in light of their era. Perhaps they were dissatisfied with their three daughters for being three daughters rather than sons—it would not have been odd. There does seem to have been a distinct lack of affectionate feeling in the relationship, and Jane seems to have been conscious of it. She delivered her famous speech to Ascham at age thirteen—nearly an adult, by Tudor standards, and a point at

⁹¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 53.

⁹² Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 50.

⁹³ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 53.

⁹⁴ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 70.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

which she should have been able to understand that her parents acted in her best interests, if in fact they truly did. It is as adults that Harris's Basset sisters are longing to be with their mother and that the children of deceased mothers are recalling their love and treasuring heirlooms. At thirteen, Jane, on the other hand, is speaking of her parents as "cruel" and saying that their presence causes her to "think myself in hell." There is still no affection a few years later when she writes her last letter to her father while awaiting her execution. She opens instead with the harsh words, "Although it has pleased God to hasten my death by you, by whom my life should rather have been lengthened."⁹⁶ Jane, then past her childhood and old enough to be convicted of treason, was still speaking quite severely and unhappily about her parents.

As Ives and Plowden argue, Henry and Frances Grey were not necessarily exceptional in their harshness to their daughter, nor was their distance from her anything extraordinary. They did what was expected of them and provided her with what she needed. They were not, in this sense, bad parents. However, whatever they may or may not have felt for her, they failed to inspire much, if any, affection in Jane. Her letters and comments lack the warm feelings documented in Harris's research in other families. They were not, then, among the best parents in Tudor England, and Jane may very well have been raised in an unusually harsh, cold family.

The matter of Jane's education also makes her stand out against her peers. She has been frequently praised in later literature for her vast learning, written up as almost a child prodigy, and she was also lauded by the reformers and scholars of the day. Yet in later eras where most teenage girls could not produce letters in Latin, she would naturally appear remarkable. Many of the contemporaries who praised her may have been partly self-interested.⁹⁷ They may have been

⁹⁶ Dudley, Lady Jane, "To Henry Grey," February 1554, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, (Ilfracombe, England: Arthur H. Stockwell Limited, 1951), 47-49, 48.

⁹⁷ See Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 64.

promoting their own tutoring skills, flattering her noble family in hopes of patronage funds from her father, or wanting to be on record with praise for the girl who rumor had it was “to be betrothed and given in marriage to the king’s majesty,” as the German scholar John of Ulm remarked.⁹⁸

As discussed, some of Jane’s peers were just as well-educated as she, and there were other Janes in England in the 1540s and 1550s, such as the More girls. But there were not many of these young women, and there is no reason to assume they were all equally gifted. As Ives admits, every bit of praise from reformers and scholars should not immediately be written off as flattery, and the oft-cited claim that she knew eight languages was written after her death.⁹⁹ Additionally, some of the source of the praise seems to be a hope of future patronage from her rather than from her father, and this would have meant that she was learned enough herself to care deeply about scholarship.¹⁰⁰ She certainly seems to have enjoyed her studies, even to the point that it surprised Roger Ascham, who knew her to be well-educated, to find her alone reading Plato in Greek instead of off hunting with her family. “Nothing has caused in me so much wonder,” he wrote.¹⁰¹ Most notable, according to Ives, were the friendships Jane seems to have been forming with reformers and scholars—she had been “accepted as a recruit to the fellowship of European reformist scholars.”¹⁰²

Jane appears to have been among the best of her own generation, but her learning was by not exclusive to her. She was indeed exceedingly rare in a broader sense of perhaps the hundred years leading up to her life, where she would have been most unusual in her ability to understand

⁹⁸ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 64.

⁹⁹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 66.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰¹ Ascham, Roger, *The Whole Works of Roger Ascham*, volume 1, ed. J.A. Giles, (London: J.R. Smith, 1864), 239.

¹⁰² Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 67.

any Latin at all, much less write it as flawlessly and elegantly as she did. Against this wider background, she is exceptional. Against the narrower background of her immediate contemporaries, she definitely has some equally capable peers, yet her education was still remarkably good. Jane certainly had an exceptionally good education and was exceptional in her learning, yet she was not the unique child prodigy unequalled by anyone that she has since been written up to be.

What about Jane and Guildford's marriage? They were married on May 21, 1553 in a triple wedding which also included Jane's sister Catherine and Henry Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke's son, as well as Guildford's sister Catherine and the son of the Earl of Huntingdon. Tradition holds that Jane originally refused to marry Guildford and was beaten by her parents until she at last agreed. This is a questionable story, however, based only on the gossip of two Italian ambassadors. Yet, as Plowden points out, it is not entirely improbable—Jane's parents would certainly have not been pleased at a refusal and may very well have reacted thus.¹⁰³ It is equally possible that Jane did, in fact, refuse, although there are simply no direct records on either Jane or Guildford's feelings about their marriage. It was clearly very much arranged by Northumberland and the Greys. After the wedding, Jane returned home with her parents, and consummation was delayed.

The Dudleys' marriage was typical in the degree of arrangement on the parents' parts, as well as in the disinterest in the couple's feelings. Even if Jane was not beaten for a refusal, neither she nor Guildford would have been permitted a veto, as Stone points out. The lack of documentation of either of their reactions suggests that they both accepted the marriage as natural and inevitable.

¹⁰³ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 85-86.

Of course, the reasons behind the arrangement were perhaps somewhat unusual. These were not merely two wealthy, well-placed young people; this was the great-niece of the last King and the potential mother of the next marrying the son of one of the current King's most prominent councillors. Because of this, it is often suggested that Northumberland pressed the marriage because he intended to put Jane on the throne. Yet the evidence here is lacking. Barrett Beer points out that, given the likely state of the device for the succession at the time of the marriage, Northumberland did not know Jane would be Queen. On May 21, Jane was only included in the device as one of several potential mothers of the unborn heir. The marriage would permit Guildford to father a King—not marry a Queen—only if he and Jane had a son before her mother, both her sisters, and one cousin. In marrying his son to Jane, Northumberland was no better off than the Earl of Pembroke, whose son married Jane's sister the same day.¹⁰⁴ Ives concurs, stating that, had Northumberland been obsessed with attaching the Dudley family to the throne, he would never have sanctioned the simultaneous marriage of Catherine and Pembroke's heir. The weddings of May 21, 1553 were nothing more, he writes, "than routine aristocratic alliances."¹⁰⁵

Beer is correct that the marriage was not the power grab on Northumberland's part that it has often been portrayed as, but Ives overstates the matter somewhat. As discussed, finances (as well as social and political positions) drove aristocratic marriage. Money was nowhere near the top concern in the Jane-Guildford match. Northumberland may not have had any guarantees, but he certainly knew what a step up it would be for his son to father the next King of England. The Grey family's wealth paled in comparison. Equally, the sonless Greys had long intended to

¹⁰⁴ Beer, *Northumberland: The Political Career of John Dudley, Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland*, 150-153.

¹⁰⁵ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 153.

make something of Jane. Her male children already had a claim to the crown; she did not need the Dudley family for that; but the Greys likely recognized that she might perhaps be in an even better position if she married the son of such a powerful man. They would likely have had little interest in the Dudley fortune. The parties involved were not looking so much for financial gain as political.

Perhaps most striking is Jane and Guildford's situation of delayed consummation. As discussed, such a delay was not wildly unusual, and they were certainly not the only young Tudor couple expected to wait for a length of time after the wedding ceremony. What *was* odd was their ages. Young age (by Tudor standards) was the central cause for concern in early consummation. Jane was about sixteen at the time of their marriage; Guildford was perhaps seventeen. His age may have been somewhat borderline, but she was certainly old enough for consummation, and thus their delay is notable. Cook writes that it was done in order to make the marriages "more easily dissolved" if necessary.¹⁰⁶ This is very possible—marrying a young woman in Jane's position was an explosive and chancy matter, especially with King Edward ill, and perhaps Northumberland wished to have a better idea of how things might go before the marriage reached the point of no return.

When viewed through the prism of the average young noblewoman's life, Jane fits, but she is far from a perfect fit. Her childhood and adolescence did not make her a complete aberration, but the parenting and education she had received did mark her as somewhat unusual, as did her marriage, with its unique considerations and complications. But it is generally not these three issues that are most striking to the modern reader who expects the stereotype of a late medieval woman who rarely speaks and remains dominated by the men around her. Lady Jane

¹⁰⁶ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 113.

Dudley was a most assertive young woman, notable for her boldness, her readiness to best men like Feckenham in debate, and her willingness to condemn others' actions and beliefs. Was it all really so strange for a woman of her class and era? Or were there others like her? A simple look at Jane's own immediate family reveals several other females quite prepared to take control of situations, make bold demands, state unpopular opinions, and defy authority.

This is first evident with the multiple wives of Charles Brandon, Jane's maternal grandfather. Brandon's father had been a member of the landed gentry and had distinguished himself by dying in battle, fighting alongside King Henry VII. When his father died, Charles was likely sent to live with his grandfather and was likely first taken into the royal household upon his grandfather's death in 1491, when he was around seven or eight years old.¹⁰⁷ As he grew, he held various positions in the household, but "[w]hat marked him out at court," writes Steven Gunn, "...was a close personal friendship with the young Henry VIII."¹⁰⁸ Beginning around 1508 or 1509, Brandon became a part of Henry's inner circle of friends, soon appearing in more and more jousting tournaments with more and more marks of the King's favor. By the time Henry had been on the throne for five years, Brandon had come forward as one of the King's best friends and was often at his side.

Charles's first wife was Anne Browne, a relation of Warwick the Kingmaker. She would eventually appear to be a tenaciously assertive woman who was a bit harder to deal with than her new husband might have hoped. Anne and Brandon were most certainly at least engaged around 1505, *per verba de presenti*. This was legally binding as a marriage of sorts, meaning simply that "a contract by words of present consent constituted, without more, the marriage bond

¹⁰⁷ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 2-3.

¹⁰⁸ Gunn, Steven, "The Rise of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk," in *Rivals in Power*, ed. David Starkey (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990), 6.

itself.”¹⁰⁹ The Church preferred a public ceremony, but no witnesses or clergy were legally necessary to make the marriage valid.¹¹⁰ Such unions were relatively common, as all that was necessary for a “marriage” was for both parties to say they consented; naturally, however, it was also relatively common for either party to marry elsewhere if a better opportunity presented itself.¹¹¹ With no hard evidence that a marriage with Anne Browne had ever actually occurred, Charles Brandon felt free to marry her aunt Margaret Mortimer in 1506, around the same time that Anne gave birth to Brandon’s daughter.¹¹² Margaret was some twenty years Brandon’s senior, but she was wealthy, and therefore a better match than Anne. He likely assumed Anne would go away quietly. Yet soon after he and Margaret were wed, the marriage was annulled based on the argument that the groom was already married, and Brandon agreed to a full ceremony with Anne, conducted this time in the presence of witnesses.

It is not clear how or why this came about, but Plowden suggests that it was at the initiative of Anne or her family.¹¹³ Gunn suggests instead that the remarriage was merely a result of Brandon’s becoming “overwhelmed by scruples,”¹¹⁴ but this seems unlikely, given Brandon’s later inability to stick to his next engagement. Shortly after Anne’s 1512 death, he would receive the wardship of eight-year-old Elizabeth Grey, Lady Lisle and soon become

¹⁰⁹ Helmholz, R. H., *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 27.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Richardson, Walter C., *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1970), 152.

¹¹² Gunn, Steven, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk*, (New York: Blackwell, 1988), 28.

¹¹³ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 6. Suits brought by a husband or wife to enforce a marriage contract that the other party had tried to ignore were not at all uncommon in Tudor England—Helmholz cites case after case and writes that they vastly outnumbered divorce cases. See *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England*, 25-73.

¹¹⁴ Gunn, Steven, “The Rise of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk,” 44.

engaged to her.¹¹⁵ Yet Brandon never married her, flirting instead with Margaret of Austria, Duchess of Savoy, and regent of the Netherlands and eventually marrying Princess Mary, Henry VIII's sister. It seems most probable that Margaret Mortimer and Charles Brandon's marriage was annulled because Anne or the Browne family pressed the issue.

Either Anne herself had a distinct amount of perseverance and assertiveness, or her family had it on her behalf. She herself was unwilling to suffer Brandon's indignities, or her family was unwilling to allow her to do so. In both situations, she was clearly not a woman who was going to be easily swept aside by men. She or her family had determined that she would have at least some control over her own life. It was an opportunity that would be denied to her step-granddaughter Jane Dudley. However, Jane would have an instinct to at least attempt to manage the destiny of her own memory as she composed documents from the Tower that she rightly assumed would be widely circulated and would shape her legacy, as will be discussed later.

After Anne died and he entered into a soon-forgotten engagement with Lady Lisle, Brandon next became entangled with Margaret of Austria, another woman whom he would find more assertive than he likely suspected. When her involvement with him began to do her more harm than good, she would waste no time in putting a stop to things. In 1514, Margaret and her father, the Hapsburg Emperor Maximilian, visited with Henry and others of the English court in France during a brief military campaign. "After the banquet," Margaret later wrote in a letter to the English ambassador, "[Charles Brandon] put himself upon his knees before me, and in speaking and him playing, he drew from my finger the ring, and put it upon his, and since

¹¹⁵ Richardson, *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 151.

showed it to me, and I took to laugh...¹¹⁶ Brandon also gave Margaret the declaration of servitude that was so much a part of traditional courtly love and flirtation: “[He] said...that he should never do thing, were it of marriage, or to take lady nor mistress, without my commandment, but would continue all his life my right humble servant.”¹¹⁷ Margaret likely enjoyed the flattery and the game in its beginnings; Gunn comments that her “entourage was a famous centre of courtly love.”¹¹⁸ Yet matters soon became embarrassing for her when rumors spread rapidly that she and Brandon would likely marry and betting occurred in London on the likelihood of the wedding. Whether or not Brandon had ever intended or hoped for a marriage is impossible to know; in any event it was most certainly not going to happen.

Margaret was accustomed to suits from reigning Kings, and it was damaging to her reputation for there to be suggestions that she was prepared to wed a mere English courtier. She was embarrassed and slightly disgraced, and, with the assertion befitting the Burgundian regent, she acted quickly. For political reasons, it was, as Walter Richardson remarks, a bad time for Margaret to offend Henry, but matters had gone far enough.¹¹⁹ Once the rumor began making its rounds, Margaret immediately complained to the English ambassador, insisting something be done. Unwilling to let her reputation be damaged, she was perfectly willing to jeopardize earlier work with international relations and create what could have become an international incident, all over a courtly flirtation and a rumored engagement. It speaks of a boldness befitting Jane Dudley.

Around this same time, Brandon found his next wife, who would go furthest yet in managing a situation by herself. Henry had a beautiful, vivacious younger sister, Princess Mary,

¹¹⁶ Margaret of Austria, “To Sir Richard Wingfield,” May 1514, *Rivals in Power*, 44.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Gunn, Steven, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk*, 29.

¹¹⁹ Richardson, *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 158.

the rare sort of late medieval woman who was pretty enough to still seem attractive to the modern eye.¹²⁰ While most young royal women were married off and sent away at an early age, partly to prevent inopportune attachments from developing at court, Mary was indulged with a youthful time of “irresponsible pleasure.”¹²¹ She apparently developed an attachment to her older brother’s friend,¹²² but it was not leaked outside the family circle, nor did it develop into any sort of gossipy scandal. In any event, Mary was presently obligated to King Louis of France, a match Henry much desired for the obvious politics involved. Louis was a sick old man, and Mary told her brother that she was quite willing to marry him, provided Henry promised to allow her to marry whomever she chose next time.¹²³ He agreed and she went off to France. David Loades calls the story of this agreement “romantic fiction,”¹²⁴ yet Mary herself made reference to the “faithful promise” in a later letter.¹²⁵ Most fortuitously, King Louis was dead eighty-two days later. Mary was now stuck in France, under a lengthy period of quarantine to make certain she was not pregnant, and forced to live in rooms with no sunlight allowed inside as a symbol of mourning. She did not feel she could trust any of the servants provided, and she found the new King François’s advances unnerving and frightening. Walter Richardson paints it as a

¹²⁰ See Image 1.

¹²¹ Richardson, *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 61.

¹²² Richardson questions the degree to which they were attached to each other, suggesting that Mary did not have anyone specifically in mind when she demanded the promise of Henry, but it seems odd that she would have felt so strongly about a future love match if she had not already loved someone. Additionally, it seems quite irrational for Mary to have thrown herself at Brandon when he arrived in France, merely because he was the first available Englishman, had there not previously been a very strong attachment.

¹²³ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 11 and Richardson, Walter C., *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 89.

