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# Gender, Sex, and Execution: The Analysis of Elizabeth Barton (1506-1534) and Anne Askew (1521-1546) Prior to their Executions for Treason

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of MA in History

The University of Huddersfield

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the role of gender and execution in the early modern era. It examines whether Elizabeth Barton's gender made it easier to cast doubt and defame her character. At the age of nineteen, and after an extended illness, Barton began having visions which quickly came to expose King Henry's reign and authority. This thesis also examines the early stages of Barton's visionary pursuit and how she emulated medieval mystics such as Margery Kempe, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena, and Bridget of Sweden. The public penance Barton endured was to ensure that she would not be remembered as a saint or a prophet after her death.

This thesis also examines Anne Askew's gender in relation to her torture and execution. It argues that as a gentlewoman Askew should have been exempt from any form of torture. However, it enabled anxieties around the Henry VIII's declining health and Catherine Parr's increased influence to be realised. It also examines Askew's *Examinations* and the two conflicting characterisations set out, the first by Anne Askew herself as a strong, independent, young women. The second by John Bale, her posthumous publisher as, weak, young, and tender.

It does not appear that Askew and Barton had many similarities, they practiced opposing religions, their level of education was vastly different, and their marital status differed. However, the way in which they experienced religion in a period of religious upheaval was significant.

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## 1 Introduction

This thesis examines the relationship between gender and sex and the treatment of two women, Elizabeth Barton and Anne Askew, prior to their executions for treason. It ascertains whether Elizabeth Barton's gender made it easier to cast doubt and defame her character despite the claims of her alleged wrongdoing only surfacing after her initial crime. It also determines whether Anne Askew was brutally tortured for information regarding a potential Protestant plot against Queen Catherine Parr and used as a scapegoat when, again, this had nothing to do with her initial crime of heresy. The punishment for treason and heresy was death by hanging and death by burning respectively, therefore, anything done to these women in the interim between their arrests and execution was unlawfully founded by ulterior motivations. It therefore asserts that gender was a significant factor in how religious transgressions were dealt with in the early modern period as these women were unfairly treated after their crimes due to their gender.

Elizabeth Barton was born in 1506 in the village of Aldington. There is a lack of information about Barton's family and upbringing, however it is almost certain that Barton was uneducated in her youth and illiterate. When Barton first entered 'the pages of history' in 1525 she was working as a servant in the house of Thomas Cobb.<sup>1</sup> Alan Neame speculates that Barton may have been an orphan, due to the fact that she was 'accused of almost every crime and shortcoming' during her arrest and defamatory sermon yet there was no mention of any family members to come to her defence.<sup>2</sup> However, Neame also suggests that it was possible that Barton came to work in the house of Thomas Cobb through an illegitimate family connection which explains his leniency towards her regarding her long period of illness.<sup>3</sup> Barton left the Cobb household for St. Sepulchre's nunnery in 1526 after she started getting visions.

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<sup>1</sup> Neame, A. (1971). *The Holy Maid of Kent: The Life of Elizabeth Barton, 1506-1534*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

Anne Askew was born in 1521 to Sir William Askew and Elizabeth Wrottesley at the family home in Stallingborough, Lincolnshire.<sup>4</sup> Askew was brought up in a Catholic household and given a good education alongside her four siblings; Francis, Edward, Martha, and Jane.<sup>5</sup> The significant turning point in Askew's life was the death of her sister Martha and Askew's subsequent arranged marriage to Martha's betrothed Thomas Kyme. This signified the start of Askew's rebellion as she made it clear that she did not want to marry Kyme, stating it was against her free will.<sup>6</sup> Although Askew behaved like a 'Christen wyfe should', she subsequently converted to Protestantism and was 'vyolentlye drove her oute of hyse howse'.<sup>7</sup>

There does not seem to be many similarities in how Barton and Askew were brought up; they practiced opposing religions, their level of education was vastly different, and their marital status differed. However, it was how they experienced their religion, in a period of religious upheaval that was significant. Although the country was going through a reformation, both women were charged and executed for treason against the king. Barton was Catholic and strongly opposed the Protestant reformation and made these views clear within her prophecies. However, Askew was also charged and executed as part of a Protestant Plot against the king. G.W. Bernard stressed that the Henry's later religious policy was more akin to 'Catholicism without the Pope', however this just made it clear that Henry could just tailor make his policy to dispose of any threat.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Watt, D. (2004, September 23). Askew [married name Kyme], Anne (c. 1521–1546), writer and protestant martyr. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. Retrieved 21 Mar. 2019, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-798>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Bale, J., 1521-1546. (1547). *The first examinacion of anne askewe latelye martired in smythfelde, by the romyshe popes vpholders, wyth the elucydacyon of iohan bale* London, Printed in, Beilin, E. (Ed.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Bale, J., 1521-1546. (1547). *The latter examinacion of the worthy servaunt of God mastres anne askew knight of lyncolne shyre, latelye martyred in smythfelde by the wicked synagogue of antichrist*, Printed in, Beilin, E. (Ed.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 92.

<sup>7</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard, G.W. (2016). Henry VIII: 'Catholicism without the Pope?'. *The Journal of Historical Association*, 101 (345), pp. 201-221.



A vast majority of the primary evidence used for Barton derives from the sermon transcribed from original documents in the public record office by L.E. Whatmore in 1943, *The sermon against the Holy Maid of Kent and Her Adherents, Delivered at Paul's Cross, November the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1533, and at Canterbury, December 7<sup>th</sup>*.<sup>9</sup> The sermon was delivered by John Capon, bishop elect of Bangor, this is problematic as his sole goal was to defame Barton, as expected by the king. Capon's elevations had depended on him siding with the king over his marriage to Anne Boleyn.<sup>10</sup> This sermon highlighted that Barton challenged the gender norms of the early modern period, for example, Barton fell ill for a period of around seven months and thus was, sick, poor, unmarried, and undesirable for a potential suiter. Barton was not fulfilling her duties as a servant for an extended period of time and Thomas Cobb may have been unable to support her any longer. Also, due to her inability to find a suitable match because of her illness, her only way to secure her livelihood was to embellish her trances surrounding her very real illness into prophecies. This aligns with the current historiography as Barton is still viewed as 'failed prophet and an embarrassment to her church' by Retha M. Warnicke and a 'failed counter reformation saint' by Diane Watt.<sup>11</sup> Watt also suggests that Barton was attempting to emulate medieval visionaries such as Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Catherine of Siena, and Bridget of Sweden.<sup>12</sup> However, while this thesis does argue that Barton did attempt to emulate these four women, it was her English contemporaries with whom she had the most similarities. Julian and Margery both had a period of sickness in which they feared for their lives and then began prophesying, whereas Catherine and Bridget did not. However, Barton would have been aware of Bridget and

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<sup>9</sup> Whatmore, L.E. (1943). The Sermon against the Holy Maid of Kent and Her Adherents, Delivered at Paul's Cross, November the 23rd, 1533 and at Canterbury, December the 7th. *The English Historical Review*, 58 (232), pp. 463-457.

<sup>10</sup> Louisa, A. (2009, May 21). Capon [Salcot], John (d. 1557), bishop of Salisbury. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. Retrieved 7 Dec. 2018, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4592>.

<sup>11</sup> Warnicke, R.M. (1983). *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, p. 69; Watt, D. (1996). The Posthumous Reputation of the Holy Maid of Kent. *Catholic Record Society*. 23 (1), pp. 148-158.

<sup>12</sup> Watt, D. (1997). Reconstructing the Word: The Political Prophecies of Elizabeth Barton (1506-1534). *Renaissance Quarterly*. 50 (1), p. 149.

Catherine and her life can be read within a female prophetic tradition, especially when her prophecies became more politically based.

Uniquely, most of the evidence for Askew was written and provided by Anne Askew herself. It was posthumously collected and edited by John Bale, a reformist scholar, into two separate editions, *The First Examination* and *The Second Examination* with the aim of framing her as a Protestant martyr.<sup>13</sup> The *Examinations* are a chronological account of Askew's arrest and interrogations, however, Bale edited Askew's raw version with elucidations after each significant event.<sup>14</sup> Elaine Beilin argues that most of what we know about Askew originates from Bale, especially about her early life and family, however, he had an agenda to frame her as a Protestant martyr through her *Examinations*.<sup>15</sup> A significant argument stands that Bale may have been the only person that had access to Askew's raw manuscript and thus it is not known how much of the this survived his edits and elucidations. Askew certainly did not conform to the gender norms of the early modern period and Bale had identified this when editing the *Examinations*. Bale was concerned she was too headstrong and unrelatable as the persona that she gave off in the *Examinations* was that she was consistently disrespectful of male hierarchy. Therefore, he attempted to represent her as 'weak and tender' in order to sell her as a more relatable female Protestant martyr with more recognisable female traits. Askew's *Examinations* highlights the illegality of her treatment, and the obviousness of her broken body on the pyre on her execution day made her torture undeniable to anyone in attendance. Tony Lilly states that she was a rare example of a female 'Reformist martyr gentlewoman tortured illegally before her death', and

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<sup>13</sup> Askew, A., 1521-1546. (1547). *The first examinacio[n] of anne askewe latelye martired in smythfelde, by the romyshe popes vpholders, wyth the elucydacyon of iohan bale* London, Printed in, Beilin, E. (Ed.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Askew, A., 1521-1546. (1547). *The latter examinacion of the worthye servaunt of God mastres anne askew knight of lyncolne shyre, latelyre martyred in smithfelde by the wicked synagogue of antichrist*, Printed in, Beilin, E. (Ed.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford:Oxford University Press.

<sup>14</sup> Beilin, E. (Ed.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press,p. xvi.

<sup>15</sup> Beilin, p. xix.

Theresa Kemp argues that the Henrician 'Anglo-Catholics made Askew famous through the process of her trial and public execution'.<sup>16</sup>

To thoroughly examine Askew and Barton in relation to gender and sex, an understanding of how women were treated in the era needs to be undertaken. Therefore, this thesis is separated into three chapters, the first of which examines 'Women and Gender in the Early Modern Era'. This chapter is then separated into three subchapters, which examine, 'Women and Religion', 'Women and the Humoral Theory' and 'Gender Expectations'. 'Women and Religion' examines how women were able to access religion and religious materials in the Henrician era. It investigates key legislation enacted during Henry VIII's reign and analyses the consequences this legislation had on women. It also analyses key teachings from the Bible such as the creation story and determines the consequences Eve's portrayal in the Bible had for women. 'Women and the Humoral Theory' examines the differences in male and female bodies in relation to the humoral theory and how this affected women. It also examines teachings from ancient Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers such as Hippocrates (460 BCE-370 BCE) Claudius Galen (129 AD-200 AD) and Aristotle (384 BCE-322 BCE) as these would have influenced key elements of culture and learning regarding medicine and the contributions they made to the humoral theory regarding women and gender. 'Gender and Expectations' examines gender roles of both men and women living in the early modern era to establish the dynamic of early modern households and what was expected of women. It investigates women at different points in their lives, single, married, divorced, and widowed to establish if changing status have undue consequences on their livelihood.

The second chapter, 'The Defamation of Elizabeth Barton', analyses the trial and execution of Barton arguing that she was prior to her execution. This chapter is split into three subchapters which investigate, 'Elizabeth Barton's Early Life', 'The Prophecies', and 'The Sermon'. 'Elizabeth Barton's

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<sup>16</sup> Kemp, T. (1999). Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth Century Heretic and Saint. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 52 (4), pp. 1021-1045. doi: 10.2307/2901834; Lilly, T. (2015). Textual Authority and Figurative Language in Anne Askew's Examinations. *English Literary Renaissance*, 45 (1), pp. 60-89.

Early Life' examines Barton's early life and how she made the transition from servant girl to a respected nun with a spiritual advisor. 'The Prophecies', analyses the evolution of Barton's prophecies, from the innocuous to the prophecies that signed her death warrant. 'The Sermon', analyses the sermon given at St. Pauls Cross to determine whether Barton's gender made it easier to cast doubt on her activities and whereabouts with her spiritual adviser on several occasions where she was supposedly unaccounted for. The preacher who gave the sermon, John Capon, and the location of the sermon, St. Pauls Cross, is also examined to obtain a thorough understanding on how Barton was treated at the sermon and prior to her execution.

The third chapter, 'The Execution and Torture of Anne Askew', examines the treatment of Anne Askew prior to her execution and is separated into three subchapters, 'Anne Askew's Examinations and John Bales Influence', 'Anne Askew's Torture and the Plot against Catherine Parr' and 'Anne Askew's Posthumous Reputation'. 'Anne Askew's Examinations and John Bale's Influence', examines Askew's *Examinations* and draws specific attention to how it was adapted to Bale's agenda. 'Anne Askew's Torture, and the Plot against Catherine Parr', analyses and determines whether the torture of Askew was necessary. 'Anne Askew's Posthumous Reputation' investigates Askew's reputation after her death. It evaluates how John Foxe dealt with her martyrdom and analyses the woodcuts made of Askew's execution.

This subchapter division allows for a concentrated and detailed analysis of women and gender in the time period and aids in the examination of how women were treated prior to their executions in the Henrician era. Askew and Barton were treated in distinctly different ways, but both had their gender used against them in their arrests, interrogations, and executions. Both Askew and Barton were executed in exceptionally brutal circumstances, which demonstrates the threat Henry VIII believed these women posed. Even in their deaths, Henry VIII had to make sure that these women could not exert any influence that could spark a posthumous following. However, he ultimately had to make an example of what would happen to any potential future dissenters under his reign.

## 2 Historiography

The Treason Act of 1351 was an all-encompassing act that detailed treasonous offences. Elizabeth Barton prophesied that King Henry VIII 'should [dey] a villaynes dethe'.<sup>17</sup> This should have been incorporated into the 1351 act 'When a man doth compass or imagine the death of our lord the king' as Barton was wishing or wanting the king dead.<sup>18</sup> However, Barton was arrested under the Act of Attainder which enabled Henry to sentence and execute Barton without trial. The attainder stated that Barton, 'shalbe convycte and atteynted of High treason, and shall suffer suche execution paynes of deth' it also stripped her of all her rights.<sup>19</sup> The attainder was a swift and easy way to dispose of Barton and as an added benefit, it removed her rights to disable her ability to legitimately retaliate. Bypassing the trial enabled Henry to keep Barton out of the public eye and reduce her exposure. As a female prophet who diminished Henry's kingship regarding his marital affairs, Barton may have gained public sympathies based on her gender and her growing status as the Holy Maid of Kent.