¹²⁴ Loades, David, “Mary (1496-1533), queen of France, consort of Louis XII,” updated January 2008, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <<http://www.oxforddnb.com.libproxy.wustl.edu/view/article/18251?docPos=1>>, cited 9 October 2010.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 11.

particularly dark time for her, and most importantly Mary was worried that Henry, who knew what a political advantage she was, would forget or ignore his promise. She wrote to her brother, reminding him of their agreement and “beseech[ing] your grace to be a good lord and brother unto me.”¹²⁶ Mary knew it was uncertain what Henry intended to do with her, and she also did not trust the new French King not to marry her off elsewhere.¹²⁷

Given the circumstances, Mary was perfectly willing to take matters into her own hands, taking charge of her situation without hesitation. When Charles Brandon arrived in Paris as part of the mission sent to handle her financial negotiations and then bring her home, she essentially pressed him into marriage. In a dramatic display of tears—“I never saw woman so weep,” Brandon told Henry as he tried to explain himself—Mary begged Charles to marry her in France, before she was returned to England where either Henry could force her into another undesirable match (“she had rather to be torn in pieces”), or Brandon’s enemies could prevent their marriage.¹²⁸ If he did not marry her now, Mary declared, he should “look never after this day to have the same proffer again.”¹²⁹

Mary’s pleas backed Brandon into a corner. He was quite clearly supposed to bring the King’s sister home unmarried, and (the French King’s accusations notwithstanding)¹³⁰ he had most certainly not gone to France intending to wed Mary. He knew it would displease the King, he was devoted and loyal to Henry, and he had a healthy fear and respect for the sovereign. Yet, as Plowden puts it, “[I]t is hard for any man to stand like a stone while the most beautiful princess in Europe is literally begging and praying him to take her to his bed. Besides which,

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹²⁷ Loades, “Mary (1496-1533), queen of France, consort of Louis XII.”

¹²⁸ Quoted in Gunn, “The Rise of Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk,” 48.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Richardson, *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 167.

Mary was far too great a material prize to be lightly surrendered.”¹³¹ Additionally, Henry and his wife Catherine of Aragon had no children, meaning that perhaps Mary’s husband might hope to father the next King.¹³²

So Queen Mary of France and Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, were wed in Paris in February 1515. Once Brandon and Mary began to plead their case to Henry, they both blamed Mary.¹³³ Their return to England delayed for some time while diplomatic and financial ends were tied up in France, Mary and Charles did not confess their indiscretion immediately, waiting until a month later when she began to suspect a pregnancy. Originally, they attempted to use Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, as their intermediary. “The Queen would never let me be in rest till I had granted her to be married,” Brandon wrote simply to Wolsey, placing the blame squarely on his wife. “And so, to be plain with you, I have married her heartily, and have lyen with her, insomuch that I fear me lest she be with child. My lord, I am not in a little sorrow lest the King should know of it and be displeased with me, for I assure you I had rather have died than he should be miscontent.”¹³⁴ When Henry was not placated, Brandon, fearing for his life when he returned to England, appealed personally—and desperately—to the King. He groveled, declaring that he would be most deserving of any punishment the sovereign should choose to give him.¹³⁵ “Sir, for the passion of God,” he went on, “let it not be in your heart against me, and rather than you should hold me in mistrust, strike off my head and let me not live.”¹³⁶ Mary followed up with a reminder that this was largely her fault, mentioning the ultimatum she had

¹³¹ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 19.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ As do certain scholars like Richardson, who writes simply, “Suffolk’s dilemma was engendered by Mary herself.” *Mary Tudor: The White Queen*, 170.

¹³⁴ Brandon, Charles, Duke of Suffolk, “To Thomas Wolsey,” 5 March 1515, *Rivals in Power*, 48.

¹³⁵ Brandon, Charles, Duke of Suffolk, “To Henry VIII,” 22 April 1515, *Rivals in Power*, 49.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 22.

given Brandon, “whereby I know well that I constrained him to break such promises as he made your grace.”¹³⁷

Mary’s assertiveness went beyond that of any of the women Brandon had previously been involved with. Anne Browne was willing to force the continuation of a marriage Brandon had already entered with her. Margaret of Austria was willing to use diplomatic channels to demand the cessation of rumors about her relationship with him. Mary Tudor, however, was willing to maneuver Brandon into a marriage. As Loades has it, she “virtually forced [Brandon] to marry her.”¹³⁸ Such behavior was not common among women, but she does not appear, in her desperation, to have thought twice about it. She managed to make Brandon feel as though he could not possibly do anything but marry her—“The Queen would never let me be in rest,” he wrote.¹³⁹ If Mary had not pushed Brandon, resorting to ultimatums and the age-old female tactic of her tears, they would most certainly have returned to England unmarried. Not only did she push a man to marry her, Mary also had the boldness to flatly defy her sovereign.¹⁴⁰

When Mary died less than twenty years later, Brandon married again, only a few months after her death—not terribly unusual behavior. His new young wife would not be assertive with him so much as she would be about her beliefs to the rest of the world. About five years earlier, Brandon had purchased another wardship, this time of the wealthy Catherine Willoughby, whose

¹³⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹³⁸ Loades, “Mary (1496-1533), queen of France, consort of Louis XII.”

¹³⁹ Brandon, “To Thomas Wolsey,” 48.

¹⁴⁰ However, Mary’s earlier ready, almost philosophical acceptance of her fate as Louis’s bride should not be passed over lightly. There was nothing to prevent the French King from lingering another ten or fifteen years, and it was somewhat chancy to assume that he would die in an opportune amount of time and that Brandon would still be available when he did. As determined as Mary was to control her own future, it does not seem to have occurred to her to refuse Louis and demand to marry Brandon. She likely knew it simply was not an option for her. Assertion and boldness were never—and simply *could* never—be absolute.

father had been William, Lord Willoughby of Eresby.¹⁴¹ By the time of Mary's death, Catherine was fourteen and had been intended for Brandon's sickly teenage son Henry. Yet it was likely that Henry would not live long, and Brandon was far too savvy an investor to waste his ward and her income on a boy likely to die. He therefore married Catherine himself in 1533, and young Henry died shortly thereafter.¹⁴²

Charles Brandon had few strong religious convictions. He and Mary seem to have been very much on the sidelines during the Catherine of Aragon/Anne Boleyn debacle, apparently siding, but not too strongly, with their (original) sister-in-law, mostly out of personal feelings. Mary avoided attending court when Anne was present (possibly because of her health and not just out of dislike), and the two traded insults.¹⁴³ As far as the issue of religious reform went, Brandon seemed very willing to simply go along with matters, adopting Protestantism and abandoning Catholicism largely out of political expedience.

Yet his new wife Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, was, by many accounts, a zealous, faithful Protestant. She was a decidedly bold woman, especially in matters of her faith, sometimes to the point of rudeness. At certain times she sounds much like her step-granddaughter Jane. By the later years of Catherine's marriage to Brandon, when she was in her twenties, she was described as "a lady of a sharp wit and sure hand to thrust it home and make it

¹⁴¹ When an heir lost both parents, he or she became a ward of the Crown. This meant that the Crown could arrange the ward's marriage and was entitled to the income from the ward's lands until the ward was of age. Often, members of the aristocracy purchased a wardship from the Crown as something of an investment. Competition to be able to purchase was intense, and receiving a wardship was a mark of favor. It was quite common for the man who purchased a female ward to either marry her himself or to arrange a marriage between her and one of his sons. See Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 31-32 and Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, 600-601.

¹⁴² Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 39.

¹⁴³ Loades, David, "Mary (1496-1533), queen of France, consort of Louis XII."

pierce when she pleased.”¹⁴⁴ She had a sharp tongue and an intelligent mind—exactly the sort of Tudor woman likely to have a keen interest in religious reform—and she joined with the Countess of Sussex, Joan Denny, Anne Herbert, Lady Lane, Jane Dudley,¹⁴⁵ the Countess of Hertford, and others to form a powerful group of women who came together to study the Scriptures and hear men like Nicholas Ridley, Nicholas Shaxton, and Hugh Latimer. This small study group was sponsored by Henry VIII’s current and last wife, Catherine Parr.¹⁴⁶

It was this study group—whose views were technically heresy—that led to the failed attempt to arrest Queen Catherine in 1546 and which Anne Askewe, who will be discussed in greater detail in the second chapter, likely attended on occasion.¹⁴⁷ In any event, the Church was not much amused by it, and Plowden notes that Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, was one of its most provocative members, naming her dog Gardiner after a disliked Bishop.¹⁴⁸ This sounds very much like the sort of borderline-rude behavior Jane often engaged in.

After Brandon’s death, Catherine married Richard Bertie, and it was at this point that she ran into trouble for her boldly reformed views. Bertie was rather beneath Catherine in standing (as a stone mason, Lady Cecilie Goff suggests that he was “the lowest rank of the social scale” among laborers),¹⁴⁹ making this appear to be one of the love matches with insignificant men that widows, who were free for the first time in their lives to marry whomever they pleased, often

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Read, Evelyn, *Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk: A Portrait*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1962), 50 from Fuller, Thomas, *The Church History of Britain*, vol. IV, (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), 235.

¹⁴⁵ Not Jane Dudley, née Jane Grey, but her future mother-in-law, the Duchess of Northumberland.

¹⁴⁶ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 46. Catherine Parr and Catherine of Suffolk were old friends, and Catherine of Suffolk had been one of only seventeen wedding guests when Henry and Catherine had married at Hampton Court. See Read, *Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk: A Portrait*, 48.

¹⁴⁷ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 48.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Goff, Lady Cecilie, *A Woman of the Tudor Age*, (London: J. Murray, 1930), 212.

indulged in. Bertie was also, according to Plowden, “a committed member of the reformed Church.”¹⁵⁰ Catherine was still active in the reformed religion herself, sending money to the now-imprisoned Ridley and Latimer,¹⁵¹ dangerous behavior now that Queen Mary’s reign had begun. She and Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, had long-standing contempt for each other, and Gardiner soon summoned her husband on grounds of an unpaid debt to the crown. Gardiner went on to accuse Richard and Catherine of heretical ideas—the real purpose of the summons—bringing up Catherine’s refusal to celebrate mass. In the account prepared by John Foxe, Gardiner gives a summary of Catherine’s other annoyances:

Is [Catherine] now as ready to set up the mass, as she was lately to pull it down, when she caused in her progress a dog in a rochet to be carried and called by my name? Or doth she think her lambs now safe enough, which said to me, when I veiled my bonnet to her out of my chamber window in the Tower [during Gardiner’s imprisonment under Edward VI], that it was merry with the lambs, now the wolf was shut up?¹⁵²

The Bishop also related an incident at one of Brandon’s dinner parties, where Brandon had told each lady to sit next to “him whom she loved best.” Apparently, Catherine had approached Gardiner, stating that since she could not sit next to her husband, the host, the man she loved best, “she had chosen him whom she loved worst.”¹⁵³ Bertie got away from Gardiner with an agreement that he would attempt to persuade Catherine out of her heresy, but the couple understood that they were not safe for long. According to Foxe, Catherine’s friends warned her “that Gardiner meant to call her to an account of her faith, ‘whereby extremity might follow.’”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 129.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁵² Quoted in Read, *Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk: A Portrait*, 99-100.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Goff, *A Woman of the Tudor Age*, 220.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

It was eventually arranged that the Berties would flee England by sea under the cover of night, and they spent the years until Elizabeth's reign in Germany and Lithuania.

Catherine continued in bold, Jane-like behavior while abroad. Elizabeth's reign was barely four months old, and the Berties had not yet made it back to England, before Catherine was already sending letters to her acquaintance Sir William Cecil, now Secretary of State, complaining that the nation was not returning quickly enough to pure Protestantism. It was "an intolerable heaviness," she wrote, "...that such as should rather be spurs holdeth her Majesty of her own good inclination, running most back, among which you are specially named... Wherefor I am forced to say with the prophet Elijah, how long halt ye between two opinions?"¹⁵⁵ Goff states simply, "The sentiments that she expresses prove that she herself did not shrink from asserting her own religious principles, regardless of the consequences."¹⁵⁶ All of this—the refusal to give an inch on the mass, the willingness to insult Bishop Gardiner, the pushy interference and high-minded rebuke over the new reign—sound very much like the sorts of things Jane Dudley would have said or done.

Jane's sisters, Catherine (born 1540) and Mary (born 1545), display no evidence of the sort of verbal assertiveness Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, and Jane herself were known for. Yet they did have their grandmother Mary's willingness to defy a monarch with little hesitation. Both ladies were willing to ignore the sovereign's authority and take charge of their own lives and marriages against the Queen's wishes.

Lady Catherine Grey did not possess Mary Tudor's cool patience that helped her wait for the French King's death, she was not in anything near Mary's desperate circumstances, and she may not have been able to weigh and understand the risks of her behavior as well as her

¹⁵⁵ Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, "To Sir William Cecil," 4 March 1559, *Rivals in Power*, 177.

¹⁵⁶ Goff, *A Woman of the Tudor Age*, 238.

grandmother, but she did have the strength and the nerve to defy Queen Elizabeth I. With Jane and Henry executed, the remaining Grey family members were readily forgiven by Queen Mary I, and Catherine had a position at court.¹⁵⁷ At some point during Mary's reign, Catherine developed an attachment to Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford. Edward was the son of the late Protector Somerset, and Catherine had spent a good deal of time with his family due to her friendship with his sister Jane. This was not exactly a secret, and there was a certain amount of courtly gossip "that there was great love between them."¹⁵⁸ When Elizabeth came to the throne, Catherine and Mary Grey both continued to have positions at court, and Catherine was—possibly, depending on how one looked at matters—Elizabeth's immediate heiress, as well as, unfortunately, a possible pretender to the throne. Elizabeth did not like any of the Greys, and she was perfectly open about it.¹⁵⁹ After Elizabeth became Queen, Edward approached Frances Grey about marrying her daughter. Frances was then to approach Elizabeth about the matter, but she died before doing so.¹⁶⁰ Edward and Catherine decided to take matters into their own hands, and he told her he would marry her when the court was next in London. With the assistance of Lady Jane Seymour, Edward's sister and Catherine's friend, the couple married privately in December 1560.¹⁶¹

The marriage ended disastrously for Catherine, which demonstrates the drastic nature of her actions. Marrying against the Queen's wishes was not something one did on a whim, and, even if Catherine was not aware of how much trouble she would find herself in, she certainly knew there might be severe consequences. The marriage continued in secret at court for several

¹⁵⁷ De Lisle, Leanda, *The Sisters Who Would Be Queen: Mary, Katherine, and Lady Jane Grey*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 148.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁵⁹ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 146.

¹⁶⁰ De Lisle, *The Sisters Who Would Be Queen: Mary, Katherine, and Lady Jane Grey*, 180.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 188-190.

months, until Edward was sent to France in April. Catherine soon discovered she was pregnant and, realizing the truth would come out sooner rather than later, confessed to the Queen's current favorite Robert Dudley, who told Elizabeth immediately. Furious, she sent Catherine to the Tower and sent for Edward, who would join his wife in the Tower as soon as he returned to England. The couple was evidently not kept apart very well, as, much to Elizabeth's annoyance, Catherine gave birth again in 1563. There were no more meetings between Edward and Catherine, and she died of tuberculosis five years later.

Lady Mary Grey, the youngest sister, was equally bold and defiant—perhaps more so, since she had Catherine's example before her. Leanda de Lisle suggests that she “envied” Catherine and Edward's brief happiness,¹⁶² but this is doubtful. Catherine and Edward were not very happy for very long, living as they did with the constant threat of exposure and the quandary her pregnancy created. On the contrary, Catherine's disastrous marriage would have made Mary very aware of where a love match might lead. The fact that she proceeded with one anyway suggests not that she envied her sister, but that she understood the potential consequences yet still dared to hope her own marriage might work out. Described by the Spanish ambassador as “little, crook-backed and very ugly,”¹⁶³ Mary is generally understood to have been a dwarf with some sort of physical deformity. In 1565, she married Thomas Keyes, the huge sergeant-porter whom she had met at court, in a secret ceremony. Mary claimed she wanted a life “as normal as possible.”¹⁶⁴ Yet Elizabeth, likely finding the marriage a degrading one, was not amused, declaring she “wanted no little bastard Keyes.”¹⁶⁵ The couple was

¹⁶² Ibid., 229.

¹⁶³ Quoted in Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 168.

¹⁶⁴ Luke, *The Nine Days Queen: A Portrait of Lady Jane Grey*, 407.

¹⁶⁵ Quoted in Luke, *The Nine Days Queen*, 407.

separated as soon as the Queen learned of their marriage, with Keyes sent to the Fleet Prison and Mary held as a prisoner in various homes.

In such a context, Jane's own assertiveness and defiance were not uncommon, or at least not unheard of, among women of the time, and certainly not among her own close relatives. Like Anne Browne, she was not pleased to be disregarded; like Margaret of Austria, she was willing to press matters when she needed to; like her grandmother Mary Tudor, she desired—if circumstances did not always allow it—to manage her destiny; and, like Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, she was easily pushed to near-rudeness to those with whom she disagreed.

Lady Jane Dudley is perhaps best-described as a mildly exceptional girl with a mildly unusual background and upbringing. She did not have particularly good parents; their distance from her was normal, but her lack of affection for them was notable. She had a normally arranged marriage (albeit one in very atypical circumstances with a remarkable father-in-law) with a slightly unusual (but not without its reasons) delay before consummation. Her education was exceptionally good; she was not the only bright, well-educated young aristocratic woman of her age, but she was one of very few, and she stood out particularly in contrast with the girls of the preceding century. The assertiveness she displayed as an adolescent was certainly not something possessed by all Tudor women, but it was nothing unusual and was mirrored by many of her relatives. In short, Lady Jane Dudley may have met an exceptional end and had certain unusual factors in her background and person, but she herself was not uniquely remarkable in relation to others of her era, sex, and station. Any modern analysis of her ought to be tempered with such considerations.

Chapter Two

Jane Dudley spent much time in her final days writing—letters, a prayer, a record of her conversations with John Feckenham, her scaffold speech, an epitaph—and it is not difficult to imagine her in the Tower of London on a cold February afternoon, calmly (if her own words are to be believed) but hurriedly penning sentences that would be quoted and misquoted for centuries. She was—once again, if we trust her words—not so much dreading her execution as rejoicing in the secure knowledge of the eternal life to follow.

Along with a few surviving letters from the years before, Jane’s writing is our only opportunity to hear from Jane herself. It is the best place to look in an examination of how Jane saw herself—the subject of this chapter.

In order to get at how Jane portrayed herself in her writing and why, it is necessary to understand how she might have understood herself in the years leading up to her time in prison. For most of her life, of course, there was no hint that she would one day find herself imprisoned in the Tower. Jane died when she was roughly seventeen, and she would have spent the years before her succession to the throne as a young noblewoman preparing to go out into the world. There were certain “career path” expectations here—marriage to a high-ranking man, children, and the running of one’s own aristocratic household and the duties it involved—and there was a certain practical education to attend to, beyond Jane’s beloved classics. Girls often went to court, as Jane did, with the expectation that they might possibly have a career there. In addition to or instead of court, they were also often sent to other aristocratic households in order to learn the skills necessary in becoming the lady of their own someday. This occurred for Jane as well when she was sent to live with Thomas Seymour and Catherine Parr. She was in all this being prepared to manage her household, should she marry no better than a Guildford Dudley sort, but

she was also being prepared for the potential match her parents hoped for—a marriage to King Edward VI. This was part of the reason Jane was sent to Seymour and Catherine—it was no ordinary aristocratic household; it was the home of the King’s stepmother.

In preparing for life as an aristocratic female, Jane would also have learned that it was possible and encouraged, if not required, to have a significant religious role, in her case in the reformed faith. Jane had been wrapped in the context of female piety throughout her teen years, and she would have learned what an important role it could play in a noblewoman’s life. It would also have greatly influenced how she regarded herself as a Christian woman.

However, the long tradition of female piety is far more than *just* Jane’s context. Although largely unexplored until quite recently, it has been argued that women had a uniquely feminine approach to Christianity. This feminine Christianity and the respect it was accorded is a vast area of scholarship in itself. There was nothing new about the ideals accorded to religious women in Jane’s lifetime; it was a tradition that had gone on for centuries with the Virgin Mary as its model.¹⁶⁶ A virtuous woman was considered the ideal of piety, as a true Christian would embody virtues that were otherwise characterized as female. Piety equaled silence, simplicity, humility, and submission. Femininity equaled silence, simplicity, humility, and submission.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, for Protestants, the unlearned nature of most women was a perfect fit with the Bible as a sole source of doctrinal authority. The pious woman—a creature inferior to men in all other ways—studying her Bible for herself proved the point quite neatly that the Scripture spoke

¹⁶⁶ The use of Mary as a model was by no means a uniquely Catholic idea. Although obviously not revered and exalted in the same way in Protestant circles, she was equally emphasized as a model for Protestant women. See Trill, Suzanne, “Religion and the construction of femininity,” *Women and Literature in Britain 1500-1700*, ed. Helen Wilcox, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30-55, 36.

¹⁶⁷ Snook, Edith, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, (Aldershot, England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 43.

for itself and could be understood by anyone.¹⁶⁸ Catherine Parr, who as Queen of England was perhaps the best known pious woman, placed great emphasis in her writing on the authority of the individual reader of Scripture. Her work thus “demonstrate[d], because she is a woman, that God himself can produce Protestant truth in the Christian who simply reads the Bible.”¹⁶⁹

These “pious women” so prevalent in Tudor England were actively involved in their religion.¹⁷⁰ Melissa Harkrider argues that they understood themselves to be both “building blocks and builders of the evangelical church,” working to create and sustain a unified community.¹⁷¹ They saw themselves—and men saw them—as an integral part of the reformed church, and they considered themselves equals in terms of their spiritual inheritance.¹⁷² They did not doubt their status as members of the elect, and they used “the language of spiritual kinship,” speaking of sisters/brothers/fathers/mothers in Christ as men did.¹⁷³ Their activities included working to spread the reformed religion and educating themselves further. The latter of these goals was achieved not only through private study, but also through larger study groups, the most famous of which was the one led and organized by Catherine Parr. It consisted of the noble ladies in her circle, her attendants at court, and included Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk (born Willoughby). Catherine Parr’s group engaged in daily prayer, Bible study, and “theological training,” with regular reading of the Scripture and frequent afternoon sermons stressing the

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Although the same sort of tradition certainly existed among Catholics, this discussion will focus solely on Protestants, as that is the culture which would have influenced Jane Dudley.

¹⁷¹ Harkrider, Melissa Franklin, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580*, (Rochester, New York: Boydell Press, 2008), 59.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

reformed faith.¹⁷⁴ In addition to their private and group studies, pious, aristocratic women also had a role in supervising (or hiring a chaplain to supervise) the spiritual activity and religious studies in their own households, a place considered “the most immediate and significant arena for transmitting their beliefs.”¹⁷⁵ In terms of their outward work to spread the faith, pious, reformed, wealthy women cultivated personal friendships with reformed scholars and preachers and often acted as patrons—those without whom the work would not have gone on. They sponsored translation or writing of new materials, their publication, and their circulation, sometimes, like Catherine Parr, serving as writers or translators themselves.¹⁷⁶ Under Queen Mary I’s reign, these women assisted imprisoned evangelicals with money, gifts, and prayers and circulated the letters they wrote in prison.¹⁷⁷

Women became quite involved in contemporary religious debates, and this was largely accepted.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, reformers often welcomed them—female religious writers were, as Jennifer Summit, calls them, a “powerful symbol of England’s break from religious tradition.”¹⁷⁹ Their participation was, for some, an indication of just how desperate the fight for the true religion was.¹⁸⁰ These females did not entirely fit in with the era’s standards for their gender, as

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 49. Kimberly Coles calls these women “scripturalists rather than traditionalists.” Coles, Kimberly Anne, *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 65.

¹⁷⁵ Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580*, 77.

¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the central argument of Coles’s book is that some of the works of female writers “were among the most important and influential works of sixteenth-century England...[C]ertain early modern women writers were far more fundamental to the development of Protestant consciousness...than has been previously acknowledged.” *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England*, 2-7.

¹⁷⁷ Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580*, 65-66.

¹⁷⁸ Trill, “Religion and the construction of femininity,” 31.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 33.

¹⁸⁰ Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England*, 4.

they were generally “neither silent nor straightforwardly obedient.”¹⁸¹ Yet bold behavior, when it came to defending the faith in these extraordinary times, was not only accepted but expected—public boldness was not a fault but a requirement of pious, reformed womanhood.¹⁸² As Suzanne Trill suggests, “[I]t is [martyr Anne] Askewe’s defence of doctrinal principles that identifies her as a true Christian woman.”¹⁸³

Examples of such women among Jane Dudley’s contemporaries abound. They famously include Catherine Parr, in whose household Jane spent some of her adolescence. Catherine has been characterized as extraordinarily familiar with Scripture, and her religious writings center on Christ’s passion, repentance, and grace and faith over works as a means to salvation.¹⁸⁴ There was also Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk (later Catherine Bertie), Jane’s step-grandmother. A close friend of Catherine Parr and a member of her circle, Catherine Suffolk is described by Harkrider as a woman who “embodied contemporary perceptions of the godly patroness.”¹⁸⁵ She was slowly influenced by the Queen, eventually and passionately adopting the reformed ideals of a religion centered on Scripture and a rejection of transubstantiation.¹⁸⁶ Her activities ranged from promoting the spread of vernacular Bibles and sponsoring Catherine Parr’s *The Lamentation of a Sinner* to actively pushing for “the abolition of superfluous holy days, the

¹⁸¹ Trill, “Religion and the construction of femininity,” 31.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 33-34.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸⁴ See Mueller, Janel, “Katherine Parr and Her Circle,” *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, ed. Mike Pincombe and Cathy Shrank, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 222-237, 223-226 and Linton, Joan Pong, “The Literary Voices of Katherine Parr and Anne Askew,” *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, ed. Kent Cartwright, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 295-308, 296-301.

¹⁸⁵ Harkrider, *Women, Reform and Community in Early Modern England: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire’s Godly Aristocracy, 1519-1580*, 46.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

removal of devotional images of saints, and an end to processions and pilgrimages.”¹⁸⁷ We have encountered some of Catherine of Suffolk’s bolder, more assertive, and more dangerous statements and activities in Chapter One.

Although lacking a personal connection to Jane, Anne Askewe is perhaps the pious female who can best serve as a point of comparison for her. Although Anne was clearly a martyr while Jane’s status as such is much more questionable, they have the inarguable and important similarity of their imprisonments, during which they both recorded conversations of themselves defending the faith. Anne Askewe was a gentlewoman, at one point married to and eventually separated from Thomas Kyme—she pressed for divorce because of conflicts over her Protestant beliefs. A strong opponent of transubstantiation, she circulated literature and preached in the streets of London. She was arrested for her beliefs in 1545 and questioned by the Lord Mayor of London and the Chancellor of the Bishop of London. Imprisoned for twelve days, she was then examined again but managed to escape with nothing more than being forced to sign a confession of faith. Anne was linked to Henry VIII and Catherine’s court by both her brothers, one of whom was a gentleman of the Privy Chamber and the other of whom was a cupbearer as well as a member of Archbishop Cranmer’s household. She likely had ties to the noblewomen at court, including the Queen, who shared her religious views. In hopes that Anne would incriminate some of them—she was questioned about “my ladye of Sothfolke [Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk], my ladye of Sussex, my ladye of Hertforde, my lady Denny, and my ladye Fizwyllyams”¹⁸⁸—she was arrested again in 1546. This time, she was tortured—something never done to aristocratic women—but refused to name any supporters. After refusing to recant

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

¹⁸⁸ Askewe, Anne, “The Lattre Examinacyon of Anne Askewe,” ed. Johan Bale, (1547), *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. Elaine V. Beilin, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 73-161, 122.

her heretical beliefs, Anne was burnt. She became one of the most “popular” and best-known martyrs of the era.

The simple fact that Anne was a woman greatly influenced how she behaved, how she portrayed herself, and how her martyrdom was later constructed. Like Catherine Parr, she placed great emphasis on the authority of individual readers of Scripture: “Then inquired he of me, what if, the scripture do say that [the Lord’s Supper] is the body of Christ? I beleve, said I, as the scripture doth teach me. Then asked he againe what if the scripture do say that it is not the body of Christ? My answer was stil, I beleve as the scripture infourmeth me.”¹⁸⁹ Stating that Anne “does not need to speak her truth except to refer to the place in the Bible where it has already been said,” Thomas Betteridge argues that “[t]his structure inherently undermines the need for anyone to mediate between the believer and Scripture. It embodies a radically simple understanding of the relationships between Scripture, believer, and authority.”¹⁹⁰ As with Catherine, such emphasis contained the implicit assumption that Protestantism was so simply found in the Bible that even a woman would find it. Also female, although it may not seem so, was Anne’s boldness. She was quite willing to tell the Bishop, when he accused her of speaking in parables, that “it was best for hym. For if I shewe the open truthe (quoth I) ye wyll not accept it...I tolde hym agayne, I was ready to suffer all thynges at hys hands...and that gladly.”¹⁹¹ When informed she would be burned, “Well, well, sayd I, God wyl laughe your threttenynges to

¹⁸⁹ Askewe, Anne, “The Two Examinations of the worthy servant of God, Maistris An Askew, doughter of sir William Askew knight of Lincolneshire, martred in Smithfield for the Constante and faithfull testimoye of the truthe,” *Acts and Monuments*, ed. John Foxe, (1563), *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. Elaine V. Beilin, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 163-192, 172.

¹⁹⁰ Betteridge, Thomas, “Anne Askewe, John Bale, and Protestant History,” in the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27 (1997) 265–84, 271.

¹⁹¹ Askewe, “The Lattre Examinacyon of Anne Askewe,” 94.

scorne.”¹⁹² Anne does not seem a meek, cowering female in her examinations, and this fits the mold of the pious Protestant Tudor woman. As Trill comments, “it is Askewe’s defence of doctrinal principles that identifies her as a true Christian woman.”¹⁹³

Anne placed great emphasis on her status as a woman. She tended to refer back to her gender as something of a defense. As Edith Snook suggests, Anne could argue that she ignored authorities beyond the Scripture because most women were prevented from the education required to know theology on a higher level.¹⁹⁴ She defended her reticence to speak (and thus incriminate herself) by saying, “God hath geven me the gyfte of knowlege, but not of utteraunce. And Salomon sayth, that a woman of fewe words, is a gyfte of God,”¹⁹⁵ and she justified a refusal to analyze Scripture for her examiners by telling them “that it was agaynst saynt Paules lernynge, that I beyng a woman, shuld interprete the scriptures, specyallye where so manye wyse lerned men were.”¹⁹⁶ Additionally, for Anne as for any female martyr, femininity served as “a powerful critique of the judges.”¹⁹⁷ Simply the act of being a weak, less intelligent, inferior, vulnerable woman brought in to face male judges immediately made her a far more sympathetic figure and her judges far more villainous.

Those who told her story in subsequent years called attention to this theme much more than Anne, whose emphasis on herself as a woman simply set up the “absurdity” of a woman

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁹³ Trill, “Religion and the construction of femininity,” 39.

¹⁹⁴ Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 36.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 36 from Askewe, Anne, “The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe,” ed. Johan Bale, *The Examinations of Anne Askew*, ed. Elaine V. Beilin, 1-72, 51.

¹⁹⁶ Quoted in Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 36 from Askewe, “The first examinacyon of Anne Askewe,” 54.

¹⁹⁷ Trill, “Religion and the construction of femininity,” 40.

being called to account in such a situation.¹⁹⁸ “In a variety of texts,” Elaine Beilin writes, “Askewe has become a female hero, but one who habitually speaks from a script other than her own.”¹⁹⁹ Yet she is always a very *female* hero, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to find an account of Anne that does not place her gender front and center. As Anne’s original document has been lost, her account comes down to us only through its inclusion in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* and through Johan Bale’s reprinting and publication of her words. Bale’s edition is the most widely read by today’s scholars, despite his constant interruptions of her writing to interpret or expound upon her words. He often refers to her as “thys woman” or “thys godlye woman,” drawing attention to her gender, and, as Betteridge writes, his glosses “implicitly make her words nonauthoritative, almost meaningless, without the polemical framework” he provides.²⁰⁰ Yet Bale’s emphasis on her as a woman is not so much to show her as inferior and needing of his assistance as it is to demonstrate God’s power to work even through such a weak instrument, as Snook suggests.²⁰¹ Given how weak women were, the logic was, in order for Anne to have remained so steadfast, her Protestant beliefs must have been true. Snook quotes: “Thynke not therfor but that Christ hath suffered in her, and myghtelye shewed hys power, that in her weakenesse he hath laughed your madde enterprises to scorne.”²⁰² Of course, Bale makes several explicit comparisons between Anne and Blandina, the early Christian *female* martyr.

Anne’s gender would color other accounts beyond Bale’s. John Louth’s near-contemporary description also focused on Anne as a female, yet he creates her as “a stereotype,

¹⁹⁸ Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 37.

¹⁹⁹ Beilin, Elaine V., “A Woman for All Seasons: The Reinvention of Anne Askew,” *Strong Voices, Weak History*, ed. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 341-364, 347.

²⁰⁰ Betteridge, “Anne Askewe, John Bale, and Protestant History,” 265.

²⁰¹ Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 41.

²⁰² Quoted in Snook, *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England*, 41 from Askew, “The Lattre Examinacyon of Anne Askewe,” 129.

the witty woman familiar from jest books.”²⁰³ By the nineteenth century, on the other hand, Anne was transformed into a far sweeter, quieter version of herself, one that fit Victorian ideals of womanhood better than Tudor ones. In these representations, Anne is not just a martyr but a romantic heroine.²⁰⁴

Jane Dudley did not emphasize her womanhood as Anne Askewe did and did not draw attention to it in her writings. Is she still a part of the wider tradition of female piety? Absolutely. Its ideas were far too pervasive in Protestant Tudor culture for Jane to have stood outside of it, and there would have been no reason for Jane to *wish* to stand outside it. The traditions were so widespread that Jane’s mentioning a feeling of connection to them would have been unnecessary, as well as unlikely given the small amount of writing we have from her. Jane was positively soaking in the pious female tradition during her time in Catherine Parr’s household, and its presence in the culture around her would have certainly shaped the way thought she about herself as a religious woman. Although Jane made no explicit references, she clearly demonstrated certain aspects of traditional female piety.

Jane exhibited the readiness to see herself as equally part of the community of believers so integral to the pious Tudor woman. In her letter to Henry Bullinger, she wrote, “You exhort me to cherish a genuine and sincere faith in Christ my Saviour. I shall endeavor to comply with the exhortation as fully as God may enable me to do.”²⁰⁵ She addressed her former tutor Thomas Harding as “chosen Brother.”²⁰⁶ She asked God to “arm me...with Thy armour,”²⁰⁷ and she

²⁰³ Beilin, “A Woman for All Seasons: The Reinvention of Anne Askew,” 354-355.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 355-356.