However, in contrast to Elizabeth Barton, Anne Askew was executed for heresy. This offence would not have been covered in the 1351 Act and did not become punishable by death for a first offence until the introduction of the 'Acte abolishing divsity in Opynyons', (The Act of Six Articles) in 1539.<sup>20</sup> Askew denied transubstantiation and thus, 'any person who by word, writing, or hold any opinion contrary to the first article declared a heretic and punishable by death by burning'.<sup>21</sup> An amendment was made to the Act of Six Articles in 1544 that stated that, 'presentments' had to be taken from 'xii indifferent persons according to good equite and conscience' before any person could be arrested for heresy.<sup>22</sup> A clause in the *Bill concerning the vi Articles* is interesting and suggests that that Henry and

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<sup>17</sup> Tomlins, T.E. & Taunton, W.E. (Eds.) (1817). *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George The Third. In Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain*. London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, p. 449.

<sup>18</sup> Abbot, C., Bathurst, C., Cambell, F., Glenbervie., Grant, W., London, J., & Redesdale. (Eds.) (1810). *The Statutes of the Realm: Printed by Command of His Majesty King George The Third. In Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain*. London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, p. 320.

<sup>19</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 450.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 740.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 961.

his government were prepared for all eventualities and that their dealings with Askew in her first examination potentially influenced this clause. It stated that if they stand mute or do not answer, they will still suffer death.<sup>23</sup> Askew employed avoidance in her first examination and if she continued in this manner for her second examination it would have progressed to trial, therefore, this loophole would have allowed her execution regardless if she confessed or not. However, Askew stated that she was 'condemned without a quest' which is directly against the updated bill.<sup>24</sup>

If both women were taken to trial, their cases would have taken far longer to resolve. Henry wanted to make sure that both women were dealt with as swiftly as possible with as little damage to his reputation as possible. Barton challenged Henry's authority to be king of England and the fact that a woman had made those accusations had made it more embarrassing. Askew was most probably not taken to trial because of how she performed in her examinations, she was an educated gentlewoman, who knew how to irritate her examiners and evade the questions asked of her. This is also against the gendered norms of the period as women are meant to be respectful of hierarchy of which Askew is repeatedly shown to disregard in her *Examinations*. This would have prevented her execution or at least slowed it down considerably which is arguably why clause VII was added to the Bill of Six Articles regarding standing mute or refusing to answer.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, Henry VIII or his government either introduced, changed, or manipulated legislation for both Barton and Askew in order to speed up proceedings for their executions.

Watt states that the appropriate form of execution for women found guilty of treason up until the late seventeenth century was burning, thus, the hanging of Barton was a 'symbolic act' her body was shown as 'broken and therefore impure'.<sup>26</sup> However, Barton escaped the more brutal execution method that her male accomplices suffered due to her gender:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, p. 962.

<sup>24</sup> Askew, *The First Examination*, p. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 962.

<sup>26</sup> Watt, *The Posthumous Reputation of the Holy Maid of Kent*, pp. 148-158.

This day the Nun of Kent, with ii Friars Observants, ii monks, and one secular priest, were drawn from the Tower to Tyburn, and there hanged and headed. God, if it be his pleasure, have mercy on their souls. Also this day the most part of this City are sworn to the King and his legitimate issue by the Queen's Grace now had and hereafter to come, and so shall all the realm over be sworn in like manner.<sup>27</sup>

Her accomplices were 'drawn' so it is only likely to assume that they also suffered quartering too. It is unclear at what point this was carried out, Barton may have had the displeasure of having to watch her accomplices suffer dismemberment. Nevertheless, Barton escaped being drawn and dismembered, however, she was beheaded either close to death or after her death. Her head was subsequently impaled as a warning to those that opposed the king, and her body was buried the same day.<sup>28</sup>

Those convicted of heresy were sentenced to death by burning. This was not a common method of execution during Henry VIII's reign, and Askew is most probably the only woman burnt at the stake for heresy by Henry VIII. However, burning as a method for execution became much more popular in the reign of Mary I when she executed over 280 Protestants in under four years from 1555 to 1558.<sup>29</sup>

Askew was tortured prior to her execution, however Tony Lilly states that it was a rare example of a female 'gentlewoman tortured illegally before her death'.<sup>30</sup> Although Edward Peters states that in the sixteenth century, torture was not 'regularised in English law' and its use was 'primarily as an instrument for uncovering information rather than formal evidence'.<sup>31</sup> However, the fact that Askew was female is highly unusual as her gender and status would normally exempt her from such brutal treatments as it did Barton from being drawn and quartered like her male counterparts.

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<sup>27</sup> Byrne, M. St C. (1981). *The Lisle Letters: An Abridgement*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, p. 76.

<sup>28</sup> Watt, D. (2008, January 03). Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent] (c. 1506–1534), Benedictine nun and visionary. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 11 Aug. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1598>.

<sup>29</sup> Duffy, E. (2009). *Fires of Faith: Catholic England under Mary Tudor*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Lilly, pp. 60-89.

<sup>31</sup> Edwards, P. (1996). *Torture*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 80.

Barton has failed to attract as much attention in recent years and therefore this thesis will update the argument surrounding her execution and gender. Shagan argues that, 'the Henrician regime crushed Barton's movement, in the process making Barton and her adherents the first martyrs of the English reformation'.<sup>32</sup> However, Barton was never canonised by the Catholic Church, unlike the medieval mystic Catherine of Siena that Barton was emulating, as she was canonised eighty years after her death. However, Retha M. Warnicke, states that Barton's reputation remains as a 'failed prophet and an embarrassment to her church', whereas Alan Neame categorises Barton as a forgotten proto-martyr.<sup>33</sup> Diane Watt argues that Barton is viewed as a 'failed counter reformation saint' and is viewed as a hypocrite and a fraud.<sup>34</sup> The sermon conducted and censorship in the Henrician era is shown to have been successful as she was never presented as a serious candidate for canonisation.<sup>35</sup> Watt also argues that Barton was a medieval visionary and was emulating those before her such as Catherine of Siena and Bridget of Sweden.<sup>36</sup> This thesis argues that Barton was also emulating her English medieval visionaries such as Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe and did not start mirroring her contemporaries on the continent until her prophecies became political. Arguably, Barton may have hoped that a biographical book of her life may have been published after her death, similar to that of Catherine of Siena, arguing why she should have been canonised. Stating that all of her miracles and smaller prophecies that up to and including her political involvement with the king meant that she should be considered. However, her political involvement with the king arguably did not make her a good Catholic and a good candidate for canonisation. Diane Watt suggests that this actually made Barton a risk to consider her for canonisation and suggests that some Catholics and recusants doubted the authenticity of her prophecies and miracles.<sup>37</sup> Evidently, this was not the message that a saint

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<sup>32</sup> Shagan, E. (2001). Print, Orality and Communications in the Maid of Kent Affair. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 52 (1), pp. 21-33.

<sup>33</sup> Neame, p. 351; Warnicke, p. 69; Watt, p. 151.

<sup>34</sup> Watt, *The Posthumous Reputation of the Holy Maid of Kent*, pp. 148-158.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 138.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, pp. 155-156.



should portray and clearly Henry succeeded in thoroughly destroying a posthumous re-examination for canonisation.

Theresa Kemp argues that the Henrician 'Anglo-Catholics made Askew famous through the process of her trial and public execution' and Tony Lilly states that she was a rare example of a female 'Reformist martyr gentlewoman tortured illegally before her death'.<sup>38</sup> The illegality of torture, and the obviousness of her broken body on the pyre on her execution day made her apparent torture undeniable to anyone. Therefore, not only was it her trial and public execution that made her famous, but this thesis argues that the irregularity and illegality of the torture of a gentlewoman was the main factor of her martyrdom.

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<sup>38</sup> Kemp, pp. 1021-1045.

## 3 Women and Gender in the Early Modern Era

### 3.1 Introduction

Issues of gender, sex and religion were inextricably linked during the sixteenth century as women were consistently represented as the weaker sex. This deep-seated belief in women's inferiority stood the test of time; centuries and centuries of reinforcement enabled men to gain more power over women which consequently led women to believe that they deserved no less. Anthony Fletcher states that in the early modern period gender was still seen as a 'cosmological principle' and that women were seen as a creature distinct from and inferior to men.<sup>39</sup> For men, the argument lay purely with the belief that God created man first and 'the female sex was a deviation from the norm' or the 'other', and thus emerged the debate that women were imperfect males and that man was the 'measure of all things' and effectively the definition and proof of perfection on earth.<sup>40</sup> This led to the 'institutionalised male dominance over women and children...and the subordination of women in society in general'.<sup>41</sup> Men felt that as they were created as perfection they had a God given right to rule over everything including other autonomous beings, and this notion of patriarchy manifested into a very significant feature of English society from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup>

Christine Peters outlines a code of behaviours that women in the early modern period were expected to follow denoted by chastity, silence, and obedience. Women were seen as more emotional, and less rational than men.<sup>43</sup> These behaviours outline what was expected of the perfect women, however, they were also the three vows professed by women who pledged their life to religious orders to become nuns. Ulrike Strasser argues that nuns and their religious orders appeared to act as an

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<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, A. (1999). *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England 1500-1800*. Bath: Bath Press, p. xv.

<sup>40</sup> Mendelson, S. & Crawford, P. (1998). *Women in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup> Fletcher, p. xv.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Peters, C. (2004). *Women in Early Modern Britain 1450-1640*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 2.

antagonist to modernity as they highlighted all the behaviours that impeded women thriving without men and 'conscripted women into sexual reproduction for the body politic'.<sup>44</sup>

Laura Gowing's explanation of how gender and sex was approached and understood around the early modern period is crucial as a definition as the distinction between gender and sex was not yet formed:

The term 'gender' is itself a modern and contested one. It depends on a distinction between biological sex and cultural gender which was crucial to feminism, but which was not made by historians of a hundred years ago, and which does not necessarily describe the way sexual difference was understood before about 1750.<sup>45</sup>

Whereas Ann Oakley defines sex as:

A word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: the visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. 'Gender' however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine'.<sup>46</sup>

For example, in the cases of Askew and Barton, in the eyes of their contemporaries, it was their biological sex that led them to their multiple arrests and their eventual executions. This thesis argues that both Barton's and Askew's gender was taken as one of the main factors in their executions to varying extents, however, there were observable cultural gender differences in the early modern period. In Askew's *Examinations*, Askew attempts to portray herself as a strong and independent woman after leaving her husband and children. She frequently spoke up against her examiners and tortures to demonstrate that she was not afraid of them. This behaviour goes against the cultural gendered norm of the early modern period.<sup>47</sup>

Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford argue that women also censored their own speech and 'men disparaged female rhetorical prowess' because it could be seen as powerful and dangerous'.<sup>48</sup> However it is clear that neither Askew or Barton censored their speech which went against gendered and hierarchical expectations of the period. When Barton spoke out against the king with her

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<sup>44</sup> Strasser, U. (2004). Early Modern Nuns and the Feminist Politics of Religion. *The Journal of Religion*, 84 (4), pp. 529-554. doi: 10.1086/422479.

<sup>45</sup> Gowing, L. (2012). *Gender Relations in Early Modern England*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited 2012, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Oakley, A. (1972). *Sex, Gender and Society*. London: Maurice Temple Smith, p. 16.

<sup>47</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>48</sup> Mendelson & Crawford, p. 215.

prophecies, she not only committed treason, but she was not censoring her speech like she was expected to. Mendelson and Crawford suggest that the majority of women's speech is hidden from us 'not only because it was likely to be negatively construed by men, but it was highly contextualised by women themselves'.<sup>49</sup> However, David Cressy states that, for the first time, 'speaking' was made treason with the clamping down of new treason laws in the Act of Succession in 1534 and the Treason Act later that year.<sup>50</sup> This meant that 'ordinary people' men and women alike may have committed this crime in their casual conversations and paid for it with their lives.<sup>51</sup> However, it is arguable that with the amendments to the Treason Act and the Act of Succession the inclusion of such a clause was initiated in order to be able to finally charge Barton with treason as her crimes mainly included the spoken word.

Three topics of discussion are analysed in this chapter: 'Women and Religion', 'Women and the Humoral Theory', and 'Gender and Expectations'. Firstly, 'Women and Religion' examines how women were able to access religion and religious materials in the reign of Henry VIII. It investigates key legislation that was enacted and how this affected women. It also analyses key teachings from the Bible such as the creation story and how Eve was portrayed, for example why she was created, for whom, and what consequences this ultimately had for women. Secondly, 'Women and the Humoral Theory' analyses the differences in male and female bodies in relation to the humoral theory and how this affected women, such as menstruation and expectations of the female body. It also examines teachings from ancient Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers such as Hippocrates Claudius Galen and Aristotle as these would have influenced key elements of culture and learning regarding medicine and the contributions they made to the humoral theory regarding women and gender. Finally, 'Gender and Expectations' examines the responsibilities of women and their gender roles in the household for women in different stages of their lives, single women, married women, and women

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 212.

<sup>50</sup> Cressy, D. (2010). *Dangerous Talk: Scandalous, Seditious, and Treasonable Speech in Pre-Modern England*. Oxford University Press, p. 50.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

who do not neatly fit into these categories such as Elizabeth Barton and Anne Askew, who is later examined in more detail. Barton was a single unmarried woman who later professed herself as a nun, and Askew was a married mother of two until she sought a separation in London.<sup>52</sup>

### 3.2 Women and Religion

After the reformation, the ways in which in which people experienced religion had fundamentally changed. This section examines how women were able to access religion and religious materials in the early modern era. It also investigates key legislations enacted during this era and the consequences these may have had on women. It also analyses key Bible teachings, such as, the creation story and determines the importance of Eve's portrayal and the effect this had on women learning to read.