²⁰⁵ Grey, Lady Jane, “To Henry Bullinger: Letter 2,” 1552, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 28-29, 29.

²⁰⁶ Dudley, “To Dr. Harding,” 34.

²⁰⁷ Dudley, “A Prayer,” 47.

wrote to her father of the “heavenly home of all joy and pleasure, with Christ my Saviour”²⁰⁸ to which she meant to go. There was no medieval “does a woman have a soul” equivocating here—Jane did not doubt that she was as much a Christian as any of the reformed men she knew.

Jane also worked to build the sort of relationships with reformers that were so common among other Protestant noble and aristocratic women, as is indicated by her correspondence. Some of these reformed scholars likely hoped to secure patronage from her as she grew older.²⁰⁹ Additionally, despite a lack of references to the unique position of a religious female, Jane did evidence a desire to grow specifically as a godly *woman*. She told Bullinger how suited some of the comments in his letter were to someone of “my age, sex, and rank,”²¹⁰ and she expressed her joy at being worthy of his teaching by comparing herself to “Blesilla, Paula, and Eustachia to whom the divine Jeronymus imparted instruction...the aged lady...whom the divine John addressed...or...the mother of Severus, who profited by the lessons of Origen.”²¹¹ Her examples were all focused on men counseling women. One of the most-cited incidents of Jane’s occasional brashness occurred over one of her attempts to pursue a uniquely feminine component of righteousness: the resistance to adornment and the wearing of simple gowns. The story appears in many biographies that Jane, having received a beautiful, elaborate, gold-laced dress from Princess Mary, refused to wear it because she found it too ostentatious. John Aylmer had written to Henry Bullinger, asking him to “instruct [Jane Grey]...as to what embellishment and

²⁰⁸ Dudley, “To Henry Grey,” 49.

²⁰⁹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 65.

²¹⁰ Grey, Lady Jane, “To Henry Bullinger: Letter 1,” 1551, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 24-28, 25.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

adornment [very little]...is becoming in a young woman professing godliness.”²¹² Apparently Bullinger did, and apparently Jane took it to heart.

Most noticeable at the end of her life was Jane’s possession of the boldness in defending the faith so central to Protestant female piety. She did not hesitate to severely rebuke Harding for his recent conversion to Catholicism, unashamedly called him, “the deformed imp of the devil...the stinking and filthy kennel of Satan...the unshamefast paramour of the Antichrist...seed of Satan.”²¹³ She was not so blunt with John Feckenham, the priest Mary sent in hopes of converting Jane, but she stated her Protestant beliefs quite clearly and contradicted and questioned him. Long before her imprisonment, Jane exhibited similar behavior in front of one of Princess Mary’s ladies, Lady Wharton. Walking past the open door of the chapel in Mary’s residence, Lady Wharton curtsied to the bread, which had been left on the altar. “Why do you curtsy?” Jane asked. “Has my Lady Mary come in?” “No,” Lady Wharton said, “I make my curtsy to him that made us all.” “How can that be,” Jane replied, “when the baker made him?” It goes without saying that Mary was reported to have taken great offense when she heard of this comment.²¹⁴ All this from a young woman who had referred in a letter to Bullinger to “boldness, which ought never to exist in our sex.”²¹⁵ Based on her remark to him (she is excusing herself for presuming to write to such a learned man at all), Jane did not approve of boldness in women for its own sake and would not have condoned it in matters of ordinary life. Such concern for propriety, however, seems to have flown out the window when she was confronted with an opportunity to defend the faith. In such a context, the girl who thought

²¹² Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 54.

²¹³ Dudley, “To Dr. Harding,” 34-35.

²¹⁴ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 100.

²¹⁵ Grey, Lady Jane, “To Henry Bullinger: Letter 3,” 1553, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 30-33, 32.

boldness “ought never to exist in our sex” was calling her former tutor “the deformed imp of the devil.” This is the religious boldness of pious womanhood to which Trill refers.

Even though she never directly referred to herself as such, the evidence is there that Jane Dudley saw herself as fitting in quite well with the tradition of female piety surrounding her. She grew up in a world that emphasized this ideal of the Christian woman, and she appears to have internalized it. She would have been striving to be a Catherine Parr sort. But would Jane have been aspiring to be like Anne Askewe as well? Did she see herself not merely as a godly woman, but as a potential martyr? In later accounts, she would sometimes be portrayed thus.

The closest we can come to an “answer” to this question can be found in Jane’s carceral writings, the letters and prayers she composed as she approached martyrdom/execution. It is useful in such a discussion to understand the traditions of Tudor-era carceral writing that had already influenced hundreds of writers before Jane. Whether or not she had read any of the circulated writings or consciously attempted to imitate any of them, much of her style is consistent with the genre as a whole. Carceral writing of the period traditionally had four characteristics: a lack of physical emphasis, its power to make its writer more than a victim, the importance of the choice of the paper on which it was written, and the authority it was generally accorded.²¹⁶ The first of these—a lack of emphasis on the prisoners’ physical surroundings—is perhaps the one that is most immediately evident. Hardly anyone wrote about the conditions in which they were kept or their discomfort in prison (or relative comfort in comparison to other

²¹⁶ See Ahnert, Ruth, “Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation,” in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72 (2009), 168-192 and Zim, Rivkah, “Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience,” in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 72 (2009), 291-311.

prisoners), nor did they often record even a basic description of their cell or rooms.²¹⁷ Most of those who wrote had more substantial and eternal matters in mind.

More significantly, the act of writing from prison served to make the prisoners more than passive victims—the power such writings have had over the centuries, Ruth Ahnert writes, “suggests that prisoners were *not* simply ‘done unto.’”²¹⁸ There was nearly always an important purpose to carceral writing. Often, it was the simple human desire not to disappear, and the writing served as a basic defense against obscurity. To this end, graffiti were often carved into prison walls to ensure permanence, and letters and other reflections were often written into books rather than on loose paper in the hope that the writing would survive. Prisoners often wrote to defend/promote certain ideas and beliefs or to bear witness to any number of things.²¹⁹ Such writers expected or at least hoped that their writing would be widely circulated and read and thus sometimes took a very didactic tone. In the same vein, prison writers also often intended to shape the popular memory of themselves through their writing. Lastly, perhaps the most common purpose in writing was simply to sustain the prisoner through his long (and sometimes final) days.

The importance of the location of the writing is a consistent component in much carceral writing. As noted, the medium chosen—stone walls or books—often served to ensure that the words would outlast the writer’s life. When a writer wrote in such a place, it could be highly significant—perhaps they wrote in a Bible because it was the only paper they had access to, but perhaps we could read their paper choice as indicative of great hope that their message would survive. Sometimes the choice of book (or choice of place on the wall) was highly significant to

²¹⁷ Ahnert, “Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation,” 168-169.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 170.

²¹⁹ Zim, “Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience,” 131.

the content of the message. For example, Ahnert notes the implicit writing-himself-into-history that occurred when Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, made notes in an almanac.²²⁰

Perhaps the most important component of carceral writing was the authority traditionally accorded to it. The experience of imprisonment, writes Rivkah Zim, “gives the writer authority, importance, and respect in the eyes of readers who may relate such experience to their understanding of the human condition.”²²¹ She goes on to suggest the power imprisonment has for convincing metaphors (such as being “shackled by sin”) as well as to recall the ancient tradition of viewing a prisoner as “a superior or especially insightful being.”²²² This is what Zim calls “advantage in adversity.”²²³ Literary, religious, and historical traditions combined to make carceral writing something that was viewed with reverence, something that made readers sit up and take notice.

In several ways, Jane fell in line with the traditions outlined above. She was quite consistent in the lack of discussion of her physical circumstances. Although Jane had no truly harsh conditions to complain about, she still provided no description of the rooms in which she was staying or of her daily life. Historians have been left to reconstruct this information from others’ accounts. Although she made several references to her impending death, Jane’s only mention of her imprisonment was in the prayer she composed in the Tower, where she referred to herself as “grievously tormented with the long imprisonment of this vile mass of clay, my

²²⁰ Ahnert, “Writing in the Tower of London during the Reformation,” 180-181.

²²¹ Zim, “Writing Behind Bars: Literary Contexts and the Authority of Carceral Experience,” 291-292.

²²² *Ibid.*, 296.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 302.

sinful body.”²²⁴ She went on to pray for mercy and the Lord’s deliverance from “this miserable captivity and bondage.”²²⁵ The majority of the prayer was spent begging that she would be delivered from her imprisonment, yet she said very little here about its circumstances.

Jane’s apparent motivations are consistent as well with certain of those mentioned above. Her longest writing was her rebuking letter to Harding, and her second-longest was her record of the conversation between herself and John Feckenham. While the letter to Harding certainly displays concern for his soul, a sincere desire to rebuke him and set him straight, and a righteous anger at what he has done, all of which were undeniably part of her motivation in writing it, the document also fulfilled the function Zim mentions of sustaining the writer. This sort of argument was the sort of thing Jane loved and was good at long before her imprisonment. She had always loved a passionate debate of the Scriptures or argument about religious doctrine, and she had always been gifted in rhetoric. Writing such a fiery letter would have served as a great diversion for Jane during the long days in the Tower. It was the same for her record of the Feckenham conversation—while she likely believed her defense of the true religion would be circulated and edifying to others, recording and reliving a good debate would have also sustained Jane in her final days, providing a momentary distraction from the fate she knew was racing towards her.

Jane may have hoped her writings would be circulated and read. Even if it was not her express wish, she would surely have known that such an event was a distinct possibility. Yet her choice of paper—her Bible and prayer book—was indicative that she desired circulation and preservation of her words. Of course, it is always possible that she had no access to any other

²²⁴ Dudley, Lady Jane, “A Prayer Composed by Lady Jane Grey,” 1553 or 1554, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, (Ilfracombe, England: Arthur H. Stockwell Limited, 1951), 45-47, 45.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

paper, yet given that the conditions of Jane's imprisonment were not particularly harsh, it would seem strange had it been impossible for her to acquire a few loose sheets to write on. Her statement in her epitaph, "God and posterity will show me more favor,"²²⁶ certainly argues that Jane had looked ahead in her final days toward how she might be viewed in the future.

In such a context, it seems clear that Jane definitely intended to shape her memory through her writings—or at least understood that she *was* shaping her memory through her writings. What sort of impression does she want to leave? Perhaps that she is a martyr, an issue that will be discussed in detail later. However, there are several far clearer impressions that Jane gives in her writings.

Jane made sure that she comes across as well-educated and learned. Written in three languages, the epitaph she composed for herself would have accomplished such a goal alone: "If Justice is done with my body, my soul will find mercy in God. [Latin] Death will give pain to my body for its sins, but the soul will be justified before God. [Greek] If my faults deserve punishment, my youth at least, and my imprudence were worthy of excuse; God and posterity will show me favour. [English]"²²⁷ The unnecessary trilingualism was quite the performance, a dramatic farewell to the world, last words that showed her to be a gifted linguist. The rhetorical flourishes of her letter to Harding also functioned to demonstrate her education, as did her report of the Feckenham conversation. Here, both documents seem to say, was a young lady who knew her Scripture, her doctrine, her theology, and her rhetoric. Jane's intention may not have necessarily been to show off *per se*, but it is hard to imagine her composing works that would lead later writers to state that "[h]er knowledge of the Scriptures [was] equal to that of any

²²⁶ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 274.

²²⁷ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 273-274.

present day Doctor of Divinity”²²⁸ without being at least slightly self-conscious of the scholarship and learning she was demonstrating.

On a similar note, Jane presented herself—extensively—as doctrinally and theologically sound. Naturally, this is front and center in the Feckenham debate, where Jane gave herself all the long, detailed answers and made key points of the reformed faith: “I ground my faith upon God’s word, and not upon the church,” “I deny that, I affirm that faith only saveth...the faith we have only in Christ’s blood and His merits, saveth,” “By what Scripture find you that?,” “God forbid, that I should say that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ: for then either I should pluck away my redemption, or confess there were two bodies, or two Christ’s,” etc.²²⁹ Jane’s presentation of her sound understanding of doctrine was of course present as well in the Harding letter. A foregrounding of her religious beliefs also made its way into other documents. Her last letter to her sister Catherine, which accompanied the Bible Jane gave her, focused solely on matters of faith. An understanding of the *sola scriptura* doctrine was implicit as Jane exhorted Catherine to study the book which had “more worth than all the precious mines which the vast world can boast of...which shall lead you to the path of eternal joy: and if you with a good mind read it and with an earnest desire follow it, no doubt it shall bring you to an immortal and everlasting life.”²³⁰ As a side note, Jane’s comment here may demonstrate how well-informed she was. In 1546, the Potosí silver mines of Peru²³¹ had been discovered and opened with news of the incredible wealth inside trickling back to Europe soon afterwards. In 1553, the

²²⁸ Geary, Douglas, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, 34.

²²⁹ Dudley, Lady Jane, “A Conference,” February 1554, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 49-54, 50-53.

²³⁰ Dudley, Lady Jane, “To Catherine Grey,” 11 February 1554, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 55-57, 55.

²³¹ The area of Peru containing the mines later separated and is now Bolivia.

first picture of the silver mines was circulated throughout Europe, showing their vast size, and Jane may very well have had this in mind when she sat down to write her letter in 1554.

In addition to *sola scriptura*, *sola fide* and *sola gratia* were implicit in her writing as well: “Be penitent for your sins, and yet despair not... The which [an eternal life] I pray God grant you in His most blessed hour, and send you His all-saving grace.”²³² Her speech on the scaffold—something clearly intended for public consumption—set out reformed doctrine quite precisely: “I looke to be saved by none other meane, but only by the mercy of God, in the merites of the blood of his only sonne Jesus Christ... And now, good people, while I am alyve, I pray you to assyst me with your prayers.”²³³ It was common for scaffold speeches to request the prayers of the spectators, and Jane would certainly have felt she needed them in that moment as she prepared to die, yet it was evidently of importance to her that it be clear that she did not wish them to engage in the Catholic practice of prayers for the dead on her behalf. In her carceral writings and in her last speech, she wanted it known that “I dye a true Christian woman.”²³⁴

Jane also wanted it known that she did not manage alone. According to her writings, it was her faith that sustained her. Dependence on God was often mentioned in carceral writing, according to Brad Gregory, who writes that imprisonment forced a person to “acknowledge the self one was: a weak, enfleshed soul, created by and radically dependent on God.”²³⁵ In the prayer Jane recorded for herself, she repeatedly asked for strength to bear her imprisonment, if she was not to be released: “[G]ive me grace patiently to bear Thy heavy hand and sharp

²³² Dudley, “To Catherine Grey,” 56-57.

²³³ *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 57.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ Gregory, Brad S., *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 133.

correction.”²³⁶ She indicated that she was struggling not to feel she had been abandoned—a sentiment that surely must have been sincere, or she would not have recorded it—and asked God to “give me grace, therefore, to tarry at Thy leisure, and patiently to bear Thy works, assuredly knowing that as Thou canst, so Thou wilt deliver me, when it shall please Thee; for Thou knowest better what is good for me than I do... Only in the meantime arm me, I beseech Thee with Thy armour, that I may stand fast.”²³⁷ Jane asked that she might “refer myself wholly to Thy will” and be “assuredly persuaded that it cannot but be well all Thou doest.”²³⁸ Jane’s writing in other places indicated that her request was granted. Her postscript on the Harding letter was quite confident, proclaiming, “Be constant, be constant, fear not for pain / Christ hath delivered thee, and heav’n’s thy gain!”²³⁹ She declared at the end of her record of Feckenham, “[M]y faith had armed my resolution to withstand any assault that words could then use against me.”²⁴⁰ On a similar note, she assured her sister, “[I]f you will cleave to Him, He will stretch forth your days to an uncircumscribed comfort, and to His own glory.”²⁴¹ The letter has the sense that Jane knew this not only from the Scriptures but from her own experience in recent weeks. She had borne her imprisonment, she wanted her readers to know, and she had not done it alone. As nothing more than a weak sinner, Jane believed that she could have been sustained through her ordeal by God alone.

Most indicative that Jane had received the patience and assurance she had prayed for was her much-proclaimed attitude of happiness and rejoicing rather than grief and fear over her

²³⁶ Dudley, “A Prayer,” 46.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 46-47.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

²³⁹ Dudley, Lady Jane, “To Dr. Harding,” late 1553, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 34-47, 44.

²⁴⁰ Dudley, “A Conference,” 54.

²⁴¹ Dudley, “To Catherine Grey,” 57.

impending death. She wrote to her father that, although he might find her death “woeful,” she herself felt “there is nothing than can be more welcome than from this vale of misery to aspire to that heavenly home of all joy and pleasure, with Christ my Saviour.”²⁴² Equally, she went on and on to Catherine Grey about the same subject—indeed, she seemed almost excited: “[R]ejoice as I do, my dearest sister, that I shall be delivered of this corruption and put on incorruption. For I am assured that I shall, for losing of a mortal life, win one that is immortal, joyful, and everlasting.”²⁴³ She wrote of the “glory God bring me now, and you hereafter” and of how “with [Christ], even in death there is life.”²⁴⁴ Recording it on paper in a book that would likely last, Jane wanted it known that she could face her execution with rejoicing, thanks to the faith God had granted her.

The fact that Jane understood that her writing might very well be read and circulated beyond its intended recipient means that it is perhaps the best guide we have in determining how she wanted to be remembered, and therefore in getting at least a partial glimpse of how she viewed herself. It also means that Jane’s writing is highly performative. Aware that she was writing her letters and prayer to an audience potentially much larger than Harding, her father, her sister, and God, Jane had to have been at least somewhat self-conscious. She was composing personal documents, but she was also performing for an audience that could extend decades into the future.²⁴⁵ This does not mean that Jane was insincere in what she wrote or was presenting a

²⁴² Dudley, Lady Jane, “To Henry Grey,” February 1554, *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, ed. Douglas Geary, 48-49, 49.

²⁴³ Dudley, “To Catherine Grey,” 57.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 56-57.

²⁴⁵ This has obvious implications for the earlier observation regarding Jane’s comment to her father, “Although it has pleased God to hasten my death by you, by whom my life should rather have been lengthened” (“To Henry Grey,” 48). Not only is this a reflection of how a nearly-adult Jane viewed her father, it is a description of how Jane wanted other readers to view her

completely false version of herself. However, it does mean that Jane's writing should not be immediately assumed to be an entirely unmediated outpouring of her soul in which she threw caution to the wind and attempted to accurately capture all of her feelings. In understanding Jane's writing, one must keep in mind that she had motivations other than merely documenting her final days and giving a last message to Catherine.

However, rather than calling into question everything she said, the performative nature of her writing adds the appearance of sincerity to Jane's religious beliefs. Jane said that she was facing death with rejoicing, and we can take her at her word. The fact that she announced this in the midst of performing for an audience does not mean that she was panicking under the surface and dreading her execution. Although she acknowledged knowing intellectually that this was not the case, she had earlier felt herself somewhat abandoned by God, according to her prayer. She did not hesitate to say so then. Of course, as will be discussed later, there was a strong tradition of martyrs going joyfully to their deaths as evidence of true religion's sustaining power and their faith in the resurrection. Yet it seems that if Jane had truly believed herself abandoned in the end, she would have said so, or at least not so enthusiastically proclaimed her satisfaction. Yes, Jane was concerned with creating a memory of herself as one who stood fast for the Lord until the end. But it was not out of arrogance or pride that she wanted to be remembered thus—although there are times when Jane seemed to have a certain measure of both in her personality. Crafting a memory of oneself that served no greater cause than to glorify one's own person would not be a wildly attractive idea to a girl about to die. Unless the newly-created narrative served a larger purpose, it would be a meaningless activity when one is facing the scaffold. Jane's writing indicates that she wanted her faith and steadfastness remembered not merely for

father and thus seems even harsher. Jane was fully aware, given how the letter might very well circulate, that she was making a very public comment, despite the seeming privacy of the letter.

her own sake, but for the sake of the reformed religion. The surface purpose of her letter to Catherine is to encourage her sister to “[r]ejoice in Christ, as I trust you do, and seeing you have the name of a Christian be a true imitator of your Master Jesus Christ, and take up your cross, lay your sins on His back, and always embrace Him.”²⁴⁶ The greater purpose of her writing is to encourage all her Christian readers to continue in their walk, and others to turn to Christ. This was the purpose of a martyr who was burned without flinching—not to make himself into a much-praised phenomenon, but to evidence the power of God-granted faith. Similarly, Jane used her letter-writing performances to demonstrate the truth and substance of her religion. There was no incentive to lie here. Had she felt or believed herself abandoned by God, the implication would have been that her faith had been incorrectly placed, and Jane would have had no desire to encourage others to adopt or continue in a faith that she now had reason to conclude was false. It calls to mind a Scripture reference Jane would most certainly have been familiar with—Paul’s remark in his letter to the Corinthians that, if Christ had not been raised and there was no resurrection, “we are of all men most to be pitied.”²⁴⁷ That Jane, in the final days of her life, desired to put on a performance in which she boldly declared her faith makes her more sincere, not less sincere.

Jane certainly saw herself as a religious woman sustained by God in her imprisonment. But did she see herself as a martyr as well? It is first necessary to say a few words about martyrs in Tudor England. This is a vast subject which has been the subject of vast amounts of scholarship and is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a few issues ought to be noted. Among these is the simple fact that martyrs and martyrdom were hugely important in Tudor religious culture. With their lives and deaths summarized by John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and

²⁴⁶ Dudley, “To Catherine Grey,” 56-57.

²⁴⁷ I Corinthians 15:19 (New American Standard)

other such writings, they and their stories were widely known and revered. Martyrdom was not a thing of the past, and it was never far from the mind of a Christian in early modern England. It would have often been present in Jane's thoughts throughout her life—not necessarily that she herself would be a martyr, but simply that it was a significant, contemporary reality which had produced many relatively-contemporary heroes of the faith. The sixteenth century was a world in which martyrdom made sense and neither governments willing to kill for heresy nor people willing to die for their beliefs were strange things. That those the state considered heretics might be executed was a fact of life that went largely unquestioned. It was understood that part of the Church's role in society was to protect against heresy, an infectious danger to the faithful, and in a society where the Church and the state worked hand-in-hand, execution for heresy was perfectly logical. On a similar note, to suggest that Protestants and Catholics ought to "just get along" and put aside differences over doctrines like transubstantiation would have been a radical, and immediately rejected, idea. As Brad Gregory points out, doctrinal differences had direct bearing on salvation, and "to treat them indifferently showed that one did not grasp what was at stake."²⁴⁸ Tolerance made no sense in such a world, and thus frequent opportunities for martyrdom were an accepted part of life.

Martyrs generally went quite joyfully to their deaths. This was considered a "final act of evangelization," where the martyr's peace and happiness could be read as evidence of the truth of his faith.²⁴⁹ A terrified or grieving martyr could negate the hope that others would be drawn to Christ through him as well as negate "the purpose of martyrdom, which is to demonstrate a

²⁴⁸ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, 344.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 135.

deliberate sacrifice for the sake of Christ's true Church."²⁵⁰ Gregory notes that there is no reason to believe martyrs were faking their joy and contentment—they believed they were on their way to a blissful eternity with God and were dying the best way a Christian could.²⁵¹

Did Jane consider herself among the select group of martyrs? She seems to have felt at least a certain amount of pressure to convert. Plowden argues that Jane did see herself as tempted to do so, citing her prayer, "Suffer me not to be tempted above my power...[A]rm me, I beseech thee, with thy armour, that I may stand fast...above all things, taking to me the shield of faith."²⁵² After her conversation with Feckenham, Jane noted that she had needed her faith to see her through the discussion—"my faith had armed my resolution to withstand any assault that words could use against me."²⁵³ She also found the interviews with Feckenham unwelcome and distressing.

Yet Jane had given every indication that she would never succumb to such temptation. During her conversation with Rowland Lea, a friend of gentleman-jailer Nathaniel Partridge in whose house she was living, she had roundly denounced her father-in-law the Duke of Northumberland for his conversion to Catholicism shortly before his execution. Lea suggested that perhaps Northumberland had hoped for a pardon. Jane responded, "Should I, who [am] young and in my few years, forsake my faith for love of life? Nay, God forbid! Much more he should not, whose fatal [life's] course, although he had lived his just number of years, could not have long continued...But God be merciful to us, for he says, Whoso denies him before men, he

²⁵⁰ Escobedo, Andrew, "John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, 1563-1583: Antiquity and the Affect of History," *The Oxford Handbook to Tudor Literature: 1485-1603*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 504-520, 517.

²⁵¹ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*, 135.

²⁵² Quoted in Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 123-124 from Dudley, "A Prayer," 46-47.

²⁵³ Dudley, "A Conversation," 54.

will not know him in his Father's kingdom."²⁵⁴ Her comment does not mean she already saw herself as a martyr—Jane had not even been tried yet, and very few expected her to die at this point—but it does demonstrate that she was mentally prepared for, and perhaps even welcomed, the opportunity to be one.

As discussed earlier, Jane exhibited the outward contentment so typical of martyrs. Given how much emphasis she placed on her joy in her last writings, it seems to have been important to her that others notice how happy she was—also typical of martyrdom. Indeed, both Ives and Cook argue that a fear of breaking down was the motivation behind Jane's refusal to see Guildford during their final days.²⁵⁵ She was quite concerned that she be seen as steadfast, and she was, as argued earlier, sincere in her feelings.

Given her emphasis on her need for faith, her resistance to speaking with Feckenham, her emphasis on the joy with which she approached death, and her reactions to the conversions of Northumberland and Harding, it seems very likely that Jane saw herself, or at least wanted to see herself, as a martyr. In attempting to portray herself thus, she did not intend to deceive—she honestly believed it. Surrounded as she was by the tales of other martyrs, it would not have been at all strange for her to have focused on her status as a Protestant heir under a Catholic Queen and to have read Feckenham's interview as an Anne Askewe-style examination. If Jane felt pressure to convert—and she seems to have—it may have been because she actually believed that conversion would have or could have saved her life.

But would it have saved her? Was Jane actually a martyr? Obviously, she was not imprisoned for her beliefs as other martyrs were. When Mary regretfully held her young cousin

²⁵⁴ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 250-251.

²⁵⁵ See Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 274 and Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 190.

in the Tower, she had little concern for Jane's views on transubstantiation when compared with Jane's taking the throne for the last nine days. Jane's background of an expressly political "crime" is far different from that of Anne Askewe and her fellow martyrs. Jane was on trial for treason, not heresy. The complicating factor here is that Jane's situation was created because she was a *Protestant* heir. Had she been Catholic, Edward and his councillors would have had no interest in leaving the crown to her instead of to Mary. Jane was not on trial for being a Protestant, but she had been led to commit the treason that had led to her trial because of her Protestantism.

With this in mind, it is possible to argue that, had Jane converted to Catholicism, no one would have had anything to gain by replacing the new Queen Mary with her. As a Catholic heir, she would not have been nearly as dangerous to Mary, who was already struggling with the decision to execute and might under such a condition have let Jane live. If this is true, then Jane becomes a martyr—in this case, she would have been executed because of a refusal to convert and would have been choosing death over denial of Protestant truth. This has always been the story of later writers who wish to portray Jane as a martyr. But is this really how it happened?

Jane clearly felt pressure to convert. Some of this may very well have been self-manufactured by mental rehearsals of all the martyr stories Jane had heard for years and by the hope that she herself would be just as steadfast. She may also have been struggling with doubts about the truth of her Protestant beliefs, given the apparent victory of Catholicism in England.²⁵⁶ Yet surely there was some outside pressure as well. Mary sent Feckenham to Jane for a reason, and it was not to see how her cousin was doing. He was there in hopes of converting her. Possibly Mary intended, should he secure a conversion, to grant a reprieve; on the other hand it

²⁵⁶ Ives suggests that this may have been behind Northumberland's conversion before his own execution. See Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 118.

may simply have been a concerned attempt to save the soul of one who was about to die regardless.

Whether or not Jane was truly a martyr rests on Mary's true motivation in sending Feckenham, and this is impossible to know. Others, like Northumberland, had converted and been executed anyway, but Northumberland was executed for his crimes and not for any danger he created by simply existing. Jane was executed because her mere existence was dangerous, and it would have been less so had she been Catholic. Yet Mary was not acting alone—she had been pressed to execute by the Spanish ambassador, the Emperor Charles V, and certain of her councillors. There were great political concerns that went far beyond Jane's religion. It seems unlikely that a conversion on Jane's part would have convinced all these people, and therefore Mary, that it was safe to keep Jane alive.

Jane was likely not, then, a true martyr. While it is impossible to say with certainty what might have happened had Jane converted in her final days, she would likely have died anyway. She was not executed for her beliefs in the same way as Anne Askewe and hundreds of others. However, this does not change Jane's own view of herself as a martyr, a view shaped by the pressures of her circumstances and by the martyr-obsessed climate in which she had come of age.

It should also be noted that, while Jane's clearest presentation of herself is in her writing, she presents herself—less intentionally, of course—through her actions as well. I have relied mostly on her writing because there is so much of it and so little record of her actions in comparison. However, the strongest actions recorded are those she committed the day she accepted the crown, and they present a facet of her character that her writings, so religiously-focused, ignore.

When Jane was first offered the crown, she refused it, declaring that it was not her right but Mary's. Eventually, she said she must pray, knelt for a few moments, then accepted the throne. There is a strong suggestion of her religious faith here, of course—it seems that it was her time in prayer that clarified to her that she was to take the throne. That Jane would turn so immediately to God is very much in line with her Tower writings.

However, we also see a young woman with a strong sense of regal dignity. When Jane was told that Guildford would be made King alongside her, she adamantly refused. Guildford appears to have thrown something of a tantrum, but Jane was not swayed. Her refusal to allow Guildford the title of King is more radical than it appears in the modern world, where no one suggests that Queen Elizabeth II's husband ought to be King Phillip rather than merely Prince or that Queen Victoria's consort Prince Albert ought to have been crowned King. It goes without saying today that no man can be elevated to the throne merely by marrying the Queen, yet this was not an obvious conclusion in Jane's day. That Queen Mary I's husband would be King of England was assumed when she married Phillip of Spain, and the issue lurked behind many fears concerning Queen Elizabeth I's potential marriages. It was assumed that it was only natural for a Queen's husband to be King, but there appears to have been no question in Jane's mind that Guildford could be. Her reaction seems to have been hers alone, as there is no record of anyone urging her along in this—on the contrary, the councillors present likely expected a King Guildford. Jane's refusal speaks volumes about her sense that the crown was hers *alone*. It was not so much a sense of entitlement—she understood quite clearly that she was not particularly entitled to the throne—as it was a sense of specialness. She alone had been elevated, God had placed her alone in this situation, and she alone had divine permission to rule in place of Mary. Guildford was neither here nor there in any of this for Jane. Through her refusal to allow him to

be crowned, Jane presents herself as someone who saw something very special in her claim to the throne. Perhaps it was partly her religious sensibilities at work—God had given her assurance that she ought to be Queen, not that she and Guildford should reign together—mixed with a heavy dose of her own pride and dignity.

When Guildford and his mother attempted to leave the Tower—a public and humiliating abandonment for Jane—she had guards bar their exit, forcing her husband to remain with her. She had immediately absorbed that *she was sovereign*, and she wanted others to see her as such. Her husband and her mother-in-law were to regard her as Queen, and they were not going to act in such a way as to suggest to the people of London that she was not fully supported within her own family. Her sense of regal dignity would not permit a public abandonment and a public humiliation. She saw herself as Queen and expected Guildford to see her that way, too.

We can safely draw certain conclusions about how Jane Dudley saw and presented herself. Based on her behavior at her accession, she was someone who looked to God first for guidance. She was also someone with her fair share of regal dignity. Once she ascended the throne, she saw herself as a divinely-appointed sovereign, one who had authority *alone*. She intended to be treated accordingly. Based on her writings, she wanted others to see her as well-learned and educated (as she indeed was), sound in her reformed doctrine and theology, and knowledgeable about Scripture. Especially after her time in prison, she saw herself as completely dependent on God and the faith He provided, and she wanted this known as well. Jane would also have recognized herself as one of the traditional, pious females common to her era. In this context, she saw herself as someone who had (or perhaps would have, as she grew older), a role in building the evangelical church, its community, and its scholarship. She also saw herself as someone who should be, at God's prompting, as bold as possible when defending

the faith. Most importantly for her own spiritual standing, she considered herself as much a part of the elect as any man. Jane also likely saw herself as a martyr. As such, it was important to her that she convey her rejoicing at her death—an event she saw as the beginning of her eternal life, as “the day of death is better than the day of birth”²⁵⁷—as well as her dependence on God for the resolution to die peacefully and without wavering in the Protestant faith. Overall, Lady Jane Dudley saw herself first and foremost as one who “dye[d] a true Christian woman.”²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 276.

²⁵⁸ *Chronicle of Queen Jane*, 57.

Chapter Three

In the epitaph she wrote for herself, Jane Dudley declared, “God and posterity will show me more favor.”²⁵⁹ Posterity has shown her a great deal of favor indeed. Jane’s story has been told again and again in biographies, histories, religious publications, poems, novels, plays, and films, and her portrayal is almost always overwhelmingly positive. It is also almost always different. She is variously a saint and a martyr, an innocent young victim, a romantic nineteenth-century heroine, a young lady head over heels in love with her husband, a girl with little interest in religious matters, a twentieth-century liberal with a social conscience, a Victorian role model of meek womanhood, and a religious fanatic. Some of these, of course, are more outlandish than others.

Why should there be so many accounts over so many centuries, such interest in a teenager who mattered very little in English history? Jane Dudley should be a mere footnote—a short chapter at the most—in books on the Tudors and the English Reformation, not the subject of entire volumes herself. And why are there so many wildly different portrayals?

The answer lies paradoxically in the fact that Jane *did* matter very little in history. She was certainly prominent and well-known among her contemporaries and in the following decades—she had, after all, been proclaimed Queen—yet, since her reign and her death had been so insignificant, there was no widespread knowledge of what exactly had occurred during her time in the Tower. Had she perhaps been offered a reprieve in exchange for conversion? In an era of martyrdom it was easy to believe, and her writings were easy to circulate among Protestants living under Mary’s reign in England, as well as those who had been exiled abroad. Easy as it was to elevate Jane to martyr status, there is no great mystery why she became popular

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 274.

in the immediate aftermath. That there are still books that cast Jane in the role of religious martyr is to be expected—once Protestants became convinced of her martyr status, it was only natural to continue to celebrate her.