In 1526 William Tyndale completed his translation of the New Testament in English, prior to this, the text could normally only be accessed by learned men who read Latin.<sup>53</sup> However, Tyndale's version appeared to be heavily influenced by Martin Luther, a German theologian who was believed to be the catalyst of Protestantism on the continent.<sup>54</sup> This version of the Bible concerned Henry and was among many heretical books burnt in 1526 in order to denounce Protestantism.<sup>55</sup> G. W. Bernard states that Henry was firmly against the central teachings of Luther; Lutheranism had already persuaded some of Henry's bishops to convert including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, in 1532.<sup>56</sup> The translation of the Bible into English, which included Lutheran ideologies incorporated within, would have potentially caused more widespread conversions throughout the populous. Bernard argues that it was not that easy to cut off such significant texts that penetrated England, especially since it was the first of its kind in English, and many scholars, priests, and merchants may have been intrigued and converted.<sup>57</sup> Word of mouth can spread extremely fast in these situations and can be very hard for

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<sup>52</sup> Beilin, p. xix; Watt, *Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent]*.

<sup>53</sup> Bernard, G.W. (2005). *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and The Remaking of the English Church*. Yale: Yale University Press, p. 278.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid; Melloni, A. (2017). *Martin Luther: A Christian Between Reforms and Modernity (1517-2017)*. Berlin: Hubert and Co, p. 25.

<sup>55</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 278.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p. 279.

authorities to control, even after the offending text has been destroyed. Henry passed the Act of Supremacy in 1534 in an aim to assert his dominance, the act:

enacted by autorite of this pSENT parliament that the kyng our sovaign lorde his heires and successours Kynges of this Realme shal be takyn acceptyd and reputed the onely supreme [heed'] in erthe of the Churche of England...Our sovaigne lorde his heirs and successours kynges of this realme shall have full power and autorite frome tyme to tyme to visite represser redresse reforme ordre correct restrayne and amende all suche errors heresies abuses offenses contemptes and enormities what so ever they be<sup>58</sup>

This act is significant as it demonstrated that Henry demanded that he wanted his bishops and parish priests to prove to him that they saw him as the supreme head of the English Church. If the king could not achieve the supremacy that he desired with his closest confidantes in his court how could he expect his realm to follow suit, or international advisors to take his new title seriously.

In 1543, Henry VIII passed the Act for the Advancement of True Religion which stated that women, and lower classes of men, such as; 'artificers, prentyses...husbandmen and labourers' were prohibited from reading the Bible.<sup>59</sup> However, Femke Molekamp states that Henry VIII was paranoid regarding female readers of the Bible as the inferior judgements of women and lower class men would make the Bible 'a talking craft'.<sup>60</sup>

Interestingly, Henry VIII did not issue a complete blanket ban on all women reading the Bible, and an exception was made for noble women and gentlewomen if they, 'reade to themselves alone and not to others any texts of the Bible or new testament'.<sup>61</sup> Merry Wiesner believes that women would rather have expressed their religious convictions in a domestic setting rather than a public setting, for example; they prayed, attended sermons and read the Bible even if they were literate.<sup>62</sup> However, both Askew and Barton went against this presupposition as they both decided to be quite public with their assertion of faith and religion for maximum exposure.

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<sup>58</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 492.

<sup>59</sup> Molekamp, F. (2013). *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 896.

<sup>62</sup> Wiesner, M. (1993). *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 189.

Barton began publicly prophesising against the king, and Askew documented her examinations and smuggled them out of prison before her execution, thereby initiating a public assessment of her religious affiliations.

Women played an important role in establishing Protestant values for future generations via the private setting of the home. The meals served no longer followed the Catholic fast prescriptions, and Wiesner states that the women provided religious instructions for their children, thus inspiring a new generation of Protestants.<sup>63</sup> Women held a significant amount of power regarding the success or failure of Henry's reformation, however, the cases of Askew and Barton show that women did not have free rein with the supposedly 'relaxed' rules surrounding the Bible. Henry made an example of, and punished, anyone shown to be disobedient. Henry's gamble on whether to let noble women and gentlewomen read the Bible evidently failed as it affected his reformation and it did so subtly. Bernard argues that Henry only initiated the break from Rome which is synonymous with Catholicism because their values were preventing him from accessing an annulment from his first wife Catherine of Aragon.<sup>64</sup> However, once Henry had secured his annulment and remarried, Bernard argues that Henry's subsequent policy was more aligned to 'Catholicism without the Pope' rather than Protestantism.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, religion in England had successfully detached itself from Catholicism in Rome and the gap that had been created had allowed an influx of Protestant influence to set root. Thus, the decision to allow gentlewomen and noblewomen to read the Bible, bridged this gap further and cemented England's progression to Protestantism as women were able to control their religion at home.

However, this demonstrated that Henry VIII was afraid of the amount of power that certain women could potentially amass, such as Askew and Barton, which is why their punishments were so extreme. Many restrictions were placed on women reading the Bible in public, regardless of Wiesner's observations that women preferred to control religion activities in the domestic setting. This

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard, *Catholicism without the Pope*, pp. 201-221.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

preference of woman to control the religious activities in the domestic setting could have been because of the restrictions placed upon them in the public setting. Not only did they have to read privately, and to themselves, many cities prohibited women from congregating to discuss religious matters.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, by making subtle changes to the way that they lived, such as changing the way that they served their meals, or prayed, and shared their faith was at home women could take control of their faith and that of their families. Women had finally been given access to the Bible; however, they were prevented from discussing it together to try to make sense of this new resource because of the threat their opinions were perceived to be. Molekamp suggests that these restrictions seemed to be a 'recognition of women as interpretative readers' but also as 'political agents'.<sup>67</sup> Christine Peters argues that the 'nurturing, emotional female' was well suited to making the leap of faith required for true devotion in Henry's quest for his reformation.<sup>68</sup>

Representation of women in scripture also fuelled views of women's inferiority. There are copious examples of women being portrayed as weak, tender, or that their only value was to be their reproductive ability. However, the most well-known piece of scripture that fuelled views of women's inferiority was the book of Genesis. This would have been known to many in early modern England, as it detailed how the first woman was created from the flesh and bone of the first man, Adam. The representation of Eve in Genesis effectively established and maintained the structure of the social hierarchy whereby men took control and power over women and viewed them as property. However, Jerry Sumney argues that this is a misrepresentation of the interpretation of the book of Genesis, that God did not intend for there to be a hierarchy between husband and wife, however, for humans to not incur the wrath of God, they self-imposed the hierarchical structure with men placed at the top as they felt it would be what God would want.<sup>69</sup> This argues that, it was not God's will, but that it was his

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<sup>66</sup> Wiesner, p. 188.

<sup>67</sup> Molekamp, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Peters, p. 132.

<sup>69</sup> Sumney, J. (2014). *The Bible: An Introduction, Second Edition*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, p. 61.



followers that believed it by incorporating this hierarchy into their lives that it would please him because it was Eve who committed the original sin.

Laura Gowing states that in Genesis it is made clear that Eve is created after Adam, from Adam, and for Adam, highlighting that the fact that women could be seen as inferior beings:

21. Therefore the Lord God sent sleep into Adam, and when he slept, God took one of his ribs, and filled flesh for it.

22. And the Lord God builded the rib which he had taken from Adam into a woman, and brought her to Adam.

23. And Adam said, This is now a bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; this shall be called virago, for she is taken (out) of man (she shall be called Woman, for she was taken from Man).<sup>70</sup>

What strengthens this view is that Adam was shown to be created by God from the 'slime of the earth' and that God 'breathed into his face' thus making him 'a living soul', effectively meaning that Adam had a piece of God within his core being.<sup>71</sup> The difference is that Eve is believed to have been created after God had created 'all living beasts of the earth, and all the volatiles of the heavens' and found that Adam was lonely in the Garden of Eden and thus decided he needed a companion.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, verses 23-25 clearly indicate this view, as despite Eve now being a separate entity, Adam still claimed ownership over her. Adam believed that because Eve was made from his bone, she was effectively owned by him, and named woman, as a whole, to indicate this ownership. As women started to read the Bible for the first time, they began to learn that their religion did not view them as equal to men.

The book of Genesis outlined that God only had one rule for Adam and Eve, 'that we should not eat of the fruit of the tree, which is in the midst of paradise... that we should not touch it, lest peradventure we die'.<sup>73</sup> Eve did not tell Adam what it was that he was eating and that she deceived him into committing sin alongside her placed the blame solely on Eve. Regardless, Eve's punishment from God further explains why women are seen as inferior to men, 'I shall multiply thy wretchednesses and thy conceivings; in sorrow thou shalt bear thy children; and thou shalt be under (the) power of

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<sup>70</sup> Genesis 2:21-25, Wycliffe Version.

<sup>71</sup> Genesis 2:7, Wycliffe Version.

<sup>72</sup> Genesis 2:19, Wycliffe Version.

<sup>73</sup> Genesis 3:3, Wycliffe Version.

thine husband, and he shall be lord of thee'.<sup>74</sup> This demonstrates that women's purpose had evolved after Eve had eaten the fruit from the forbidden tree; women were no longer seen as a companion for man, but as something to be controlled.

Therefore, it is no surprise that when Genesis was read by men, to many congregations for numerous centuries thereafter, that women continued to be treated as inferior to that of men after the portrayal of Eve in the creation story. Eve was considered to have committed the first human sin or the original sin and managed to convince Adam to sin too who, before Eve, was sin free. Also, many women's feelings of inferiority may have been realised when they started reading the Bible, as they came to realise that the reason for their amplified pain during childbirth was their own God. This could have caused a crisis of faith and a rebellion against the authority that continued to repress women's voices, certainly the latter was seen in the case of Askew when she consistently rebelled against her examiners.

### 3.3 Women and the Humoral Theory

This section analyses contemporary medical procedures in relation to the humoral theory which was a rudimentary understanding of the human body with which it was believed explained many differences between the male and the female body. In the early modern era, physicians believed that both male and female bodies were composed of four humours: blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm. It was believed that the balance of the four humours was necessary to remain in good physical and mental health as Hippocrates wrote that:

A disease was supposed to result when the equilibrium of the humours, from some "exciting cause" or other πρόθασις (intent), was disturbed, and then nature, that is the constitution of the individual Θύσις (sacrifice), made every effort she could through coction to restore the necessary κρᾶσις (psychological willpower).<sup>75</sup>

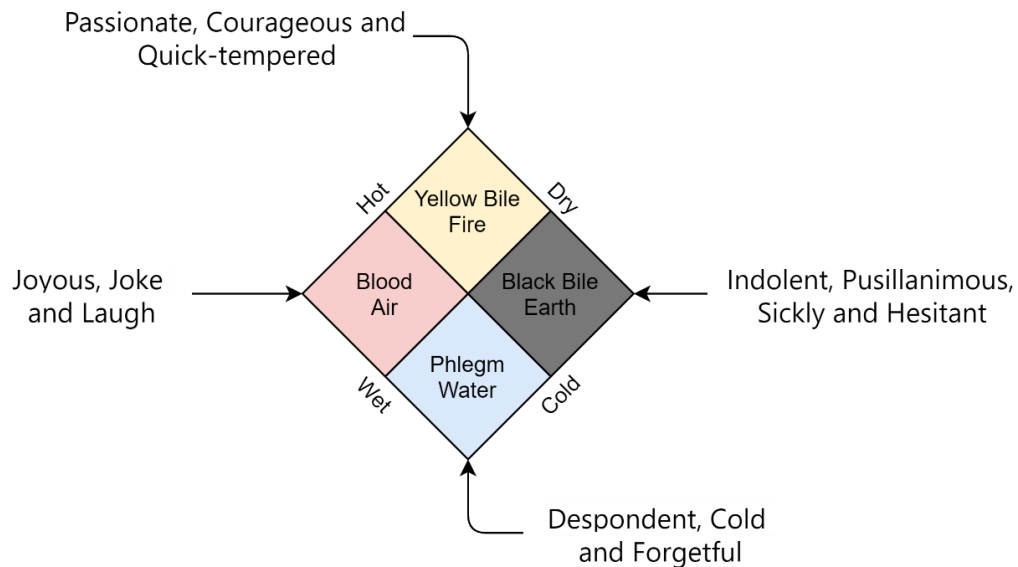
Gowing states that this theory gave each individual body its own complexion; masculinity and femininity were determined by the balance in each body between hot and cold, wet and dry: heat and

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<sup>74</sup> Genesis 3:16, Wycliffe Version.

<sup>75</sup> Page, T.E., Capps, E., Rouse, W.G.D., Post, L.A., & Warmington, E.H. (Eds.) (1957). Hippocrates with an English Translation by W. H. S. Jones. London: Heinemann Ltd, p. lii.

dryness made men, cold and wet made women. Jacques Jouanna compiled letters that outlined the expected character traits of persons that were composed of blood, yellow bile, black bile or phlegm, (see Figure 1).<sup>76</sup>



*Figure 1: Diagrammatical Representation of the Four Humours with Character Traits*

Gowing argued that the humours were even narrowed down by gender; the heat of men made them more prone to anger and wet humours of women made them more susceptible to melancholy.<sup>77</sup> Using the character traits from Jouanna’s letters and Gowing’s theory this would suggest that men were also more likely to be passionate and joyous whereas women were more likely to be despondent, and sickly.<sup>78</sup> These beliefs were solidified by ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle almost a century after the humoral theory was founded as he taught that women needed male assistance in everything that they did because of their ‘physical and intellectual weakness’ due to the differences in their humours.<sup>79</sup> Askew was consistently represented as ‘weak and tender’ by Bale in his narrative as these were more recognisable female traits as opposed to the independent and strong persona that Askew had attempted to impose upon herself. As the editor and publisher of Askew’s posthumous work, Bale

<sup>76</sup> Jouanna, J. (2012). The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise the Nature of Man: The Theory of the Four Humours. In P. Eijk (Ed.) Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen. (40th ed., pp. 335-359). Leiden: Brill, p. 344.

<sup>77</sup> Gowing, p. 6.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid; Jouanna, p. 344.

<sup>79</sup> Wiesner, p. 14.

wanted to ensure that it would make the biggest impact to his intended market. He was attempting to sell her as a Protestant martyr, and if she came off too strong as she fought against her oppressors, she would have been unrelatable. In relation to the humoral theory, Bale effectively balanced out unwanted traits and imposed new traits as seen in the humoral theory that he thought would be more acceptable.

Another sign of women's inferiority that was taken very seriously was menstruation; women's monthly blood loss was defined as women being 'polluted and polluting' in Leviticus'.<sup>80</sup> Mendelson and Crawford examined two early modern theories that relate menstruating women to the four humours, firstly; women menstruated because their bodies were inefficient and accumulated excess blood, thus menstruation was a means to flush out the excess.<sup>81</sup> The second theory argued that women could not purify their blood by heat and exercise as men could, so they accumulated impure blood which they then shed.<sup>82</sup> Both these theories shed light on how women in the early modern period were viewed by men, incompetent, weak and subordinate which subsequently shows how little was understood about female bodies.

Thomas Vicary, a surgeon, and anatomist, described what female sexual organs should look like:

Rose leaues before they be fully spread or ripe, and so they be shut together as a Purse mouth, so that nothing may passe foorth but vrin, vntil the time of chyldling. Also about the middle of this necke be certain veynes in Maydens, the which in tyme of defouring be corrupt & broken.<sup>83</sup>

This verifies the little knowledge that surgeons of the era knew about female bodies as Vicary is stating that the vagina must be kept shut until childbirth except for the passage of urine. Although, perhaps metaphorical in the sense, women must remain chaste lest they were seen as corrupt and unworthy, however, it demonstrates a lack of knowledge from supposed educated medical professionals. This passage is also creating unrealistic expectations of what a woman should look like and is unnecessarily

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<sup>80</sup> Crawford, P. (1981). Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England. *Past & Present*, (91), p. 49. doi: 10.1093/past/91.1.47.

<sup>81</sup> Mendelson & Crawford, p. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Vicary, T. (1577). *A Profitable Treatise of the Anatomie of Man's Body*. London: Henry Bamforde, p. 77.

romanticising and hypersexualising the female sex organs by comparing them to rose leaves. This also highlights the issue of women's sexual worth which linked directly to their saleability in the marriage market.<sup>84</sup> Keith Thomas states that if young women happen to lose their 'honour' this greatly effects them in finding a potential partner as they are seen as property and the act of sex before marriage diminishes this and as seen from Vicary's *A Profitable Treatise of the Anatomie of Man's Body* he backed the narrative that women were 'corrupt and broken'.<sup>85</sup> The use of sex to diminish the value or defame a woman was not uncommon and is exactly what happened in the case of Barton when she was accused of having sexual relations with her spiritual advisor Edward Bocking. This accusation would have harmed Barton regardless of her innocence or not as the damage had already been done with the accusation. As a practising nun, Barton had to follow a rule of chastity and to have this challenged so publicly shattered the image of trust and faith she managed to garner in her followers. Unfortunately, most of the time it was a case of 'he said, she said' with the women on the losing side of the argument because the men were held in a higher regard in the community.

### 3.4 Gender and Expectations

This subchapter examines the gender roles of women in the early modern period to establish what their responsibilities entailed and compare them to that of men's. The comparison demonstrates the dynamics of early modern households, and thus lifestyles. It also compares Margery Kempe's marriage, a medieval visionary and prosperous laywoman, in relation to gendered expectations of the period. Within the early modern household women had many responsibilities and expectations placed upon them and in 1523, John Fitzherbert expressed these beliefs in his book *The Boke of Husbandry*.<sup>86</sup> It was originally believed that it was published under Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, who J. H. Baker argues was one of the best-known English legal writers of the sixteenth century, but it was later established

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<sup>84</sup> Thomas, K. (1959). The Double Standard. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20 (2), p. 210. doi: 10.2307/2707819.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 20; Vicary, p. 77.

<sup>86</sup> Baker, J. (2015, May 28). Fitzherbert, Sir Anthony (c. 1470–1538), judge and legal writer. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 28 Nov. 2019, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-9602>.

to be his brother, done presumably so the book would gain more tract with its readers.<sup>87</sup> Within the early modern household, the notion of patriarchy is apparent as women are transferred from the bounds of their fathers or masters, to their husbands through marriage and they suddenly had the responsibly of running the household, possibly with children to rear and servants to oversee.<sup>88</sup> Garthine Walker suggests that women's honour 'resided in the fulfilment of a wife's household duties' and that an 'idle huswife was taken to one of an insult'.<sup>89</sup> Fletcher argues that housewifery was regarded as quintessentially a female skill, by which every woman was judged.<sup>90</sup>

Fitzherbert committed to print exactly what he expected of women within the bounds of marriage:

What works a wyfe shulde do in generall... first swepe thy house, dresse vp thy dyssheborde, and sette all thynges in good order within thy house: milke thy kye, secle thy calues, sye vp thy mylke, take vppe thy chyldren, and araye theym, and prouyde for thy husbandes brekefaste, dynner, souper, and for thy chyldren, and seruauntes, and take thy parte with theym.<sup>91</sup>

However, this is only some of the responsibilities expected of women which appears to be confined to the start of the day, but Fitzherbert does elaborate and extend his expectations only pages later where he also outlines typical gender roles and expectations for men. According to Fitzherbert, men were expected to know how to run a farm, tasks which included; ploughing and sowing, breeding and birthing cattle, maintenance of the equipment and the land, and the ability to successfully complete the harvest in order to do it all over again the following year.<sup>92</sup> However, the woman of the house were expected to run and manage everything else, without fail, and without complaint; such responsibilities included; preparing food for the family, managing the servants, raising the children but this is not where the responsibilities end as Fitzherbert details extensive obligations:

It is conuenyente for a housbande, to haue shepe of his owne... to make her husbande and her selfe some clothes. And at the leaste waye, she maye haue the lockes of the shepe, eyther

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Mendelson & Crawford, p. 124.

<sup>89</sup> Walker, G. (1996). Expanding the Boundaries of Female Honour in Early Modern England. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6, p. 238. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/3679239>.

<sup>90</sup> Fletcher, p. 226.

<sup>91</sup> Skeat, W. W. (1882). *The Book of Husbandry by Master Fitzherbert: Reprinted from the Edition of 1534*. London: English Dialect Society, pp. 94-97.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

to make clothes or blankettes, and couerlettes, or bothe. and if she haue no woll of her owne, she maye take wol to spynne of clothe makers, and by that meanes she maye haue a conuenient lyuyng, and many tymes to do other warkes. It is a wyues occupation, to wynowe all maner of cornes, to make malte, to wasshe and wrynge, to make heye, shere corne, and in time of nede to helpe her husbnde to fyll the mucke wayue or dounge carte, dryue the ploughe, to loode hey, corne, and suche other. And to go or ride to the market, to sel butter, chese, mylke, egges, chekyns, capons, hennes, pygges, gese and all maner of cornes. And also to bye all maner of necessarye thynges belongynge to houssholde, and to make a trewe rekenynge and a compte to her housbnde, what she hath receyued, and what what she hath payed. And yf the husbnde go to the market, to bye or sell, as they ofte do, he than to shewe his wife.<sup>93</sup>

There would be very little cross over into each other's assigned gender roles, for example, the husband would have very little to do with keeping the house, the children or the servants and the wife would have nothing to do with the manual work of the farm therefore solidifying the gender expectations of the early modern period. Although Barton was not married when she left the family household, she left to find work and Watt states that by the age of nineteen she was working as a servant in the household of Thomas Cobb.<sup>94</sup> Barton would not have been a very desirable match for a potential husband as it is thought that she came from a poor background and the prospect of marrying under their current status was a real concern. Therefore, Barton would have been a live-in servant and she would have had to perform most of these tasks as part of her duties as a servant. William Lambarde's *Perambulation of Kent* states that Barton was a servant for seven months before her illness, however, it does not state what her duties may have been, as that is not the intended focus of the source material, one can only assume it was the normal duties which are somewhat similar as expected of a wife in the era as detailed above in the *Boke of Husbandry*.<sup>95</sup>

In the early modern period, marriages were arranged, often by the woman's father, to maximum property gains and with the view of marrying someone of a higher class. This is what was intended in the case of Anne when her father William Askew, offered his second daughter, Anne to Mr Kyme after the unexpected death of his first daughter, Martha, to minimise any financial loss.<sup>96</sup> This practice

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Watt, *Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent]*.

<sup>95</sup> Skeat, pp. 94-97.

<sup>96</sup> Mendelson & Crawford, p. 110.

created resistance from the women involved as they normally had no time in which they could process what was happening to them. In the case of Askew, Martha had just died, of which it appears she had no time to grieve before being forced to marry a man 'agaynst her wyll, or free consent' so that their families' name could be elevated, and more land could be gained.<sup>97</sup>

To a woman in the early modern era, marriage hopefully meant a seamless transition of ownership and she now 'was to her husband what she had been to be father or master', only that she now possessed even fewer adult rights and privileges than she had prior to her marriage.<sup>98</sup> Keith Thomas argues that 'the desire for absolute property in women' is the likely basis of the insistence of chastity before marriage as the desire cannot be satisfied if the man has reason to believe that the woman has once been possessed once before, no matter how momentarily or even involuntarily.<sup>99</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, in Vicary's *A Profitable Treatise of the Anatomie of Man's Body* the tract was being distributed that women were to remain chaste until marriage, and for the purpose of having a child.

Margery Kempe's, early marriage is a good example of what was expected in a marriage of the period until the weight of the expectations and constant pregnancies drove her mad. She married John Kempe in her early twenties and with him had fourteen children.<sup>100</sup> Kempe was from a 'prosperous urban mercantile family' and Jacqueline Jenkins describes her as a 'businesswoman' from Lynn, Norfolk.<sup>101</sup> However, Kate Parker states that although Kempe was brought up as the daughter of a wealthy, successful, and honoured man, Kempe's social status shifted after national events 'overwhelmed the town and the social certainties that she was accustomed to'.<sup>102</sup> Kim M. Phillips

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<sup>97</sup> Beilin, p. xv.

<sup>98</sup> Mendelson & Crawford, p. 124.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas, p. 216.

<sup>100</sup> Phillips, K. (2004). Margery and the Ages of Women. In J. H. Arnold, & K. J. Lewis (Eds.), *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe* (pp. 17-34). D.S. Brewer, pp. 19-22.

<sup>101</sup> Arnold, J. H., & Lewis, K. J. (2004). *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe*. D.S Brewer. p. xvii; Jenkin, J. (2004). Reading the Book of Margery Kempe. In J. H. Arnold, & K. H. Lewis (Eds.), *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe* (pp. 114-128). D.S Brewer, p. 130.

<sup>102</sup> Parker, K. (2004). Lynn and the Making of a Mystic. In J. H. Arnold, & K.H. Lewis (Eds.), *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe* (pp. 55-73). D.S Brewer.



argues that Kempe's early twenties were a time of 'change and crisis: marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, madness, and her first visionary experience'.<sup>103</sup> Kempe begged her husband several times for chastity, Phillips argues the first may have been when Kempe was aged around thirty-five, however it was not until Kempe was forty that John had finally agreed to chastity.<sup>104</sup> Following her chastity Kempe led a very 'active and adventurous life' she adopted white clothing and experienced the spiritual pleasure of poverty.<sup>105</sup> However, this came with consequences as John Arnold states that Kempe was examined for heresy and was 'part of a long line of medieval folk teetering on the border between holiness and heresy'.<sup>106</sup> Barton, who took inspiration from Kempe certainly teetered on this line and unfortunately as the appetite lessened for medieval mystics into the early modern period Barton was no longer seen as holy and therefore charged with treason.

### 3.5 Conclusion

It is evident that women were viewed as the inferior sex throughout the Henrician era, from the way that women were able to or prevented from accessing religion, to a deep misunderstanding or ignorance of the differences between male and female bodies.

The Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 was a moderate advancement for women as it allowed noblewomen and gentlewomen to read the Bible, albeit, in private and to themselves, as prior to 1543 the only way was through a man. It was only a moderate advancement for women as a large portion of society still did not have access to the Bible as those of lower social classes were prohibited from reading the Bible in the same act.

There was very little understanding as to how the female body worked as the humoral theory categorised women as both despondent and sickly. However, it is highly unlikely that all women met these attributes in practice in the Henrician era, yet it was continuously used. Menstruation was also

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p. 19.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Arnold, J. H. (2004). Margery's Trials: Heresy, Lollardy and Dissent'. In J. H. Arnold, & K. J. Lewis (Eds.), *A Companion to the Book of Margery Kempe* (pp. 75-93). D.S. Brewer, p. 80.

viewed as a sign of women's inferiority; humoral theory stated that women's bodies were not as advanced as men's and thus women had to flush out the excess blood that they produced. This shows how little understanding there was of the female body and how much of current research that existed was done on men, and women were expected to be the same or similar.

The gender roles that men and women assumed during the early modern era were very binary. There was little cross over into each other's assigned roles, whereby the women were commonly tasked with running the household and looking after the children, whereas the men were the sole providers. It also demonstrates that women are usually transferred from the bounds of their fathers to their husbands to maximise property gains and their success in the marital market is also linked to their sexual worth.

Askew did not fit into what was expected of women in the early modern period and was seen as non-compliant to orders given by men. The representation she tried to give herself in her *Examinations* was strong willed and independent whereas women were meant to obey orders given to them by their superiors, husbands or in Askew's case her examiners.

## 4 The Defamation of Elizabeth Barton

### 4.1 Introduction

On 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1533, a scathing sermon was delivered against Elizabeth Barton by John Capon, the bishop-elect of Bangor, the purpose of which was to discredit and defame her before her execution for high treason. In exploring the ways in which Barton was portrayed it is evident that the attempts to discredit her were of a gendered nature. Barton delivered several prophecies that supposedly foresaw Henry VIII losing his kingship or kingdom should he divorce Catherine of Aragon and proceed with his intended marriage with Anne Boleyn. Arguably, this alone would have been enough for a charge for treason, however, after she displayed such a lack of respect, Henry VIII insisted on a defamatory sermon to ensure she was not immortalised after her execution.

This chapter is separated into three subchapters, 'Elizabeth Barton's Early Life', 'The Prophecies', and 'The Sermon'. 'Elizabeth Barton's Early Life' examines Barton's journey from a young servant girl to a respected nun with a spiritual advisor. Secondly, 'The Prophecies' investigates the evolution of Barton's prophecies which can be linked to the radical religious that began with the lack of male heir. Finally, 'The Sermon' analyses the sermon given at St. Pauls Cross and determines whether Barton's gender meant it was easier to cast doubt on and defame her character due to her alleged unaccountability. It argues that the sermon had the sole intention of defamation which also deviated to her relationship with her spiritual adviser Edward Bocking. The persistent focus on Barton and Bocking's potential relationship meant that it was easier to cast doubt on what may or may not have been true. This shows that execution proceedings of women, when the women's representation was focused on, or when her sex life was brought into proceedings, like Barton's was, often meant there was no conceivable way back for them.