Later centuries' portrayals that are even further from the truth can also be credited to her historical insignificance. By the time Jane became popular again in the eighteenth century, her story was not widely known. It was even less so in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—since Jane had done nothing in history, she was hardly someone who was going to be emphasized in history lessons and books. This made her malleable, ready to be packaged any way one wanted. And packaged she was, usually in a portrayal that fit the spirit of its time.

The fact that Jane was such a perfect fit for any era explains part of the interest. The rest of it can be explained by the simple fact that her story is a fascinating, striking, and tragic one: an intelligent teenage girl of remarkably strong convictions is maneuvered onto the English throne for nine days, before she is ousted by the rightful heir, imprisoned in the Tower, and eventually executed. Her writings seem to suggest that she believed denying her faith might change her circumstances. At the heart of this all is the central religious struggle of Western history. Of course interest in the story would continue for centuries. It would have been stranger had it not.

How, then, did later centuries handle Jane Dudley? And how far off the mark were they? The most immediate popular portrayal of Jane was as a Protestant martyr. Due to the widespread belief that her conversion would have spared her life, Jane became a Protestant icon, especially during Mary's reign. She was included in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* ten years after her death, and reformers wrote of her in the immediate aftermath. John Banks wrote to Henry Bullinger that Christians had less reason to mourn than "to rejoice that the latest action of her life was

terminated in bearing testimony to the name of Jesus.”²⁶⁰ John Calvin called Jane “a lady whose example is worthy of everlasting remembrance.”²⁶¹ Miles Coverdale included the letter to Catherine Grey with his *Most frutefull, piththe and learned treatise how a Christian man ought to behaue himself in the daunger of death.*²⁶² Most common were the pamphlets and other publications that contained the texts of her letters, prayers, and scaffold speech. These were subversively distributed in England and circulated abroad among Marian exiles. As Jane had perhaps expected, her Tower writings became widespread reading material for other Protestants.

Yet this was all very much in moderation. Inclusion in Foxe’s book was certainly significant, given how widely read it was, but Jane was not a heavily featured subject. Foxe reprints her conversation with Feckenham and her scaffold speech and quotes from her letters to Harding, her father, and her sister, yet this is all a small part of a lengthy historical description of Mary’s accession and “the reversion to Rome.”²⁶³ Foxe never calls Jane a martyr, nor does he state that she was offered a reprieve in exchange for conversion. His inclusion of the Feckenham debate and the statement, “[Mary] caused Jane, being both in age tender and innocent from this crime, after she could by no means be turned from her faith, together with her husband to be beheaded,”²⁶⁴ imply this, but her martyr status is certainly not emphasized. At this point, Jane was never the sole subject of a publication (beyond short pamphlets). As was appropriate to her actual importance, she was most commonly a brief note in English histories of the period.²⁶⁵ The

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 287.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 288.

²⁶² Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 288.

²⁶³ Foxe, John, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*, ed. G.A. Williamson, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965), 192.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 343.

²⁶⁵ For example, see Sir Richard Baker’s *A chronicle of the Kings of England, from the time of the Romans government unto the raigne of our soveraigne lord, King Charles containing all passages of state or church, with all other observations proper for a chronicle / faithfully*

publications that call her a martyr tend to be collections of religious writings or histories of the Reformation. There appear to be no exclusively Jane Dudley biographies, in the way there would be in later centuries. Plowden suggests that the lack of emphasis on Jane, especially after Elizabeth came to the throne, was simply due to political incorrectness: “For reasons both personal and political,” she writes, “it became increasingly tactless to mention the Suffolk family in polite Elizabethan circles.”²⁶⁶ Jane was, after all, a convicted traitor whose younger sisters would continue to find themselves on the wrong side of the Queen.

The politics of the era aside, it is notable that Jane was emphasized relatively little in comparison with later centuries. Jane was publicly known, Jane was portrayed as a martyr in some religious publications, and Jane’s writings were reprinted to the encouragement of many Christians, but she was not a central focus for anyone. There were simply better martyrs, those whose status was not complicated by messy political questions. At seventeen Jane had obviously been very young, nearly an adult by Tudor standards but not quite. In this sense, she was an unimportant teenage girl, the twin factors of her age and her gender making her somewhat secondary in her era. That she expressed herself so strongly and came to be so celebrated and studied later, in spite of her contemporary secondary status, is itself remarkable.

Those early-modern writers (most of whom wrote after Elizabeth’s death) who give Jane more than a sentence or two do still emphasize her faith and her martyrdom. John Dunton and

collected out of authours ancient and moderne, & digested into a new method, (London: Daniel Frere, 1643); William Camden’s *Britain, or A chorographical description of the most flourishing kingdomes, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the ilands adjoyning, out of the depth of antiquitie beautified vvith mappes of the severall shires of England*, (London: George Latham, 1637); or William Dugdale’s *The baronage of England, or, An historical account of the lives and most memorable actions of our English nobility in the Saxons time to the Norman conquest, and from thence, of those who had their rise before the end of King Henry the Third's reign deduced from publick records, antient historians, and other authorities*, (London: Roper, Martin, and Herringman, 1675).

²⁶⁶ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 127.

Samuel Ward, while not explicitly calling Jane a martyr, certainly tend in that direction. Dunton ends the Jane section of his book *The house of weeping, or, Mans last progress to his long home fully represented in several funeral discourses, with many pertinent ejaculations under each head, to remind us of our mortality and fading state* with some lines she wrote in the Tower: “If God protect me, malice cannot end me.../ After dark night, / I hope for light,” and with an epitaph written about her: “My Race was Royal, sad was my short Raign; / Now in a better Kingdom I remain.”²⁶⁷ Ward, whose book is a collection of speeches of Christians at their deaths, emphasizes Jane’s inscription to the Lieutenant of the Tower, “Let the glassie condition of this life neuer deceiue thee, There is a time to bee borne, a time to die; But the day of death is better then the day of Birth.”²⁶⁸ Their contemporaries Christopher Love and Thomas Mall present the full-fledged martyr portrayal. In Love’s history of the Reformation (also known as “an account of Babylon’s fall”), he prints the letter to Catherine Grey and then tells us that Jane was offered a reprieve if “she would embrace the idolatrous worship of the Church of Rome.” Yet “she held Death and Christ in greater esteem. Lady Jane had presence of mind...to defend her religion with a Christian fortitude, supported from holy writ.”²⁶⁹ Mall’s book is a collection of martyrs’ writings, and he includes most of Jane’s. He opens with mention of the reprieve and

²⁶⁷ Quoted in Dunton, John, *The house of weeping, or, Mans last progress to his long home fully represented in several funeral discourses, with many pertinent ejaculations under each head, to remind us of our mortality and fading state*, (London: Black Raven, 1682), 245-246.

²⁶⁸ Quoted in Ward, Samuel, *The life of faith in death: Exemplified in the liuing speeches of dying Christians*, (London: Augustine Mathewes, 1622), 23.

²⁶⁹ Love, Christopher, *The strange and wonderful predictions of Mr. Christopher Love, minister of the Gospel at Laurence Jury, London who was beheaded on Tower-hill, in the time of Oliver Cromwell's government of England. Giving an account of Babylon's fall, and in that glorious event, a general reformation over all the world. With a most extraordinary prophecy, of the late revolution in France, and the downfall of the antichristian kingdom, in that country*, (London: 1651), 63.

Feckenham's intention to "reduce her from the Doctrine of Christ to Queen *Maries* Religion."²⁷⁰

None of these four writers focused exclusively on Jane, of course, but their books were all collections of figures who served as Christian examples, and they each saw fit to include Jane.

For roughly a century after her death, Jane did not have a particularly significant portrayal, but when she did it was usually as a Protestant martyr or at least as a faithful Christian. However, in more recent years, the religious portrayal of Jane Dudley has once again received attention in certain modern biographies written for a Christian market. There is often even stronger emphasis here on her faith and role as a martyr than there was originally. For example, Douglas Geary's 1951 collection of Jane's writings was prepared with the explicit intention that God might "use them to bring blessing to everyone who reads them."²⁷¹ The focus in the memoir Geary writes by way of introduction is clearly on the religious Jane. Mentioning her time with Catherine Parr, Geary declares, "[Jane's] religion became so deeply rooted in her heart, that as she afterwards evinced, no temptation, not even the promise of life and fortune, was sufficiently powerful to induce her to abandon her faith, and she has rightly been considered by the reformed writers as fully entitled to the crown of martyrdom."²⁷² He emphasizes Jane's opportunity to convert, claiming that it would have prevented the execution: "many solemn promises of life and fortune were made, if she would yield to their solicitations. To her eternal honour and doubtless to her immortal advantage, the sin of apostasy was not hers."²⁷³ Writing more recently in 2004, Cook also presents an explicitly Christian portrayal of Jane. A divine

²⁷⁰ Mall, Thomas, *A cloud of witnesses, or, The sufferers mirrour made up of the swanlike-songs, and other choice passages of several martyrs and confessors to the sixteenth century, in their treatises, speeches, letters, prayers, &c. in their prisons, or exiles, at the bar, or stake, &c.*, (London: Robert Boulter, 1665), 150.

²⁷¹ Doig, C.V., "Foreword," in *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, 7-9, 9.

²⁷² Geary, Douglas, "Memoir of Lady Jane Grey," in *The Letters of Lady Jane Grey*, 10-23, 11.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 18.

purpose is read into the events of Jane's early life—for example, Cook sees Jane's arrival at court as God's plan to bring her to a place where she would come to see the truth of the Biblical teachings she had learned during her time with her Reformed tutor John Aylmer.²⁷⁴ Of course, Cook emphasizes that Jane had an opportunity for a life-saving conversion and did not take it. "Lady Jane," she states, "would now find a place among that long and noble register of martyrs of the Christian Church – those who 'loved not their lives unto death' – choosing to suffer rather than to deny Christ. Without doubt she had 'kept the faith' ... Jane had well understood the lesson Jesus taught to his followers, that it is of no advantage to a man if he should gain the whole world, yet lose his soul."²⁷⁵ Cook finishes her account with the resounding words, "Like the Apostle Paul, she had fought a good fight, finished the course and kept the faith. Henceforth there was laid up for her a crown of righteousness—a crown that none could take from her."²⁷⁶

The religious, martyr-driven portrayal of Jane began in the sixteenth century and would continue into the modern era. It was not the only sort of portrayal to follow such a timeline—another kind also became popular shortly after her death and would continue for centuries as well. This one emphasized Jane's innocence even more than her religion. The same year as her execution, George Cavendish wrote verses in the voice of Jane's ghost: "I was your instrument to work your purpose by; / All was but falsehood to blear withal my eye. / O ye counselors, why did ye me advance... / Forsooth, you were to blame, and all not worth a straw."²⁷⁷ Cavendish, it should be noted, was very much not a Protestant—he was in the service of Cardinal Wolsey. He

²⁷⁴ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 43. The Greys' choice of Aylmer as a tutor is equally seen as God's hand at work: "The choice of such a man [a Reformed scholar] to be Jane Grey's first tutor would have a profound effect on his pupil's entire life, and in it we may clearly trace God's overruling purposes for the girl." *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 188, 191.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁷⁷ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Myster*, 279-280.

was a political moralizer, and much of his writing concerned the fall of princes genre; his use of Jane and the events around her is a secular object lesson of the chance rise and fall of the great. She was innocent, yet it had not mattered.

1562 saw the appearance of another poem, *The lamentacion that Ladie Jane made, saiyng for my father's proclamacion now must I lese my head*. "I pray thee yet remember afterward," she says, "that thou hast headed an innocent."²⁷⁸ In the coming centuries, Jane's pure innocence would be reflected in paintings. The best example of the many produced in the nineteenth century²⁷⁹ is Paul Delaroche's 1833 *Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, which depicts a blindfolded Jane being helped to the block by Feckenham.²⁸⁰ As Ives argues, Jane is the epitome of innocence here. Young, helpless, blind, pale, and fragile, Jane is the only light in a dark scene that has been moved indoors. With her ladies in a state of emotional collapse in the background, the small girl is surrounded only by strong, imposing men. "This," Ives writes, "is rape."²⁸¹ It is the perfect illustration to accompany the thousands of pages written to proclaim Jane's innocence.

Innocent, helpless Jane Dudley continued into the twentieth century. Writing in 1909, Richard Davey mentions Jane's question, "Can I go home?" after being informed that she was no longer Queen. "God help her!" he writes. "What a world of innocence was in that little sentence, 'Can I go home?' Alack! Alas! Poor little victim of so much ambition and such damnable intrigue, there is no more earthly home for thee!"²⁸² Davey seems to see Jane almost

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 280.

²⁷⁹ Twenty-four paintings of Jane were exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1827 and 1877. Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 279.

²⁸⁰ See Image 2.

²⁸¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 278.

²⁸² Davey, Richard, *The Nine Days Queen: Lady Jane Grey and Her Times*, (London: Methuen & Co., 1909), 288.

as a child in her innocence, inventing a story where she sobs in her nurse's arms on the scaffold.²⁸³ Geary's 1951 letter collection's foreword and brief memoir, while portraying Jane as a martyr and a Christian example, emphasize innocence as well. In the foreword, the Reverend C.V. Doig calls her "the innocent victim of the sins of others. Lust for power has been the curse of those in high places all down the centuries, and here we see it remorselessly sweeping to her death, in the most tragic of circumstances, one who was herself utterly devoid of it."²⁸⁴ Geary writes that she possessed "the innocency of childhood."²⁸⁵

The perennial mark of the stress on Jane's innocence is the name by which she is generally known: Lady Jane *Grey*. She was born and lived most of her life as Lady Jane Grey, yet she came to the throne and died as Lady Jane Dudley. She signed her letters from the Tower Jane Dudley. It was clearly how she thought of herself. There is no reason she should have gone on to be known almost exclusively as Jane Grey. Her claim to the throne did not come through the Greys; it came through the Tudors by way of the Brandons. That her father's name was Grey is irrelevant. Jane Dudley is likely known today as Jane Grey, and has been for centuries, because of the associations that came with the name Dudley. Often synonymous in a broader sense with corrupt government, within the context of Jane's own story the name John Dudley had come to represent an ambitious, power-hungry grasp for the throne. Dudley, therefore, was certainly not the sort of name one wished to attach to the innocent Jane. Many older writings merely call her "Lady Jane"—implying royal blood by not giving her a last name—but in later accounts she would revert to her more innocent maiden name.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 343.

²⁸⁴ Doig, "Foreword," 7.

²⁸⁵ Geary, "Memoir of Lady Jane Grey," 23.

Emphasis on Jane as the innocent victim of the circumstance, a tragic figure swept away by others' ambition, a young damsel in distress, drifted naturally into an interest in romantic legend. It was a natural fit with the romanticism in art and literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of these legends persist in modern biographies, but one that seems to have completely disappeared is the myth that Jane was pregnant at her death. This suggestion appears in the anonymous 1832 *Memoirs and literary remains of Lady Jane Grey*: "Fuller asserts, that it was reported at the time of Lady Jane's death, that she was in the most interesting situation in which a married woman can be placed; and observes, 'cruelty to cut down the tree with blossoms on it...' but he adds, 'God only knows the truth thereof.'"²⁸⁶ The writer questions the truth of the rumor but seems to consider it a distinct possibility. However, he acknowledges that answering "so delicate a question" at this point is impossible.²⁸⁷ Francis Laird repeats the myth in *Lady Jane Grey, and her times*: "It is an interesting fact, hinted by Fuller, that it was reported she was 'as ladies wish to be who love their lords' at the time of her suffering."²⁸⁸ While one can appreciate the effect this story has in heightening the tragic nature of Jane's life, anyone at all familiar with Jane's circumstances would understand that it is highly unlikely that there is any truth in it. Perhaps this is why it has been dropped from modern biographies which otherwise tend toward romantic details. It was common practice for women condemned to death to be examined for signs of pregnancy, their executions delayed if they were found to be with child. That Mary would have executed a pregnant Jane seems improbable; that there would be no discussion recorded of whether or not it would be proper to do so is even stranger. Not that

²⁸⁶ *Memoirs and literary remains of Lady Jane Grey*, (London: H. Colburn, 1832), 117.
(Unknown author)

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ Laird, Francis Charles, *Lady Jane Grey, and her times*, (London: Sherwood, Neely, and Jones, 1822), 384.

Jane and Guildford²⁸⁹ had any opportunity to conceive a child—the only contact they could have had would have been during supervised walks in the Tower courtyard, if that. It has often been suggested that Jane and Guildford spoke during their time in prison, and it is quite possible. That they had sexual relations is impossible to the point of being ridiculous, even without considering that Guildford had sworn off sex with Jane the previous summer when she had refused to make him King.

Perhaps the most entertaining legend is one cited at the end of Davey's book. He writes as though he does not believe it himself, but feels he must include it—he has something of the air of Chaucer's apology for his bawdier tales: Chaucer certainly did not make these stories up himself, he promises, he just overheard them, and feels bound to repeat them. Davey sounds much the same, yet the legend has been impossible to find elsewhere, suggesting he invented it himself. He first tells a long-winded story about Jane's corpse: it laid out for an unusual length of time, waiting for a burial permit to inter a heretic in St. Peter-ad-Vincula. Certainly, he assures his reader, it was eventually buried there. Yet there is a story, he admits, that the body was taken to Bradgate, Jane's family home, for burial, "and secretly interred in the parish church. And with this tradition, of course, is connected the legend of the coach with the headless occupant, said to appear before the gates of Bradgate on the anniversary of Lady Jane's death."²⁹⁰ Not that Davey wants his readers to believe any such thing.