### 4.2 Elizabeth Barton's Early Life

This subchapter provides context for Barton's early life and outlines her journey from a young servant girl to a respected nun, her illness that supposedly gave her the ability to prophesise, and the

appointment of her spiritual advisor, Edward Bocking. Elizabeth Barton was born in 1506, in the parish of Aldington, however, nothing else about her early life or her family is known other than the assumption that she was of low social standing. Diane Watt argues that Barton was unlikely to have received a formal education and was almost certainly illiterate.<sup>107</sup> Barton worked as a domestic servant in the household of Thomas Cobb, a farm manager to the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham. Whilst working for Cobb in 1525 she ‘fell seriously ill, and during seven months that her illness lasted, seemed to have frequent trances’.<sup>108</sup> Alan Neame suggests that it was plausible that Cobb ‘had a servant that was literate and well informed’ especially if she was tolerated through seven months of illness where she would have been unable to fulfil her duties within the household.<sup>109</sup> However, Neame suggests that the reason that Cobb was so lenient towards Barton and her illness for such an extended period of time is that she may have come to work in his house through an illegitimate family connection.<sup>110</sup> Barton was clearly valued in the household as she slept in the same room as Cobb’s child who was also gravely unwell despite the fact that Barton later went on to prophesise the child’s death.<sup>111</sup> Neame argues that the immediate fulfilment of the prophecy in front of several witnesses would have catapulted her to fame.<sup>112</sup> Barton’s illness was described as a ‘great infirmitie in her bodie, which did ascende at divers times up into her throte, and swelled greatly: during the time wherof, shee seemed to bee in grievous paine’ and she ‘often times trifled and spake such words as she remembered not herself when she came to good avisement’.<sup>113</sup> This demonstrated to herself and

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<sup>107</sup> Watt, *Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent]*.

<sup>108</sup> Hamilton, A. (Ed.) (1905). *The Angel of Syon: The Life and Martyrdom of Blessed Richard Reynolds, Bridgettine Monk of Syon, Martyred at Tyburn, May 4, 1533*. Edinburgh: Sands & Co, p. 40; Watt, D. (2008, January 03). Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent] (c. 1506–1534), Benedictine nun and visionary. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. Retrieved 5 Aug. 2018, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1598>.

<sup>109</sup> Neame, p. 44.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

<sup>111</sup> Lambarde, W. (1576). *A Perambulation of Kent, Conteyning the Description, Hystorie, and Customes of that Shire; Written in the Yeere 1570, First Published in the year 1576, and now Increased and Altered from the Author's Owne Last Copie*. London: Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, p. 170; Neame, p. 33.

<sup>112</sup> Neame, p. 33.

<sup>113</sup> Lambarde, p. 171; Whatmore, p. 464.

her contemporaries that she appeared to have no control over when or how the prophecies were delivered and that they must have been from God.

Murphy states that it was unlikely for Barton to have possessed the 'semiconscious command of the Catholic vocabulary' that propelled her to fame, having been of low birth.<sup>114</sup> However, Neame challenges this narrative as Barton was a 'longstanding member of a business like household where catholic piety was habitual' therefore it was conceivable that over the years she learnt much of the vernacular.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, Barton's reputation, and legacy, relied solely on what educated, contemporary men wrote about her and it was unlikely that she was able to control this narrative and nothing exists that was written by Barton's own hand. One of these men, Edward Bocking, a Benedictine monk, and later Barton's spiritual advisor and confessor, attempted to influence the opinions of the upper clergy men by compiling a document of all of Barton's visions, prophecies, and miracles since her illness in 1525.<sup>116</sup> Bocking targeted the men of the upper classes with the publication and distribution of the 'nun's book' as they were more likely to be educated to a high enough standard to not only read the book, but to contribute to the discussion of Barton's authenticity. There are similarities between Barton and Catherine of Siena, as both women had a spiritual advisor and confessor who then controlled their written narrative. Karen Scott states that Raymond Of Capua composed *Legenda Major* after Catherine's death to promote her canonisation by the church which was finalised in 1461.<sup>117</sup> Barton and Catherine were of similar ages when they started receiving their visions, nineteen and sixteen respectively, and therefore it is arguable that Barton's followed in the footsteps of Catherine.<sup>118</sup> Catherine 'embraced a voluntary penance as a Dominican Tertiary' but Scott states that Catherine was not an enclosed nun'.<sup>119</sup> Barton was accepted into St Sepulchre's nunnery

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<sup>114</sup> Murphy, R. (2015). *Elizabeth Barton's Claim: Feminist Defiance in Wolf Hall*. *Frontiers*, 36 (2), p. 153.

<sup>115</sup> Neame, p. 48.

<sup>116</sup> Jager, C. (2014). *Unquiet Things: Secularism in the Romantic Age*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 38.

<sup>117</sup> Scott, K. (1992). St. Catherine of Siena, "Apostola". *Church History*, 61 (1), p. 35.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

after which she took her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and where she met her spiritual advisor and confessor, Edward Bocking.

The early stages of Barton's visionary calling began the same way as two of her English contemporaries, Julian of Norwich, a church anchoress (c.1343-1416) and Margery Kempe, a prosperous laywoman of King's Lynn (c.1373-1439).<sup>120</sup> All three women experienced a period of sickness in which they feared for their lives. Julian of Norwich wrote that she became ill, 'Ande when I was thrittye wintere alde and a halfe, God sente me a bodelye sykenes in the whilke I laythre days and thre nightes' but when she looked upon the crucifix, 'sodeynlye alle my paine was awaye for me and I was alle hole'.<sup>121</sup> However, Juliette Vuille states that Julian initially thought herself mad but a religious man at her bedside interpreted her altered state as a divine revelation and consequently Julian felt ashamed to have doubted her mental health and her faith.<sup>122</sup> Julian's shame and regret of failing to comprehend her first vision prompted her to write and record all of her subsequent visions so she could establish a deeper connection and understanding with God.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, Margery became seriously ill after her first pregnancy and, 'despaired of her life, weening she might not live' and she attempted to confess to her ghostly father but he, 'began to sharply reprove her before she had fully said her intent' and therefore she 'went out of her mind and was wondrously vexed and laboured with spirits for half a year, eight weeks and odd days'.<sup>124</sup> Subsequently, Christ appeared to Margery in a vision and cured her of her madness and Vuille states that Margery's unusual displays of devotion were marked by 'her gift of tears and a gift of crying out and roaring'.<sup>125</sup> Around 1413, Margery visited Julian to 'find out if there were any deceit' in her revelations as the 'anchoress was expert in such

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<sup>120</sup> Vuille, J. (2015). 'Maybe I'm Crazy?' Diagnosis and Contextualisation of Medieval Female Mystics. In N. K. Yoshikawa (Ed.) *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture* (pp. 103-120). Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, pp. 104-105.

<sup>121</sup> Jenkins, J. & Watson, N. (Eds.) (2006). The Writings of Julian of Norwich: 'A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman' and 'A Revelation of Love'. University Park, PA: *Pennsylvania State University Press*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>122</sup> Vuille, pp. 104-105.

<sup>123</sup> Tracy, K. (2015). Julian of Norwich and the Sin of Forgetfulness. *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 41 (2), p. 148.

<sup>124</sup> Butler-Bowdon, W. (Ed.) (1936). *The Book of Margery Kempe: A Modern Version*. London: *Oxford University Press*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>125</sup> Vuille, p. 106.

things'.<sup>126</sup> Margery appeared to get the reassurance she desired as Julian told her 'when God visiteth a creature with tears of contrition, devotion, and compassion, he may and ought to believe that the Holy Ghost is in his soul' and after their meeting Margery 'ever increased in the love of God and was more bold than she was before'.<sup>127</sup> However, Liam Temple writes that East Anglia, the region in which both Margery and Julian hailed from, was the gateway to continental Europe and both women would have been aware of Bridget of Sweden (c.1307-1373), a mystic and the founder Bridgettine Foundation at Syon and Catherine of Siena (c.1347-1380) a nun and mystic.<sup>128</sup> Liz Herbert McAvoy argues that both Julian and Margery would have been aware of Bridget's writings through their literary and spiritual circles.<sup>129</sup> Barton was from the same relative region (south east England) as Julian and Margery and it would have had successful links with continental Europe through Dover. Watt argues that it was Bridget and Catherine that provided Barton with female role models for her to aspire to for her activities.<sup>130</sup> Although, Watt makes the contrast between these women, stating that, Barton 'vanished into virtual obscurity' whereas Bridget and Catherine were canonised relatively soon after their deaths.<sup>131</sup> Arguably Barton took inspiration from all four women, but at different points in her visionary pursuit, for example, Margery and Julian both experienced an extended illness like Barton after which they began to prophesise<sup>132</sup> Whereas Bridget and Catherine did not suffer an illness, however Barton did take inspiration from them when she became more political in her later years.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Butler-Bowdon, W. (Ed.) (1936). *The Book of Margery Kempe: A Modern Version*. London: *Oxford University Press*, pp. 53-59.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> Temple, L.P. (2015). Returning the English "Mystics" to their Medieval Milieu: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Bridget of Sweden. *Women's Writing*, 23 (2), pp. 144-145. doi: 10.1080/09699082.2015.1055695.

<sup>129</sup> McAvoy, L. (2008). *A Companion to Julian of Norwich*. Suffolk: Boydell and Brewer, p. 1; Temple, L.P. (2015). Returning the English "Mystics" to their Medieval Milieu: Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Bridget of Sweden. *Women's Writing*, 23 (2), pp. 144-145. doi: 10.1080/09699082.2015.1055695.

<sup>130</sup> Watt, *Reconstructing the Word*, p. 139.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> Sirko, J. (2015). Making "Penance Profytable": Julian of Norwich and the Sacrament of Penance. *The Journal of Medieval Religious Cultures*, 41 (2) pp. 163-186; Temple, pp. 144-145; Tracy, pp. 148-162.

<sup>133</sup> Barrett, J. & Lukowski, A.A. (2008). Wedded to Light: The Life, Letters, and Legend of St. Catherine of Siena. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 41 (1), pp. 1-9. doi: 10.2307/20464245; Heffernan, C. (2017). The Revelations of St Bridget of Sweden in Fifteenth Century England. *Neophilologus*, 101(1), pp. 337-349; Scott, pp. 34-46; Wegner, S. (1998). Heroizing Saint Catherine: Francesco Vanni's Saint Catherine Of Siena Liberating a Possessed Woman. *Women's Art Journal*, 19 (1) pp. 31-37. doi: 10.2307/1358652.

The attainder that condemned Barton and her adherents in 1534 suggests that Barton and Bocking worked together to create a book of Barton's revelations:

which falce feyned revelacions, by the myschevous and malicious counsayle and conspiracye of the seid Edwarde Bickyng with the seid Elizabeth, were wrytyn and expressed in the seid bokes and volumes conteynyng the false and feyned revelacions and myracles of the seid Elizabeth for a ppetuall memorye thereof<sup>134</sup>

If Barton was completely illiterate it would have been extremely difficult for her to socialise within the upper echelons of society to such a standard that would disguise her fraud. Therefore, some level of literacy can be assumed, otherwise her sudden ability to prophesy on matters of religion would have been unbelievable and her participation in the book implausible.<sup>135</sup> However, if Barton was modelling herself as a mystic, a level of stage presence would have been expected for Barton to sell herself and be convincing. Interestingly, it is Bocking that the attainder condemns as being the chief instigator of Barton's prophecies and revelations by referring to him as 'myschevous' and his counsel 'malicious'.<sup>136</sup> Bocking deliberately tried to induce Barton to prophesise which Watt argues that 'obviously gives fuel to the idea that she was merely a pawn of conservative churchmen'.<sup>137</sup> This strips Barton's agency and implies that she was controlled and manipulated by Bocking and his opinions and views. The view that Barton could have orchestrated these prophecies on her own, was unthinkable. E.J. Devereux states that an unnamed monk of Canterbury began to distribute the book to certain bishops, but the governmental crackdown prevented distribution of the book, and of the seven-hundred known copies, none exist today.<sup>138</sup>

As outlined in chapter two William Lambarde, an Elizabethan lawyer and antiquarian, preserved a pamphlet written by Edward Thwaites, one of the only eye witnesses to Barton's prophecies and trances, in his *Perambulation of Kent* due to his belief the beginning of her story was 'knowne to very

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<sup>134</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 449.

<sup>135</sup> Neame, p. 48.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Watt, *Reconstructing the Word*, p. 149.

<sup>138</sup> Devereux, E.J. (1966). Elizabeth Barton and Tudor Censorship. Manchester: *Manchester University Press*, p. 95.



few, and likely in time to be hid from all'.<sup>139</sup> Lambarde wrote, 'it chaunced mee to see a little Pamphlet, conteining foure and twentie leaves, penned by Edward Thwaytes...intituled A marveilous worke of late done at Court of Street in Kent'.<sup>140</sup> The fact that there are also no copies of this pamphlet in existence along with 'The Nun's Book' suggests that the censorship against literature promoting the Holy Maid of Kent was successful. This is evidence that Barton was not as influential as she thought she was as someone may have kept aside a book for safekeeping or sent it abroad for publishing if others thought she was significant. Barton was prophesising through a period of radical change and Keith Thomas argues that the reformation had blurred the distinction between magic and religion even further.<sup>141</sup> Thomas suggests that mysticism and magic was seen as more of a Catholic ritual and as the country was moving more towards Protestantism it is evident that to be a mystic in the early modern period was no longer fashionable.<sup>142</sup>

Barton was never canonised by the Catholic Church after her execution despite Neame arguing that there was some movement for this during the reign of Mary I.<sup>143</sup> Barton's legacy remains that of a failed prophet, a fraud, and an 'embarrassment to her church'.<sup>144</sup> According to Thwaites, Barton, 'told plainly of divers things done at the Church and other places where she was not present...she spake also, of heaven, hell and purgatory'.<sup>145</sup> Barton subsequently became renowned as a miracle worker within her church diocese and as her fame spread further, her parish priest, Richard Master, informed the archbishop of Canterbury, of her activities.<sup>146</sup> As Barton's fame was growing at an unrepresented rate, it became necessary to 'make sure that there were no appearances of imposture or delusion' within her prophecies and revelations.<sup>147</sup> W.F. Hook states Barton's new ability would either be seen

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<sup>139</sup> Lambarde, p. 170; Neame, p. 18.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 170.

<sup>141</sup> Thomas, K. (1973). *Religion and The Decline of Magic*. London: Penguin University Books, p. 53.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Neame, p. 371.