Common in both modern and nineteenth-century Jane literature are the stories that she was beaten over her refusal to marry Guildford and that the judge who condemned her went mad at his death. The first of these stories has its origins in a 1560 Italian text, which stated, "Although [Jane] resisted the marriage for some time...she was obliged to consent, urged by her

²⁸⁹ The thought that the father was someone other than Guildford would be even more fantastical.

²⁹⁰ Davey, *The Nine Days Queen*, 347.

mother and threatened by her father.”²⁹¹ Of course, this could very well mean that Jane was beaten, especially given Jane’s complaint to Ascham about the treatment she received for everyday missteps: “I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea, presently sometimes with pinches, nips and bobs and other ways (which I will not name for the honour I bear them).”²⁹² It is not beyond possibility that she was physically abused until she agreed to marry Guildford. Yet the text does not say so explicitly, and it is equally possible that her mother nagged her constantly or presented good reasons for the marriage and that her father merely threatened her with violence. In any event, the story ought not to be repeated with anywhere near the certainty that it often is. Laird and the *Memoirs* both assert the incident as absolute fact, as do many other biographies. Agnes Strickland, in her *Lives of the Tudor and Stuart Princesses*, incorrectly quotes the Italian text: “The reluctant submission of Lady Jane to this marriage was extorted by the urgency of her mother and the violence of her father, who compelled her to accede to his commands by blows.”²⁹³ More recently, Cook declared in 2004, “Her mother took her recalcitrant daughter in hand, and gave the girl such a beating as only a woman of Frances Grey’s physique could bestow.”²⁹⁴ Nearly every piece of modern fiction, movies and novels alike, plays the incident to great dramatic effect. Naturally—it *does* make for a dramatic scene, and it creates more sympathy for Jane for having to grow up in such a harsh home and for being forced into a marriage she detests. But there simply is not strong evidence for its truth.

²⁹¹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 183.

²⁹² Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*, 36.

²⁹³ Quoted in Strickland, Agnes, *Lives of the Tudor and Stuart Princesses*, (London: G. Bell, 1888), 85.

²⁹⁴ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 110.

The judge story does not appear quite as frequently—perhaps because it does not concern Jane personally—but it is still cited in multiple biographies from multiple eras. Cook dramatizes it thus:

Six months later Judge Morgan himself was dying; but one thing from which he could not escape, even to his last moments, was that fixed look which Jane had given him as he pronounced sentence. He was haunted by it: ‘Take the Lady Jane from me!’ he cried out in despair! ‘Take away the Lady Jane!’ Remorse for passing a sentence of guilt on an innocent girl drove him mad before he died.²⁹⁵

The story does have a more credible source than the beating or the pregnancy rumors—Laird quotes from John Foxe, who claimed that the judge “shortlie after fell mad, and in his raving cried continuallie to have the Ladie Jane taken awaie from hym, and so ended his lyfe.”²⁹⁶ Ives, certainly a serious academic, cites the incident as fact, quoting Foxe.²⁹⁷ Foxe was, of course, a contemporary, and there is nothing to suggest that the judge did not suffer from Jane Dudley hallucinations, yet it has the air of something more fanciful than factual. It seems a bit too dramatic, a bit too perfectly serving of the innocent Jane theme, and a bit too suited for a novel to be accepted as unquestionable truth. Whatever it is, it has received great attention in much of the literature.

Most romantic of all Jane portrayals are those that paint Jane and Guildford’s marriage as a great love story. More common in fiction, this approach occasionally appears as well in biographies purporting to be accurate. Star-crossed lovers naturally make for a more entertainingly tragic story. There is of course no historical evidence that the Dudleys’ feelings

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 167.

²⁹⁶ Quoted in Laird, *Lady Jane Grey, and her times*, 384.

²⁹⁷ See Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 232.

for each other were affectionate in the slightest; on the contrary, they seem to have lived separately throughout most of their marriage. There would have been very little opportunity for any sort of romance to develop between them, and the only recorded interactions we have are of Guildford's joining in the chorus for Jane to take the throne and his later tantrum when she refused to make him King. Neither casts their relationship in a particularly warm light.

Yet a love story often has a certain public appeal. Laird's 1822 biography is interested in the romance, perhaps for this reason. Laird assures his readers that, although the Jane-Guildford match was undeniably arranged,²⁹⁸ Jane and Guildford may still have had feelings for each other, since their families had known each other for years.²⁹⁹ Laird does acknowledge the brief nature of the engagement, only to remark upon how Guildford and Jane did not have time to engage in the courtly love tradition of medieval literature. Apparently, Laird is not overly familiar with the marriage customs of Tudor nobility. Stranger still is Laird's tendency to draw from Nicholas Rowe's 1791 play as though it is a historical document, quoting Guildford as praising Jane's "auspicious beauty" which "cheer'st ev'ry drooping heart."³⁰⁰ Laird observes that it is quite natural for Jane to have fallen for Guildford; indeed, she could not have failed to do so as he was "a very comely tall gentleman: and not being quite twenty years of age, he was the more likely to interest a girl of sixteen."³⁰¹

However, Laird is attempting to give a history of Jane, and thus his primary focus is her succession to the throne and subsequent execution, not her marriage. Fictional accounts have more freedom to concentrate on the romance. The sixteenth and eighteenth centuries both

²⁹⁸ Laird views the marriage, as many have, as an attempt by Northumberland to place his son on the throne, calling it "a match of ambition." *Lady Jane Grey, and her times*, 201.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 203.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 204.

produced fictitious letters from Jane to Guildford, giving her lines like, “Farewell sweet Guildford, know our end is here. Heaven is our home; we are but strangers here,”³⁰² and “What comforts can a wretched wife afford / The last sad moments of her dying lord? / ... While Heav’n shall leave one pulse of life / I still am woman, and am still a wife.”³⁰³ Of greater length and importance is the play Laird often quotes from, *Lady Jane Grey: A tragedy, of five acts*. It reads like a bad imitation of Shakespeare. There is first of all competition for Jane’s heart—Guildford Dudley loves her, but so does the Earl of Pembroke. Jane, of course, marries Guildford, and he professes undying, selfless love as they discuss the coming consummation of their marriage. “Here then I take thee to my heart forever,” Jane says, “the dear companion of my future days.”³⁰⁴ The Earl responds to the news of their marriage with a lengthy speech on Jane’s virtues. Throughout the rest of the play, Jane turns to her husband Guildford for comfort and advice. She takes the crown at his urging, but he presses her not because he desires the throne himself or is told to press her by others, but because he thinks she deserves such glory. His reaction is not to demand to be King, as he did historically, but to take a warm, husbandly pride in his wife’s achievement. He responds with, “Wake ev’ry tuneful instrument to tell it, / And let the trumpet’s sprightly note proclaim / My Jane is England’s Queen! Let the loud cannon / In peals of thunder speak it to Augusta; / Imperial Thames, catch thou the sacred sounds, / And roll it to the subject ocean down: / Tell the old deep, and all thy brother floods, / My Jane is empress of the wat’ry world!”³⁰⁵ Guildford spends the remaining acts proclaiming his loyalty to Jane and

³⁰² Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 281, from Michael Drayton’s *England’s Heroicall Epistles* (1597).

³⁰³ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 282, from James Cawthorn’s “An Epistle in the Manner of Ovid” (1753).

³⁰⁴ Rowe, Nicholas, *Lady Jane Grey: A tragedy, of five acts*, (London: W. Lowndes, J. Nichols, S. Bladon and W. Nicoll, 1791), 19.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

supporting her as she attempts to save England from disastrous Catholic rule. The character bears no resemblance to the historical Guildford Dudley demanding to be made King and announcing he will not sleep with Jane until she grants him the title. Instead, he reads more like Margaret Thatcher's husband Denis, who gave a speech in the midst of the Westland affair proclaiming that, recent troubles aside, the party could "like the soldiers at Agincourt cry, 'God for Margaret, England and St. George!'"³⁰⁶ and whose response to a reporter after the 1979 election victory was to beam with pride and say, "I'm terribly proud; wouldn't you be?"³⁰⁷

Of equal ridiculousness is the epistolary novel *Lady Jane Grey: An Historical Tale*, also published in 1791 by an unknown author. If *A tragedy of five acts* is sub-par Shakespeare, *An Historical Tale* is Jane Austen on a bad day. In it, Jane Grey writes letters to fictitious cousins and friends, and they write to each other about her. She sounds just like any other Regency-era teen preserved in literature, telling her cousin Anne, "I am a little recovered from those first emotions which our separation excited."³⁰⁸ Soon, Jane writes a letter to her sister Catherine Grey, recounting her first meeting with the dashing Guildford Dudley, which occurs only after a certain amount of contrivance on her friend's part that is worthy of Emma Woodhouse and a certain amount of subterfuge from her suitor. "Amazement, confusion, joy, a thousand different passions pressed upon my heart at once, and deprived me of speech," she writes.³⁰⁹ The subsequent conversation, declaration of love, and marriage proposal sound as though they have occurred between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy or Elinor Dashwood and Edward Ferrars, not

³⁰⁶ Thatcher, Carol, *Below the Parapet: The Biography of Denis Thatcher*, (1996: London, HarperCollins), 233. Thatcher was quoting the famous speech before the battle at Agincourt from Shakespeare's *Henry V*, which ends with the words, "Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'"

³⁰⁷ *Married to Maggie*, DVD (Politico's Media, 2003).

³⁰⁸ *Lady Jane Grey: An Historical Tale*, volume 1, (1791), 10.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 62.

Jane Grey and Guildford Dudley. Jane goes on to report, “The tenderness of his affection for me seems every day to increase.”³¹⁰ She does not sound here like a woman who will soon have to force her husband by legal decree not to abandon her publicly.

Like all other periods, the Victorian era left its mark on Jane as well, constructing her as a perfect role model for Victorian ladies: discreet, modest, virtuous, gentle, sweet, and quiet. Books were published for young girls, encouraging them “to imitate the character of the beautiful and illustrious woman whose sad, yet in another sense glorious career [this book] records.”³¹¹ Needless to say, the Jane that the nineteenth-century woman was to emulate was not the Jane who had waspishly mocked Lady Wharton’s belief in the mass, refused her husband the crown, and called her former tutor a “deformed imp of the Devil.” Especially not the latter. Victorian and Edwardian writers went out of their way to deny Jane’s authorship of the letter to Dr. Harding. They rarely offered any evidence for why Jane had not written it, other than that it simply was not the sort of thing that their Jane would write. Davey argued, “Certainly its wording, of a vulgar polemic type, has nothing in common with the Christian forbearance and piety of her undisputed compositions. It is difficult to believe Jane Grey can have used such expressions as ‘thou deformed imp of the Devil,’ ‘sink of sin,’ ‘white-livered milksop,’ and even worse.”³¹² Laird had even stronger doubts: “Can it for a moment be supposed that such epithets as ‘deformed imp of the Devil’ – ‘stinking and filthy kennel of Satan’ – ‘unshamefast paramour of Antichrist’ ...have issued from the mind or pen of an amiable young female? We think not; and therefore consider it unnecessary to notice this epistle any further.”³¹³ He stated that he

³¹⁰ Ibid., 76.

³¹¹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 286, from D.W. Bartlett’s *Life of Lady Jane Grey*.

³¹² Davey, *The Nine Days Queen*, 321.

³¹³ Laird, *Lady Jane Grey, and her times*, 346.

agreed with the opinions of others “that the violent and flaming zeal, with the coarse indelicate language of it, cannot have been the genuine effusion of a mind so gentle and amiable as that of our heroine.”³¹⁴ Laird also wrote of Jane’s generous, selfless nature—while in prison, he stated, she was “more affected with the sufferings of her husband and father than with her own.”³¹⁵ Needless to say, there is no evidence that Jane gave either Henry Grey or Guildford Dudley very much thought at all until right before her execution.

What is implicit alongside all of this is the suggestion of female inferiority. After remarking that Jane had more education than is useful for a female,³¹⁶ the *Memoirs* writer expressed surprise that, when condemned to death, she was able to offer to her companions the comfort “which, from her youth and sex she might naturally be supposed to have stood in need.”³¹⁷ He later called her “one of the most interesting women that ever adorned [the world.]”³¹⁸ The assumptions that young women are fragile, emotional creatures and that females serve to adorn the world were repeated by Geary in 1951.³¹⁹ He also attacked Queen Mary by calling her “unfeminine and blood lustful”³²⁰—a woman who would execute others is apparently not fully a woman—and provided a rather bizarre explanation of why Jane finally took the crown. Historically, it is true that Guildford was pushed to persuade her as well with “prayers and caresses,”³²¹ and Jane gave in shortly thereafter—after pausing for a brief period of prayer. It is most likely that Jane accepted the throne because of the pressure from all sides and because she felt that her time in prayer had impressed upon her that she should do so. The opportunity to

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 345.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 286.

³¹⁶ *Memoirs and literary remains of Lady Jane Grey*, 28.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

³¹⁹ See Geary, “Memoir of Lady Jane Grey,” 17, 22.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

³²¹ Quoted in Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 187.

preserve the Reformed faith would have weighed heavily. Geary, however, credited Guildford with being the deciding factor: “Lord Guildford Dudley...was prevailed upon to add the accents of love, to the wiles of ambition, and beyond this female fortitude could not be expected to go.”³²² Considering we have no evidence that Jane felt anything for Guildford, it is an odd conclusion that it was his kisses that convinced her to take the throne after she had vehemently refused it. Given Jane’s religious fervor, the religious issues involved would be a better place to lay the blame. Yet in Geary’s version, it is impossible to imagine a female *not* being persuaded by a pretense of love.

In recent years, the Victorian model of soft, gentle Jane and its assumptions have been largely, explicitly rejected. Nearly all modern writers are quick to point out that the Harding letter is, by all accounts, Jane’s work, and her contemporaries saw nothing wrong with it—in fact, they celebrated it and made pamphlets of it. Plowden’s book presents a Jane who “possessed her full share of Tudor family pride.”³²³ This Jane is stubborn, outraged at certain points, self-confident, and forceful. Plowden goes so far as to write that Jane “had all the markings of a true fanatic. In another age she would have been the perfect prototype of the partisan, the resistance or freedom fighter, the urban guerrilla, perfectly prepared to sacrifice her own or anyone else’s life in the furtherance of some cause.”³²⁴ Hester Chapman rejects the Victorian Jane completely, characterizing her instead as somewhat arrogant in her beliefs and pointing out how naturally she falls into giving orders once she becomes Queen.³²⁵ Like Plowden, she points out the fanaticism in Jane Dudley, calling her “self-examining, fanatical,

³²² Geary, “Memoir of Lady Jane Grey,” 15.

³²³ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 93.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

³²⁵ Chapman, Hester W., *Lady Jane Grey: October 1537—February 1554*, (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), 118.

bitterly courageous, and utterly incapable of the art of compromise in which the Tudors specialized...Just as she would have gone to the stake for her beliefs, so she would have sent anyone else there.”³²⁶ To Cook, Jane was a potent combination of deep religious faith and Tudor blood: “[She] was a true Tudor, strong, opinionated, and indignant; but, more importantly [she had]...a deep attachment to the faith of the gospel.”³²⁷ The modern Jane is part arrogant, confident Tudor and part devoted Protestant.

Modern academic biographers—Ives and Plowden are the best examples—tend to take the most distant view of Jane Dudley. The Victorian view is rejected, as are the romantic portrayals of Jane. The common emphasis on innocence is handled differently. There is generally an acknowledgment that Jane was a victim of circumstance who did not deserve to die—Ives calls her execution “a crime and a folly”³²⁸—yet there is also an acknowledgment that Jane *had* committed treason and *had* accepted the throne. She was not, in that sense, wholly innocent. Additionally, Jane’s account is not always taken at face value. For instance, Ives questions the accuracy of her complaints to Ascham about her parents’ severity, suggesting that, while there may have been something more there, it also may have been simply “teenage exaggeration.”³²⁹ Plowden doubts that Jane truly had not suspected anything about her imminent succession until she was informed she was Queen.³³⁰ Jane is not portrayed as a martyr, but the sincerity of her religious beliefs and their significance to her life is usually emphasized by modern scholars. Ives takes all of her last writings as perfectly sincere: “What she wrote in the Tower she wrote from passion and conviction, bringing us closer to the real girl than anything

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

³²⁷ Cook, *Lady Jane Grey: Nine Day Queen of England*, 159.

³²⁸ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 268.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

³³⁰ Plowden, *Lady Jane Grey and the House of Suffolk*, 91.

but her speech from the scaffold.”³³¹ Ives does not doubt the strength of her convictions, nor does he doubt that they are the source of her strength in her final days. Plowden, of course, goes further, taking Jane’s faith seriously and noting her constant devotion to it, to the point of fanaticism.

While modern biographies have a greater concern with historical accuracy than did those of centuries past, novels have changed little, and twentieth-century films present their own version of the Jane-Guildford love story. The first movie was a silent film produced in 1923, *Lady Jane Grey: The Court of Intrigue*; unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, it does not seem to have survived. In 1936 *The Tudor Rose*³³² was released. The Jane portrayed here is a sweet, kind, rather empty-headed girl who has no interest in learning. Quite obedient, her only refusal to do as she is told comes when she is commanded to marry Guildford Dudley, but she quickly warms to the idea when she discovers he is that nice young man she has been talking to recently. They are played as “star-crossed lovers,”³³³ and Jane’s great concern in the end is her husband’s death, not her own. The movie is a saccharine 1930s romantic tragedy, and Jane seems far more like her sister Catherine than herself.

The most recent movie is the 1986 *Lady Jane*. A historical travesty, it has two main interests, neither of which has anything to do with the actual events of 1553: telling a heated love story about Jane and Guildford, and giving Jane Dudley an anachronistic commitment to social justice. Accurately, Jane is portrayed as a religious young woman committed to the reformed religion—in contrast, religion has little to no role in the 1936 film. She has a brief conversation

³³¹ Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 253.

³³² Occasionally called *Lady Jane Grey* or *Nine Days a Queen*. I was not able to get access to this film myself and thus am drawing heavily on Carole Levin’s article “Lady Jane Grey on Film,” in *Tudors and Stuarts on Film*, ed. Susan Doran and Thomas S. Freeman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 76-87.

³³³ Quoted in Levin, “Lady Jane Grey on Film,” 81.

with John Feckenham early in the movie when he visits the Grey estate in which she tells him she “would die to free our people from the chains of bigotry and superstition,”³³⁴ clarifying that she mostly means the Catholic Church and transubstantiation. Her comments here sound rather like the historical Jane. Later, the incident between Jane and Mary’s lady (i.e., “The baker made him”) is depicted relatively accurately.

Yet Jane’s religious sensibilities are less important in her life than her love for Guildford. At first, Jane does refuse to marry him and is violently beaten for it; she agrees because King Edward asks her to do it for his sake. Guildford, who is shown to be leading a life of drunken gambling and nights with prostitutes before his marriage, is equally resistant, but the wedding goes forward. In subsequent weeks, Jane and her new husband discover a shared social commitment, a desire to help the poor, and a distaste for the policies instituted by older generations of nobility. The attitude Jane takes toward social problems is not wholly inconsistent with her historical character, and it is not difficult to imagine her taking such stances had she lived four hundred years later. Yet such concerns, although they had played a role in the 1540s commonwealth movement, simply were not the norm among sixteenth-century noblewomen, and Jane’s interest in them makes the film rather bizarre. The movie’s historical consultant Frank Prochaska called it “1960s socialism writ 1550s.”³³⁵ Naturally, once Jane finds herself on the throne, she and Guildford make the most of their nine days to turn England’s social policies and devalued currency around.

As Jane and Guildford find common ground over social justice early in their marriage, they fall deeply, passionately in love. We see their first kiss, a brief conversation immediately after the consummation, and happy, carefree summer afternoons spent riding a horse, floating

³³⁴ *Lady Jane*, DVD, Dir. Trevor Nunn, (Paramount Pictures: 1986).

³³⁵ Quoted in Levin, “Lady Jane Grey on Film,” 82.

down a stream, and holding each other under a tree. Once in prison, the couple is eventually allowed to see each other; the time before their executions is filled with romantic conversations. Jane draws strength not from her faith but from Guildford's love. "I could never stay true if you weren't here," she whispers as he holds her. "We'll both fly beyond their reach so their reach can't touch us," she says on their last night together. "And at last we'll be nothing and nobody. We'll be each other. I need this time forever...Next time I see your face I want it for eternity."³³⁶ Of course, Jane gives no scaffold speech. There is no time for political or religious concerns in the movie's climax.³³⁷

Unlike the films, modern fiction has little interest in the Jane-Guildford love story. Yet disregard for historical fact abounds in other areas. Some Jane novels bear little resemblance to the historical Jane and her story—for example, Susan Meissner's *Lady-in-Waiting*,³³⁸ which tells two stories at once, one set in the modern world and one set in the Tudor era, told by Jane Grey's dressmaker. The novel attempts to put a modern spin on the Jane Grey story by examining the choices Jane could and did make. This is bizarre and anachronistic—sixteenth-century people, especially women, simply did not think in terms of the "life choices" so often stressed in modern psychology. Jane mostly functions as a device for a modern young woman to realize how much control she has over her own life, and in truth she could have been left out of the novel entirely. At the very least, she ought to have had her name changed, as the story told is so far off the mark it is a bit misleading to name her character Jane Grey. The focus of Jane's story is her supposed love for Edward Seymour, to whom she was once betrothed. As the author admits, there is not a shred of evidence regarding Jane's feelings toward any man. It is understandable that historical

³³⁶ *Lady Jane*, Dir. Trevor Nunn.

³³⁷ I am somewhat embarrassed to admit that the romantic young girl in me thought all the love scenes in this film were absolutely wonderful. The historian in me was, of course, appalled.

³³⁸ Meissner, Susan, *Lady-in-Waiting*, (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2010).

fiction writers often must fabricate incidents, create characters, and guess at true feelings, but in order to be fully deserving of the label *historical* the central points of the plot must be true. It is the periphery, not the center, that can be subject to invention. This novel, on the other hand, has as its center a romance which may or may not have ever existed. If one wishes to stray that far from historical fact, one is better off just writing a purely fictional book with completely invented characters. It is odd even to consider *Lady-in-Waiting* a fictional portrayal of Jane Grey, as the character in it simply does not look at all like Jane.

At other times the story at least follows largely along historical lines with some strange, and largely unnecessary, alterations. Such is the case with Ann Rinaldi's middle-grade novel *Nine Days a Queen*, which follows Jane's life from her time at court with Catherine Parr up to her execution. Religion plays absolutely no role at all beyond vague mentions that Jane is Protestant while Mary is Catholic, and Jane is urged to take the throne to protect Protestants. It has no place in Jane's daily life, and historical religious actions on Jane's part that cannot be removed are cast in a different light. When Jane learns Edward has left her the crown, she eventually asks to pray, as the historical Jane did. Yet everything known about the historical Jane indicates that this was sincere turning to God for guidance, and it seems very likely that she proceeded to accept the crown because she felt assured that He willed her to do so. The fictional Jane here asks to pray because, "It was the only way to get time." She merely kneels to think.³³⁹ This is ridiculous. Jane was an extremely religious person and a devout Protestant. It was the very center of her being. No scholarly or even popular account attempts to deny this. The whitewashing of her well-documented religious beliefs is absurd. Since Rinaldi has no religious faith for Jane to lean on in her final days, her Jane must draw strength from some other source.

³³⁹ Rinaldi, Ann, *Nine Days a Queen*, (New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2005), 133.

Bizarrely, Jane is convinced she will receive a last-minute reprieve, and she tells herself this even as she mounts the scaffold. This, too, is ridiculous—there is no evidence that Jane ever hoped a last-minute reprieve was possible, and there is much evidence that she never even considered it.

Refreshingly, there is at least one fictional portrayal of Jane Dudley that attempts to be painstakingly accurate. Alison Weir's *Innocent Traitor* is nearly flawless on every level.³⁴⁰ Her attention to detail makes it clear that Weir has previously published multiple scholarly histories of the Tudor period. She writes in the first person, switching between characters every chapter and including nearly everyone—Jane herself, Henry and Frances Grey, Catherine Parr, the Duke of Northumberland, Jane's nurse Mrs. Ellen, etc.—and seems to have come as close as possible to actual thoughts and attitudes. Everything seems to be a very educated guess, and nothing appears wildly fabricated. The dialogue is also quite well done, with an authentic ring that allows historical quotes to be interspersed without standing out. Weir does include the offer of a reprieve in exchange for a conversion, yet this is important for Jane's psychological state at the end, as the historical Jane's writings suggests she may have believed conversion would change things for her. The only flaw in the novel is that Jane's attitude after her death sentence is not perfectly handled—Jane does not lean quite as much on her religion as her prayers and letters demonstrate, and Weir does not include the text of very many of these, nor does she include the scaffold speech. However, this is difficult to manage without Jane appearing as the unrealistic Victorian saint of other books. Overall, Weir's novel is as accurate as can be expected in fiction, the best that can be hoped for outside of plain academic history, and better than some books that claim to be history.

³⁴⁰ Weir, Alison, *Innocent Traitor*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 2006).

The vast array of portrayals of Jane Dudley largely fit their own eras. Quite naturally—repackaging her in a contemporary model increases her appeal for each century. Thus, the era of Marian persecution required a martyr, a girl who valued Reformed truth more than life; the romanticism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries played up the romantic details of her story and invented more, making her an even more pathetically tragic figure; the Victorian era made Jane the gentle, submissive girl all contemporary girls were trained to be; and the modern period made her less religious, gave her a social conscience, and was willing to show her naked in bed with Guildford. The common thread was a greater interest in playing to a contemporary audience than in presenting a purely historical Jane.

Conclusion

How then should Lady Jane Dudley be presented? What should be our best understanding of her?

The first chapter examined Jane through the prism of what could be expected for any young noblewoman of her era, questioning whether Jane was as unusual and remarkable as she is often made out to be. And she *was* remarkable in many ways, but not dramatically, exceptionally so.

Much has been written on Jane's harsh childhood and the abuse she endured from her parents. Strict, distant, demanding parents were by no means unusual in the sixteenth century, and Jane was certainly not alone among her peers in surviving a childhood that looks quite cold by modern standards. Yet her upbringing does seem to have been worse than most, her parents stricter and perhaps even cruel. Her situation was unusual in its severity, but not in its basic characteristics.

Much has also been written on Jane's great learning and education. She was celebrated in her own time and would be for centuries to come. In recent times, even her more basic skills—i.e., her fluency in Latin as a young teenager—have come to seem quite exceptional. However, by the standards of her own time, Jane's skills were not terribly bizarre. A thorough knowledge of the classics was an essential part of any decent education, as was rhetoric. It had been unusual a mere generation before Jane for women to be particularly well-educated, and thus Jane stands out against a broader background, but in Jane's own generation there was a sudden flowering of female education, and she was not the only young noblewoman of the 1540s and 50s to receive a remarkable education. She was one of a small number—perhaps twenty—but

she was still one of a number. Jane was among the best of her own generation; she was not necessarily *the* best, nor were her abilities unique.

Jane has also been praised and remarked upon for her assertive boldness. She appears to have been determined to, or at least hoped she might, shape her own destiny. This is not always consistent with the modern image of a sixteenth-century woman, yet it was not particularly uncommon even among women associated with Jane's own family—for example, Mary Tudor, Queen of France, and Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk. The second chapter's discussion of female piety pointed out the boldness expected of a woman in defending the faith. Jane might have been particularly assertive and bold at times, and her attempts to shape her destiny—at least the destiny of her memory—played out on an exceptional stage, yet her basic characteristics were not unique among contemporary noblewomen.

Jane certainly should not be written off as a typical Tudor-era girl—much about her truly was remarkable. Yet any emphasis on her exceptionality should be tempered with the understanding that she was not as remarkable as she may seem from a modern perspective.

The second chapter analyzed Jane's view and portrayal of herself, suggesting this might be the closest thing we have to an accurate portrayal of her. Through her behavior, we see a girl who was possessed of a dignified regal bearing and a sense that the right to rule was hers alone, perhaps because God had given it to her alone. Jane's presentation of herself through her writing, which falls very much in line with the long tradition of female piety, was primarily in religious terms. As well as showing herself to be well-educated and learned, she presented herself as doctrinally and theologically sound and as a faithful and sincere Christian. She quite possibly saw herself as a part of the martyr tradition. Aside from casting herself as a martyr, Jane's portrayal of herself does not seem far from the truth of who she was. She wanted to be

seen first and foremost as a Christian, and this is a highly appropriate way to see her—most of Jane is incomprehensible without understanding the depth of her religious convictions.

It is possible to place her in something of a “semi-martyr” category. Jane was not *executed* for her religion, and changing her religion would likely have changed nothing. Yet it is still possible to argue that Jane *died* for her religion, if in her mind a conversion would have changed everything. If Jane truly believed she had a choice—and it seems very possible that she did—and she chose her faith, then she made something of a martyr of herself. That said, the reprieve stories told later are unnecessary and likely untrue.

Later portrayals of Jane that unquestioningly call her a martyr ought to be rejected, and the reprieve story at least questioned. Other issues of religious portrayals are a bit more complex in escaping the bounds of provable, recorded history; for instance, Cook’s attempt to read the hand of God in certain point of Jane’s life. I do not entirely *reject* this—it is certainly possible that there was a divine purpose in the Greys’ selection of a tutor, in Jane’s time at court with Catherine Parr, and so on—but it is unprovable conjecture.

Modern portrayals that act as though Jane was unique in her linguistic abilities, had uniquely horrid parents, and spoke her mind to an unheard of degree ought to be rejected as well, as they demonstrate far too much presentist bias. As is clear in the third chapter, the Jane-Guildford love stories, the romantic portrayals, and the Victorian Jane are not credible either—they all make Jane into something she was not.

But all those are merely ways Jane Dudley should *not* be portrayed. Is there a good—or perhaps just better—way to do it? Jane should be portrayed first and foremost in terms of her religion. She should not be portrayed as a true martyr—although the issue of what she believed about her situation should be noted—so much as a faithful Protestant very much consumed with

spiritual matters. Jane had a remarkably strong faith for someone so young, and was certainly prepared to die for it. She wanted to be seen as someone whose faith strengthened her at the end and who relied continually on her God, and her story is most meaningful in this context. The legacy Jane wished to leave was one of Protestant faith. Beyond that, she is merely an interesting footnote in centuries of struggles for the English crown.

Secondly, Jane can very accurately be seen as a remarkably strong character. She was not uniquely strong or uniquely bold, but her strength and boldness were still notable aspects of personality. That she seems to have so often irritated her parents suggests that she was more outspoken than was generally expected, and even in an age where religious women were expected to boldly defend the faith, not everyone was prepared to address their former tutor as a “deformed imp of the devil.”³⁴¹ That there was less interest in Jane in her own century than would later develop suggests how unimportant she was in her own era. She was young, she was female, her status as a martyr was dubious, and her innocence was not complete. She was not the sort of person who was anyone’s first choice for a hero. That she wrote so powerfully and lastingly and that she would go on to acquire such significance in spite of the encumbrances of her time is a credit to the strength of her personality.

Jane’s composure in the days before her death—her debate with Feckenham was not the work of a distracted, distraught girl—and in her moments on the scaffold is worthy of note as well. There was a tradition of martyrs who went joyfully to their deaths, but that did not make dignified composure easy, and there are plenty of stories of Tower prisoners going to pieces on the scaffold. Jane’s calm is especially notable in light of her youth—at seventeen, she was

³⁴¹ Dudley, “To Dr. Harding,” 34.

young, very young. Additionally, her strength in refusing to share the throne with Guildford, and in responding immediately when he attempted to leave the Tower, should not be taken lightly.

Modern biographies do tend to emphasize both Jane's faith and strength, although not as much as I would prefer. Aside from these issues, her childhood, education, marriage, and even reign itself—nothing much happened beyond Mary's rebellion—are mere footnotes. Jane did not much matter historically, and the minute details of her life are not particularly relevant to her slight historical significance. Beyond the central facts of who Jane was and what she left in her writings, she herself is not of any particular interest. The only other notable feature of her story is the debate over Northumberland's motivations and involvement and the other details of the various versions of Edward's device, and this has little to do with Jane the person. Frankly, a Jane without a remarkable faith and a remarkable strength is not worth much. Ives suggests at the end of his book that "the fundamental justification for remembering Jane is the justification for remembering Anne Frank centuries later. They speak for the multitude of brutality's victims who have no voice."³⁴² Yet Jane is not a member of a particular group of victims like Anne; in order for Jane to be some sort of representative who can speak for other victims, one has to cast a very broad net of all those who were unjustly executed under a monarchy, or all Protestants who died under Mary, or those in history who considered themselves martyrs but technically were not, or those who were forced into political crimes in situations beyond their control, or... The fact is that Jane has no defined group of victims to speak for in the way that Anne can represent children who died in the Holocaust. Jane was in a unique, rather bizarre situation. With all the conflicting versions of Jane published over the centuries, she has barely been allowed to speak for herself, much less to speak for a multitude of others.

³⁴² Ives, *Lady Jane Grey: A Tudor Mystery*, 293.

Jane is not best remembered as a member or representative of a group; Jane is best remembered as Jane. And the most salient part of Jane and her story is not her childhood or her education, the events that pushed her onto the throne or the events of the nine days she occupied it; it is Jane as a Protestant and Jane as a girl of remarkable strength. Not Jane as a martyr, not Jane as the only assertive, determined woman in Tudor England, but Jane as a woman of strong faith who was excessively outspoken. It is not so far off from how she intended to be remembered.

Image 1



Mary Tudor and Charles Brandon, Widowed Queen of France and the Duke of Suffolk. Painting to mark their 1515 marriage.

French Hood Images, <<http://www.kimiko1.com/research16th/FrenchHood/1500/MaryCharlesBrandon.html>>

Image 2



Delaroche, Paul. *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*. 1833.

Wikimedia Commons, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_Delaroche_-_The_Execution_of_Lady_Jane_Grey.jpg>

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