<sup>144</sup> Warnicke, p. 69; Watt, *Reconstructing the Word*, p. 151.

<sup>145</sup> Lambarde, p. 171.

<sup>146</sup> Watt, *Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent]*.

<sup>147</sup> Hamilton, p. 41.

as 'divine or diabolical visitation' and to prove the former, an ecclesiastical commission needed to be held.<sup>148</sup>

According to Richard Reynolds, a Bridgettine Monk and Catholic martyr, these investigations were only concerned in ensuring that there was 'nothing in her alleged supernatural communications' that were 'at variance with the catholic church'.<sup>149</sup> Thwaites wrote that:

the fame of this marveylous Maiden was so spred abroade, that it came to the eares of Warham the Archbishop of Canterbury, who directed thither Doctour Bocking, Master Hadleighe and Barnes (three Monkes of Christes Church in Canterbury) father Lewes and his fellowe (two observants) his Officiall of Canterbury, and the Parson of Aldington: with commission, to examine the matter, and to informe him of the truth. The men opposed her of the chiefe pointes of the Popish believe, and finding her sounde therein, not onely waded no further in the discoverie of the fraude, but gave favourable countenance, and ioyned with her in setting foorth [to St. Sepulchre's]<sup>150</sup>

The confirmation by an ecclesiastical commission that Barton was found to be orthodox on all points of faith meant that it was believed by said commission that Barton's prophecies and revelations, thus far, were considered genuine. Following this pronouncement, Bocking was appointed Barton's confessor and spiritual advisor after a 'voice had spoken in her in one of her trances, that it was the pleasure of God that he should be her ghostly father'.<sup>151</sup> Her prophecies were widely publicised by Bocking to clergy in Canterbury but began to turn political as rumours of a royal divorce developed.<sup>152</sup>

### 4.3 The Prophecies

This subchapter analyses the evolution of Barton's prophecies which can be directly linked to the radical religious reformation that began with the lack of a male heir, which consequently led Henry to believe that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was invalid. W.F. Hook states that this led the country to be 'divided into two great factions, the party of the king and the party of the queen'.<sup>153</sup> Henry cited

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<sup>148</sup> Hook, W.F. (1868). *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury*. London: Bentley, p. 348.

<sup>149</sup> Hamilton, p. 41.

<sup>150</sup> Lambarde, p. 173.

<sup>151</sup> Marshall, P. (2003). Forgery and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII. *The Past & Present*, 1 (173), p. 41; Whatmore, p. 466.

<sup>152</sup> Louisa, Capon [*Salcot*], John.

<sup>153</sup> Hook, p. 351.

Leviticus in his case to have his marriage annulled stating that it was against divine law, 'If a man take his brothers wyfe, it is an vncleane thyng, he hath vncouered his brothers secrettes, they shalbe chyldlesse'.<sup>154</sup>

In 1526, Barton entered the Benedictine Priory, St. Sepulchre's. Hook argues that there would have been 'very few monasteries that would have received the profession of a penniless girl' and that her acceptance was a decision made out of 'fame which attached to a wonder-worker'.<sup>155</sup> Although, her prophecies remained innocuous:

[Barton] continued her accustomed working of wonderous myracles...lighting candels without fire, moistning womens breastes that before were drie and wanted milke, restoring all sorts of sicke to perfect health, reducing the dead to life againe, and finally dooing all God, to all such as were measured and vowed unto her at court of strete.<sup>156</sup>

Barton was now 'in a place of comfort and respectability, receiving visits from the great and the good' and was now referred to as 'The Holy Maid Of Kent'.<sup>157</sup> Barton was receiving the highest of commendations from the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham who referred to her as 'a very well disposed and virtuous woman'.<sup>158</sup> Thwaites wrote that Barton continued in this manner for a number of years until, 'the question was moved about King Henries marriage, at which time this holy Maiden stepped into this matter also'.<sup>159</sup> Barton's chief aim, through delivering her prophecies, quickly evolved. Her prophecies now focused on dissuading Henry VIII from marrying Anne Boleyn by claiming to have had a prophesy from God stating that:

that within one moneth after suche marriage he should no lenger be Kynge of this Realme, and in the reputacion of Almyghtie God should not be a Kynge one day nor one houre, and that he should [dey] a villaynes dethe<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Leviticus 20:21, Tyndale Version.

<sup>155</sup> Hook, p. 353.

<sup>156</sup> Lambarde, p. 174.

<sup>157</sup> Hook, p. 351.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid; Neame, p. 371.

<sup>159</sup> Lambarde, p. 174.

<sup>160</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 449.

After more than one month of marriage, the prophecy had not been fulfilled and Barton issued an amendment with the 'advertisement and counsel of Dr. Bocking' to ensure the focus remained upon her prophecies as the attempt was made to question Henry VIII's kingship:

traytrously beveled in their hartys that the Kyng our Sovereigne Lorde after hys late maryage solempnyzed between hys Hyghnes and hys seid moost dere and entyerly beloved wyf Quene Anne, was no lenger rightfully Kyng of this Realme in the reputacion of Almyghty God<sup>161</sup>

The language of the amended prophecy is decisive and absolute and enforces the consequences that the previous prophecy threatened. The first prophecy was given any time between 1528 and 1530 with the second prophecy being dated immediately after Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII married in January 1533. Significantly, it is believed that Barton had no contact with Bocking when her first prophecy was issued, and only when a respected Benedictine monk helped Barton reissue the prophecy that it began creating problems for Henry when their prophesy began spreading. With at least three years between the first and second prophecies Barton was shown to be a false prophet and was arrested and questioned. These prophecies left Barton open to accusations of treason under the 1351 Treason Act which specified that you could not imagine the king's death and of incite a rebellion.<sup>162</sup> It is not known how many followers Barton had but Thwaites states that at least 'three thousand persons' witnessed her supposed cure at Court-at-Street which allowed her to be admitted to St. Sepulchre's.<sup>163</sup>

Barton's prophetic abilities divided many of the clergy and Henry Man, bishop of Sodor and Man, wrote to Edward Bocking in July 1533 regarding Barton;

Let us magnify the name of the Lord, who has raised up this holy virgin, a mother indeed to me, and a daughter to thee, for our salvation. She has raised a fire in some hearts that you would think like the operation of the Holy Spirit in the Primitive Church. If you saw with what frequent tears some bewailed their transgressions!<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Hamilton, p. 43; Tomlins & Taunton, p. 449.

<sup>162</sup> Abbot, Bathurt, Cambell, Glenbervie, Grant, London & Redesdale, p. 320.

<sup>163</sup> Lambarde, p. 173.

<sup>164</sup> 'Henry VIII: July 1533, 11-15', in Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 6, 1533, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1882), pp. 352-370. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters->

However, by August 1533 Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury, on the orders of Thomas Cromwell, wrote to the Prioress of St. Sepulchres stating that:

Sister prioress, in my hearty wise, I commend me unto you. And so likewise will that you do repair unto me to my manor of Otford, and bring with you your nun which was some time at Courteupstrete, against Wednesday next coming: and that ye fail not herein in any wise.<sup>165</sup>

However, Cranmer 'did not succeed in eliciting the information he desired' therefore, 'the investigation was continued by other interrogators who were less leniently disposed than the archbishop'.<sup>166</sup> In a letter to Charles V of Spain dated 12<sup>th</sup> November 1533, Eustace Chapuys, the Spanish Ambassador to England, wrote that, '[Henry VIII] has lately imprisoned a nun who had always lived till this time as a good, simple and saintly woman, and had many revelations' but that many believed she was 'encouraged to such prophecies to stir up the people to rebellion'.<sup>167</sup> Barton was arrested and questioned again on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1533 by John Capon and he wrote that, 'Our holy Nun of Kent has confessed her treason against God and the King, that is, not only a traitress, but a heretic. She and her accomplices are likely to suffer death'.<sup>168</sup>

In another letter dated only four days later, Chapuys wrote that the king assembled judges, prelates, and nobles 'from morning to night, to consult on the crimes and superstitions of the nun and her adherents'.<sup>169</sup> The haste in which they dealt with the issue shows the urgency to suppress her feigned prophecies. Moreover, several of Barton's accomplices had also been arrested and interrogated, many of them priests or friars, which incurred an added level of concern for Henry VIII. Under interrogation, Henry Gold, Hugh Rich, Richard Risby, John Derring, and Richard Master, admitted that:

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papers-hen8/vol6/pp352-370 [accessed 3 February 2019]; Newcombe, D. (2004, September 23). Man, Henry (d. 1556), bishop of Sodor and Man. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. Retrieved 3 Feb. 2019, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-47311>.

<sup>165</sup> Cox, J. (Ed.) (1846). *The works of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr, 1556* (2nd ed.). Oxford: Parker Society.

<sup>166</sup> Merriman, R. (Ed.) (1902). *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, p. 119.

<sup>167</sup> 'Henry VIII: November 1533, 11-20' in *Letters and Papers*, pp. 562-578.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

if the nun had sent them word that it had been the pleasure of God, that they should have preached to the people that the King's Grace was no king afore God, they would have preached it and would have induced as many as they could thereto<sup>170</sup>

G.W. Bernard argues that no such order was given by Barton, but it demonstrates that Barton was not operating under her full potential, had these orders been given, it could have amassed hundreds, if not thousands of more followers from several different congregations. Henry was already concerned with the threat of several high-level priests and friars that had succumbed to Barton's deceit, he could not afford to lose anyone else:

...the nun and her accomplices in her detestable malice, desiring to incite the people to rebellion, had spread abroad and written that she had a divine revelation that the king would soon be shamefully driven from his kingdom by his own subjects<sup>171</sup>

Barton's prophecies became more politically based after Henry went public with his intentions to divorce Catherine of Aragon in order to marry Anne Boleyn as she issued several prophecies that made her beliefs on the issue perfectly clear. Neame states the primary function of a prophet was to witness the truth and then warn people of the consequences of ignoring it, which is what Barton attempted to do achieve by issuing the prophecy against Henry's divorce.<sup>172</sup> Barton must have overestimated her reach and reputation as only three days later on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1533, Barton and her accomplices were 'forced to make a public confession at St. Paul's Cross to denounce herself as a heretic and traitor'.<sup>173</sup> It is evident that Barton was attempting to continue on the tradition of medieval mystics such as Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe, Bridget of Sweden, and Catherine of Siena, however, as the scene was changing rapidly there was no longer the appetite for medieval mystics in early modern England.

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<sup>170</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 92; Whatmore, p. 468.

<sup>171</sup> 'Henry VIII: November 1533, 11-20', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 6, 1533*, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1882), pp. 562-578. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol6/pp562-578> [accessed 3 February 2019].

<sup>172</sup> Neame, p. 37.

<sup>173</sup> Smith, S. (Ed.) (2012). *For all Seasons: Selected Letters of Thomas More*. New York, NY: Scepter publishers.

#### 4.4 The Sermon

This subchapter investigates the fateful sermon that was delivered on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1533 at St. Paul's Cross, six months before Barton's execution, to determine whether the attempts to defame Barton were of a gendered nature. Two further themes are explored in relation to the sermon alongside this, its authorship by John Capon, the bishop elect for Bangor, the preacher that delivered the sermon and the location of the sermon. These themes are significant in understanding how Elizabeth Barton was treated and portrayed prior to her execution. Henry hoped that a public confession in front of a large audience would succeed in making many of her supporters lose faith in her and her prophecies. It also demonstrated that Barton was challenged on many of her values, namely those that she vowed to uphold after professing herself a nun, chastity, poverty, and obedience. Garthine Walker argues that a women's 'honour' is used interchangeably with other terms such as 'name', 'virtue', 'honesty' and 'chastity'.<sup>174</sup> Walker suggests that these terms 'undoubtedly have a bearing had a bearing on how honour was imagined'.<sup>175</sup> Barton's honour was undoubtedly the target when she was forced to undergo the defamatory sermon as attacking her honour in reference to her vows, for example, poverty, chastity and obedience meant she was not honest or trustworthy. It also outlined the determination of Henry VIII to expunge any threat to his supremacy by ensuring that a well-respected preacher, John Capon, was preaching Barton's sins at the most influential and public venue in early modern England.<sup>176</sup>

J. Mackintosh suggests that Henry 'would not be satisfied without the blood of the poor girl [Barton]' and the humiliation and degradation of being forced to confess and repent was justified.<sup>177</sup> Richard Reynolds wrote that Barton was:

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<sup>174</sup> Walker, p. 238.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Kirby, T. & Stanwood, P.G. (Eds.) (2014). *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640*. Leiden: Brill, p. 1.

<sup>177</sup> Walter, W. (Ed.) (1840). *The Catholic Family Library Containing Sir Thomas More: His Life and Times, Illustrated from His Own Writings from Contemporary Documents*. London: Booker & Co, p. 2.

attainted by Act of Parliament and a pretended confession, clearly not her own composition, and as certainty that of Cromwell, in whose power she had been for several months, being read at Paul's Cross, this being deemed essential by the king to destroy her credit.<sup>178</sup>

The sermon was delivered once again in Barton's home city of Canterbury on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1533. Those who saw Barton's supposed prophetic abilities would have been those who lived in or around Canterbury, therefore, targeting these people with a separate sermon would have been a high priority to persuade the masses that she was a fraud. Thomas More wrote that, 'She [Barton] was condemned to stand in the pillory at St. Paul's Cross, on a Sunday, and confess the imposture' whilst 'a sermon was preached in denunciation of the fraud'.<sup>179</sup> Capon began the sermon by addressing the audience directly by attempting to appeal to their better judgement:

I will declare the whole unto you shortly and briefly, under such manner as, if you give your benevolence and attendance thereto, you shall perceive what guile, what malice, what conspiracy hath been imagined and contrived – not only to put our most noble sovereign in danger of his realm and crown...but also to distain His Grace's renown and fame in time to come, as though His Grace has been the most wicked and detestable prince that ever reigned in this world hitherto<sup>180</sup>

Capon delivered the sermon in which Barton was denounced at St. Paul's Cross. Capon appeared to be very close to Thomas Wolsey and Thomas Cromwell through his brother William Capon who was Wolsey's chaplain, and he was granted favours through these connections.<sup>181</sup> This makes the sermon that he delivered against Barton, and her adherents, politically significant as it implies that it was an orchestrated attempt to defame her originating from the centre of court. In August 1533, Capon was nominated bishop of Bangor, which Eustace Chapuys, the Spanish ambassador to England, attributed to his support of the marriage of Henry and Anne Boleyn:

the preacher [John Capon], who was a monk lately made bishop in order to support the Lady's party [Anne Boleyn], repeated all that the Chancellor [Thomas More] had said against them,

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<sup>178</sup> Hamilton, p. 46.

<sup>179</sup> Merrimen, p. 119; *Walter, The Catholic Family Library Containing Sir Thomas More.*

<sup>180</sup> Whatmore, p. 464.

<sup>181</sup> Louisa, *Capon [Salcot], John.*



further affirming that the Nun, by her feigned superstition...and this had been one of the great calamities of this kingdom<sup>182</sup>

This critical statement demonstrates that the appointment of Capon as the bishop of Bangor was not simply fortuitous. L. Angelo states that despite Cardinal Wolsey's fall, Capon managed to rise through the government and thus was one of the twenty-nine delegates chosen to decide the fate of Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon in 1530 and, after siding with the king, he was 'translated to Hyde Abbey in Winchester' as a reward.<sup>183</sup> Henry and Capon seemed to develop an understanding that Capon would support the marriage and denounce Barton and, as a reward, Capon's position would be elevated. However, Capon reverted to Catholicism when Mary I succeeded the throne, which suggests that Capon switched his loyalties from monarch to monarch. However, having made these governmental connections, Capon was acutely aware of how fast he could fall out of royal favour. He supported Henry's annulment and now he was needed to condemn the false prophet who threatened Henry's kingship.

Capon argued that Henry's marital status should not diminish his divinely ordained kingship, 'Good Lord! What a myschefis and traitorous occasion was this – to induce the people to believe the king not to be righteous king, and them to be no longer his subjects'.<sup>184</sup> The sermon ensured that Henry's subjects knew, that no law had been broken by Henry for having his marriage annulled and thus, anyone who disagreed was committing treason as stated by the Act of Succession 1534. Henry was effectively justifying his reasoning behind believing that he was entitled to an annulment by verifying through Capon that his marriage to Catherine of Aragon should never have happened in the first place. This put Henry in a vulnerable position because divorce was not recognised by the Catholic Church and annulment was only granted in exceptional circumstances, furthermore, Henry's annulment was

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<sup>182</sup> 'Henry VIII: November 1533, 21-25', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 6, 1533*, ed. James Gairdner (London, 1882), pp. 578-591. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol6/pp578-591> [accessed 13 January 2019].

<sup>183</sup> Louisa, *Capon [Salcot], John*.

<sup>184</sup> Whatmore, p. 468.

not approved by the Catholic Church and he was excommunicated as a result.<sup>185</sup> A secondary benefit of the sermon was to validate Henry's marital choices through the voice of a respected monk and bishop, Capon was boosting Henry's persona whilst destroying Barton's.

According to Chapuys, 'the king and his ministers were taking extraordinary measures against Barton to blot out from people's minds the impression they have that the nun is a saint and a prophet'.<sup>186</sup>

Barton began prophesying when she was eighteen in 1525 and was executed at the age of twenty-eight; ten years of prophetic ability had to be destroyed to such an extent that no one could have believed Barton to be innocent. Chapuys' correspondence to Charles V of Spain offer a unique perspective of Henry and his great matter he was firmly against the proposed divorce because Catherine of Aragon was Charles V's niece. Although Chapuys failed in this task, the marriage between Catherine and Henry was annulled on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1553 and nine days later Henry and Anne Boleyn secretly married. However, Chapuys 'consistently collected reports of dissatisfaction in England, and was optimistic about the chances of rebellion'.<sup>187</sup> Chapuys' opinion of Henry VIII was forthright and damning, 'the great obstinacy and blindness of the king, which increases every day' and that Henry would not 'listen to reason and return to the right way' as even prophecies would not alter his opinion.<sup>188</sup> Chapuys' opinion of Henry altered after his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, 'So that it seems as if he has made a total divorce not only from his wife, but from good conscience, humanity, and gentleness, which he used to have'.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 85.

<sup>186</sup> 'Spain: November 1533, 16-30' in Calender of State Papers.

<sup>187</sup> Davies, C., & Edwards, J. (2011, May 19). Katherine [Catalina, Catherine, Katherine of Aragon] (1485–1536), queen of England, first consort of Henry VIII. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. Retrieved 13 Jan. 2019, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4891>; Davies, C. (2008, May 24). Chapuys, Eustache (1490/92–1556), diplomat. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. Retrieved 13 Jan. 2019, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-70785>.

<sup>188</sup> 'Henry VIII: November 1533, 21-25' in Letters and Papers, pp. 562-578.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

However, Chapuys may have agreed with Barton regarding the royal divorce but he does not state whether he was a believer of Barton's prophecies at any point in any of his correspondences. However, he described the failings of Henry and his privy council regarding Barton:

Meanwhile the King has hitherto failed in his attempt to make the judges declare guilty of high treason those who have had any dealings with the Nun...He himself [Henry VIII] is expected here on Friday next to dispute the case with the judges; and, if so, I should rather think that although some—perhaps the most learned and impartial among them—have declared that they will rather die than deal with the accused in that manner, should the King, as they say, come to dispute the case, he will have his own way; for no one in England dares contradict him in such matters unless he chooses to be treated as a madman, or, what is worse, as guilty of high treason<sup>190</sup>

S. House argues that Henry was so troubled about his former lord chancellor falling him in granting the royal divorce that he was convinced that Thomas More, lord chancellor from 1529, was 'the chief deviser of Barton's utterances'.<sup>191</sup> More praised Barton's devotion but continuously warned her not to meddle in political matters and insisted that all his meetings with Barton were 'innocent of what we would call political intention'.<sup>192</sup> More's name was originally included in the bill of attainder for aspiring with Barton, but was removed on the 'probable grounds that his inclusion threatened the bill's passage'.<sup>193</sup> Henry could have persisted and indicted More on grounds of treason, but he was more concerned in definitively condemning Barton. Although More was eventually executed for refusing to acknowledge the Act of Succession on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1534, it diminished Henry's power as More was seen to survive an accusation of treason that challenged Henry's divine right to be king.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> 'Spain: November 1533, 16-30', in *Calendar of State Papers, Spain, Volume 4 Part 2, 1531-1533*, ed. Pascual de Gayangos (London, 1882), pp. 858-868. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/spain/vol4/no2/pp858-868> [accessed 17 May 2019].

<sup>191</sup> House, S. (2008, January 03). More, Sir Thomas [St Thomas More] (1478–1535), lord chancellor, humanist, and martyr. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Ed. Retrieved 17 May. 2019, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19191>.

<sup>192</sup> Bernard, *The King's Reformation*, p. 136.

<sup>193</sup> House, *More, Sir Thomas [St Thomas More]*.

<sup>194</sup> Smith, *Selected Letters of Thomas More*.

St Paul's Cross was the most influential of all public venues in early modern England and was able to accommodate audiences of approximately 6000 people.<sup>195</sup> Attending the weekly two hour sermons would have been a staple activity for many in the early modern era.<sup>196</sup> As the religious policies in England were changing substantially with Henry VIII turning against his first wife and the pope, St Paul's Cross was used to reflect these changes as the crown sought to increase their control over the pulpit and by extension, the people.<sup>197</sup>

Mary Morrissey states that public penances held at St. Paul's Cross were 'unusual' and were only reserved for especially scandalous cases such as those that involved sexual misconduct.<sup>198</sup> Millar MacLure argues that the pulpit in Paul's Churchyard was 'the most important vehicle of persuasion used by the government during the period of 1534-1554'.<sup>199</sup> John Wall outlines that the Paul's Cross sermons did not happen 'spontaneously' and would have needed organisation of 'time, space, people and money'.<sup>200</sup> This highlights the extreme concern that Henry VIII and his privy council felt regarding Barton and her prophecies as the decision to hold the public penance at St Paul's Cross was only made on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1534, three days before the event.<sup>201</sup> Peter Marshall argues that Barton was an 'exceptionally dangerous opponent because her manipulation of the supernatural order met expectations deeply rooted in contemporary religious culture' and thus it was difficult to separate the truth.<sup>202</sup> In these scandalous cases that involved sexual misconduct, Morrissey states that the aim of the penances was remedial and the sinner would be forgiven and rehabilitated back into the community.<sup>203</sup> However, this was never the intention with Barton and her followers and she was due

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<sup>195</sup> Mears, N. (2014). *Paul's Cross and Nationwide Special Worship, 1533-1642*. In T. Kirby & P. G. Stanwood (Eds.) *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640* (pp. 41-60). Leiden: Brill, p. 41.

<sup>196</sup> Rex, R. (2014). *Paul's Cross and the Crisis of the 1530s*. In T. Kirby & P. G. Stanwood (Eds.) *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640* (pp. 107-127). Leiden: Brill, p. 108.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Morrissey, M. (2011). *Politics and the St Paul's Sermons 1558-1642*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 120.

<sup>199</sup> MacLure, M. (1958). *The Paul's Cross Sermons, 1534-1642*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, p. 20.

<sup>200</sup> Wall, J. (2014). *Virtual Paul's Cross: The Experience of Public Preaching after the Reformation*. In T. Kirby & P.G. Stanwood (Eds.) *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640* (pp. 61-92). Leiden: Brill, p. 66.

<sup>201</sup> 'Henry VIII: November 1533, 11-20 ' in *Letters and Papers*, pp. 562-578.

<sup>202</sup> Marshall, p. 42.

<sup>203</sup> Morrissey, p. 120.

to be executed after a confession had been procured and the perfect venue for this was one of the most public places in the kingdom.<sup>204</sup>

The sermon delivered by Capon is key to understanding how Barton was viewed prior to her execution and whether her gender was a key element in the efforts to defame her. Henry VIII clearly viewed Barton as a significant threat against his reign and sovereignty for action to be taken so quickly after her arrest. Throughout the sermon, Capon challenges Barton's status as a Holy Nun by attacking her on the vows she made when she professed herself a nun, poverty, obedience, and chastity.

The vast majority of the primary evidence for this subchapter derives from the sermon transcribed from original documents in the public record office by L.E. Whatmore in 1943, *The sermon against the Holy Maid of Kent and Her Adherents, Delivered at Paul's Cross, November the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1533, and at Canterbury, December 7<sup>th</sup>*. Whatmore identifies specific passages that make insinuations regarding sexual immorality with her spiritual advisor Edward Bocking, and thus surmises that 'no evidence, in spite of searching was ever found against Barton's moral character'. However, this proves that it is easier to cast doubt on a woman's character when their sexual morality is concerned as Barton's alleged promiscuity is mentioned, at least in passing comments, in the majority of secondary works.

There are two instances in the sermon where it is implied that Barton was sexually immoral with her spiritual advisor, and confessor, Edward Bocking. These insinuations would have been extremely harmful to her reputation, not only because she was an unmarried woman, but because she had 'at the recommendation of the parish rector, professed herself a nun' and taken a vow of 'chastity, poverty and obedience'.<sup>205</sup> Bocking would have also taken a vow of chastity when he professed himself a Benedictine Monk in 1500, however, it appears that the implications of his sexual immorality did not affect his reputation as harshly as it did Barton's. Bocking would have been at least fifty years of age when Barton entered St. Sepulchre's in 1526, when she was only twenty.

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Walter, p. 227.

The first statement, 'And she came with the said Bocking's servants to Canterbury in an evening; and Dr. Bocking brought her to the said Priory of St. Sepulchre's in the morning!' implies that Barton and Bocking spent the night together.<sup>206</sup> Barton is unaccounted for between the evening she went to Canterbury with Bocking's servants, and the morning when she was dropped off by Bocking at St. Sepulchre's. There is no outright accusation made by Capon of sexual immorality, the insinuation of sexual promiscuity is inferred because Barton is unaccounted for, and this is arguably more harmful to her reputation as it leaves her whereabouts, and what she is doing with whom, open to interpretation. This approach is arguably very deliberate whereby Capon is attempting to cast doubt about her accountability. No out-right claims needed to be made, only a degree of doubt and the damage is done to her character. After Barton's miraculous cure at Court-At-Street the archbishop 'was contented that the said Elizabeth Barton should be in the meantime in the nunnery of St. Sepulchre's if the prioress would take her'.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, it is conceivable that this course of action only spanned a few days, 'bring with you your nun which was some time at Courtupstete, against Wednesday next coming'.<sup>208</sup> In this case, the meeting of Barton and Bocking would not have been unusual or even noteworthy. The fact that it took place at night was unfortunate and shows the lack of time Bocking had to prepare Barton for the drastic change it would be to live in a nunnery. Bocking appears to have been genuinely inspired by Barton and her prophetic abilities, solicits her admittance to a nunnery and becomes her advisor and confessor, thus it makes no logical sense why either Barton, or Bocking, would engage in a sexual relationship that could undermine them both.

The second insinuation made by Capon was more elaborate and not only questioned her sexuality but her faith:

And as far as can be conjectured, she feigned that she was so often troubled and vexed with the devil to the intent her sisters should be afraid to stir in the nights; and that thereby she might walk abroad in the night without controllement of any of them. For, as her own maid hath confessed, she used twice or thrice a week to go out of her cell secretly, and to be absent

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<sup>206</sup> Whatmore, p. 466.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Cox, p. 252.

for an hour and some times more, when she perceived her sisters in their deep sleep. And it is supposed that then she went not about the saying of her Pater Noster!<sup>209</sup>

This statement challenges the reputation that Barton had built as The Holy Maid of Kent by depicting her as a controlling, deceitful and deviant woman, who did not conform to the role of an obedient and chaste nun. Capon suggests that Barton's sexual relationship with Bocking was ongoing and that she was regularly leaving the confines of the nunnery to have sex. In order to stop suspicion, she built the illusion that the devil was present with her in her cell, so no one would visit whilst she was out.<sup>210</sup>

A search of Barton's cell was conducted after her arrest and 'brimstone, arcefetida, and other stinking gommies and powders' were discovered.<sup>211</sup> This was seen to prove that Barton was a fraud, creating a sensory experience that the devil was present.<sup>212</sup> Additionally, Barton's maid confessed to seeing her leaving the confines of her cell up to three times a week for several hours at a time. However, Capon prefaced this by stating that the sisters were terrified to leave their cells at night, thus, she could have left her cell much more frequently than her maid confessed to, or not at all. However, it is not known under what circumstances Barton's maid confessed to seeing her leave her cell at night. This is crucial evidence that underpins the entirety of the efforts to defame Barton is only referred to once, by someone that has connections with Henry and Privy Council.

Capon also attempted to challenge her vow of poverty by insinuating she was living in luxury:

Among whom she (being herself fat and ruddy) caused some to fast so much, that the sharpness of their bones had almost worn through their skin. Some did wear hair; some chains of iron next to their body; and suffered other marvellous penance in their bodies at her commandments, to prepare themselves to be worthy<sup>213</sup>

The aim of the statement was to ensure that Barton's followers believed on every level that Barton was a fraud. It strongly insinuates that Barton encouraged her followers to fast so much that they

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<sup>209</sup> Whatmore, pp. 469-470.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid, p. 470.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p. 469.

were emaciated but that she continued to indulge in food so much so that she appeared fat. However, Watt suggests that it is unlikely that Barton would have been fat due to her illness.<sup>214</sup> The sermon appears to be the only primary source document that mentions Barton's physical appearance, however, if Barton was breaking fast and overindulging it would have been clear and obvious as Barton was present at the sermon upon a scaffold. It would have been obvious to those viewing Barton at St. Paul's Cross and then in Canterbury and up to them to make their own judgement on this particular piece of evidence. Unfortunately for Barton, it is conceivable that majority of the audience would have believed what Capon was preaching in the sermon. Firstly, because the evidence at the time seemed ironclad and there was no disputing it, a secret sexual relationship was very hard to prove either way. Secondly, Barton was due to be executed for speaking out against the king, so for fear of repercussions they kept silent and finally, there could have also been the possible converts, that did believe and on seeing the evidence presented such as the stinking gommies found in her cell and switched alliances, which was the initial aim of the sermon anyway.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

It is clear that the attempts to discredit and defame Barton were of a gendered nature. It was also easier to cast doubt on Barton because of her gender and thus by alleging sexual immorality this questioned her respectability and honesty. However, she was also challenged on all three vows she took when she professed herself a nun, chastity, obedience, and poverty. Her execution was inevitable due to her prophecies delivered against the king, therefore the sermon at St. Paul's Cross on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1533 was purely to defame her character and ensure Barton did not die a martyr. Two shrouded accusations of sexual immortality were made in the sermon by Capon, one of which suggested that she spent the entire night with her spiritual advisor Bocking. Capon was careful not to make an outright accusation of sexual immortality and instead stated that he saw her late at night with Bocking and then again early morning; questioning where she was, where she spent the night,

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<sup>214</sup> Watt, *Barton, Elizabeth [called the Holy Maid of Kent, the Nun of Kent]*.



and with whom. This was a clever tactic employed by Capon because it would have challenged the trust that Barton's followers had in her.

Her status as a nun at St. Sepulchre's who had taken vows of chastity, or as unmarried woman who should have remained chaste before marriage were similar, in both in that both required an unblemished reputation. The second accusation was significantly more elaborate and depicted her not only as sexually immoral, but as controlling, deceitful and deviant. It detailed how Barton set an intricate illusion whereby she tricked her sisters into believing the devil was present with her in cell so she could leave her cell at any time during the night to satisfy her growing sexual appetite with Bocking. It specified that on multiple occasions she snuck out of her cell to have sex with Bocking, implying that her sexual promiscuity that was alluded in the first accusation was not limited to the single instance. Capon was attempting to establish Barton's untrustworthiness to the audience, if she was willing to fool her sisters for sex, to manipulate them in this way, what else was she capable of?

Of course, this is dependant of whether she actually left her cell or not. The only evidence that Capon employed is the word of Barton's maid who is said to have confessed to seeing her leave on several occasions. However, there are several problems with this evidence, as he has already stated that because Barton set up the illusion of the devil Barton's sisters were terrified to leave their respective cells at night, so this may have been a manufactured ruse by Capon, so it was impossible to verify whether Barton was in her cell or not. Also, the circumstances of the questioning of Barton's maid are unknown, she may have been threatened with the same punishment as Barton if she did not comply. Regardless, there is no defending statement from Barton or Bocking proving that Capon and the Henrician government was not interested in hearing Barton attempt to redeem herself – as this was not the point of the sermon.

The point of the sermon was to ruin Barton's character and honour so thoroughly that no one would respect her views and prophecies. She had been attacked thus far on the vow of chastity and obedience. The final vow to challenge was poverty and he did this by stating that she appeared fat

and ruddy despite encouraging so many of her followers to fast so much they were clearly underweight. Despite Capon attempting to influence the audience with her physical appearance, it would have been much easier for the immediate audience to look upon Barton, who was situated on the stands among them. However, Capon may have been thinking about the wider effect as there were only two sermons that took place, one at St Pauls Cross and one in Canterbury. The sermon was transcribed and may have been delivered to congregations all over the country before she was executed in April 1534 to ensure the sermon had the maximum effect of defaming her character. Thus, Capon's comment about Barton being fat and ruddy becomes almost becomes unverifiable as more people heard that this was true than ever saw her at either of the two sermons in the first place.

Barton was being executed for treason against the king; she declared through several prophecies that he would lose his kingdom if he divorced Catherine of Aragon and married Anne Boleyn. There was no elements of sexual misconduct or sexual promiscuity or any reason to believe she had broken any of her vows she made, chastity, obedience, or poverty. Barton was to be executed regardless as the punishment for treason was death by hanging because her prophecies undermined Henry's kingship and right to rule. Therefore, the entire sermon was designed to thoroughly defame her character, thus it is evident Elizabeth Barton's gender was a key element of the sermon at St. Paul's Cross. It has been shown that because of the scale of Barton's crimes, any means necessary had to be employed to take her down.

## 5 The execution and Torture of Anne Askew

### 5.1 Introduction

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 1546 Anne Askew was arraigned for heresy after several earlier arrests and interrogations and was transported to Newgate to the Tower.<sup>215</sup> There were no doubts that she would be executed for heresy, however, the examiners wanted to extract more information from Askew through any means possible. Diane Watt states that at this point Thomas Wriothesley and Sir Richard Rich took the extraordinary approach to torture Askew in the hopes that she would name other members of her 'secte'.<sup>216</sup> When she steadfastly refused to incriminate anyone, and remained true to her faith, this solidified her martyrdom and she was executed by burning, on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1546<sup>217</sup> As a woman who was of gentle birth, Askew should have been exempt from such brutal treatment, which demonstrated how desperate the councillors were to curb the reformist movement. The method of execution for heresy in this era was burning but was used sparingly, however, this was increased significantly during the reign of Mary I of England when she burnt over 280 Protestants at the stake between 1555 and 1558.<sup>218</sup> Eamon Duffy suggests that Mary's reign was the most intense religious persecution of its kind, and it demonstrated what martyrs such as Askew sacrificed their lives for.<sup>219</sup>

In analysing Askew's *Examinations*, and the circumstances around her arrests, it is made clear that the Henrician government was angered by her religious beliefs. Following the introduction of the 'Act of the Six Articles' in 1539, it made the justification for executing Askew very straightforward as she consistently denied transubstantiation, the belief that the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.<sup>220</sup> Megan Hickerson states that in the Six Articles the act of denying transubstantiation was deemed heretical and was punishable by burning for a first offence, therefore, the use of torture was clearly personal as it was inevitable that she would be executed for heresy.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Watt, *Askew [married name Kyme], Anne*.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>217</sup> Beilin, p. xv.

<sup>218</sup> Duffy, p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>220</sup> 'Letters and Papers: June 1539, 1-5' in *Letters and Papers*.

<sup>221</sup> Hickerson, *Negotiating Heresy in Tudor England*, p. 777.

This chapter is separated into three subchapters. The first section gives context for the execution in discussing Askew's family life, her conversion to Protestantism, and what brought her to London. It analyses Askew's *Examinations*, drawing attention to how it was adapted by John Bale. Although the *Examinations* can be read independently of Bale's interjections, without them it may have prevented its publication in the 1500s. The second subchapter analyses why Askew was tortured when her execution was inevitable as she was detained for heresy before the decision was made to brutally torture her. It argues that Askew was accused of infiltrating Henry VIII's court and accused of influencing Queen Catherine Parr to the reformed religion. Therefore, it examines a plot to depose Catherine Parr due to her religious beliefs and that Askew was tortured in the hopes of implicating Catherine Parr and her ladies. It argues that Askew was used as a political tool by the Henrician government in an attempt to curb the protestant reformation. By 1546 Henry's health was declining and the threat of Catherine becoming Queen regent, and having a minority regency, was at the forefront of Henry's Privy Council's mind.<sup>222</sup> Therefore, Susan E. James states that Askew was specifically sought out to implicate the queen as she was a 'self-confessed sacramentarian heretic' and a perfect scapegoat.<sup>223</sup> It is conceivable that it was Askew's gender that was seen as a threat as it was evident that Askew held a great deal of power over her torturers. The third subchapter investigates Askew's posthumous reputation and analyses the influence of martyrologist John Foxe and the publication of his *Acts and Monuments*. It also determines the significance of the woodcuts that were commissioned to depict Askew's execution that were displayed as titular pages in the *Acts and Monuments*.

## 5.2 Anne Askew's Examinations and John Bale's Influence

Askew was arrested for the first time on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1545 and, after she was denied bail on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, she was released four days later on the 27<sup>th</sup>. It was during those four days that her first

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<sup>222</sup> James, S. (2012, January 05). Katherine [Kateryn, Catherine] [née Katherine Parr] (1512–1548), queen of England and Ireland, sixth consort of Henry VIII. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Retrieved 31 Jan. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4893>.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

examination took place, according to the unique first-person account that Askew authored while she was imprisoned. It was an extremely valuable, first-hand, chronological account straight from Askew's own hand. However, Oliver Wort states that Askew's *Examinations* did not survive unadorned, with prefaces and intrusive additions to Askew's narrative by John Bale, a reformist scholar.<sup>224</sup> Despite never meeting face-to-face, Askew and Bale developed a unique, unexpected, and unforeseen partnership that benefited both parties similarly and this is examined throughout. Although, Bale had adorned Askew's *Examinations* in an attempt to push his own Protestant agenda, Askew's prose may not have been so popular without so much publicity. However, it is evident that although Bale made many attempts to characterise Askew throughout his interjections, that he ultimately failed.

This subchapter examines several themes, Askew's heresies when she arrived in London, the ambiguity surrounding the dates of Askew's examinations, and how Askew's examinations were published with excessive additions throughout the narrative that impeded Askew's voice. Additionally, comparisons are made between Askew and Barton as their executions for treason were only twelve years apart, however Barton was illiterate and relied on men to form her voice and lasting representation whereas Askew had the ability to control her own narrative through her education. However, despite Askew's ability to control the narrative, in the first instance, it was still influenced by Bale who published her work after her death meaning she had less control over her work than she initially intended.

Anne Askew, born in 1521 was the daughter of Sir William Askew, a landowner in Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire, and Elizabeth Wrottesley.<sup>225</sup> Diane Watt suggests that Askew was thought to have had a good education, possibly from tutors at home.<sup>226</sup> This enabled her to keep a record of significant events in her life and keep extensive notes on both of her examinations. According to Bale, Askew was married at a young age, against her will, to Thomas Kyme who was originally betrothed to Martha, her

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<sup>224</sup> Wort, O. (2007). The Double Life of Anne: John Bale's "Examinations" and "Diue Anne Vitam (sic)". *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, 58(237), p. 634.

<sup>225</sup> Watt, Askew [married name Kyme], Anne.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

older sister.<sup>227</sup> However, after Martha's unexpected death, Anne was bargained off by their father as to not lose any money and the potential advances in name and land the union brought.<sup>228</sup> According to Bale, Askew and Kyme supposedly had two children together, 'and had by hym (as I am infourmed) ii. chyldren', however, Bale could not confirm his sources, therefore, the credibility of this particular source is diminished.<sup>229</sup>

Askew's conversion to Protestantism led Kyme to 'drive her 'vyolently away' and Askew attempted to obtain a legal separation in 1544 when she arrived in London.<sup>230</sup> Elaine Beilin argues that Askew could have lived a 'prosperous, conventional life as a gentlewoman' but her conversion to the heretical Protestantism prevented that life.<sup>231</sup> Bale's previous comment suggesting that Askew and Kyme had two children together can further be challenged as it would have been irregular for a women in the early modern period to leave young children as it was seen as their duty to care for them. Bale hypothesised that Kyme may have been responsible for Askew's arrest and subsequent examination, 'of thys matter was she first examyned (I thynke)', due to his anger at her sudden conversion.<sup>232</sup> However, Bale's inability to verify his sources, again, diminishes its validity. Bale wanted to cast Kyme as the antagonist, Bale approved of the separation as it set Askew on her path to martyrdom. However, Askew effectively abandoned her husband and her attitude and behaviours before her abandonment certainly gave Kyme grounds for separation due to Askew's heresy.<sup>233</sup> Belin argues that Askew's case is relevant to the passage of the Act for the Advancement of True Religion whereby gentlewomen, of which Askew was, was only allowed to read the Bible privately and not to others.<sup>234</sup> According to Pender, it is highly probable that Askew's trip to Lincoln happened after the passage of

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<sup>227</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 92.

<sup>228</sup> Beilin, p. 92.

<sup>229</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>230</sup> Beilin, p. xix; Watt, *Askew [married name Kyme], Anne*.

<sup>231</sup> Beilin, p. xv.

<sup>232</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 93.

<sup>233</sup> Jewel, H. M. (2007). *Women in Late Medieval and Reformation Europe 1200-1550*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 29.

<sup>234</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 56; Beilin, p. xxvi.

the 1543 Act therefore, Askew was 'deliberately defying the law when she read the Bible so publicly in Lincoln minster'.<sup>235</sup> Askew even stated that her friends warned her against such action:

For my fryndes tolde me, if I ded come to Lyncolne, the prestes wolde assault me and put me to great trouble, as therof they had made their boast...And as I was in the mynster, readyng upon the Byblem they resorted unto me by ii. and by ii. by v. and by vi myndyng to have spoken to me, yet went they they ways agayne with our wordes speakyng.<sup>236</sup>

It is obvious that Askew was so determined in her religious conviction, that her friends could not deter her. Her separation from her husband, and her disregard of the law displayed the starting point of her journey to martyrdom. In 1539, Henry VIII brought in 'an acte abolishing divsity in opynions' which recognised him as 'a true syncere ane unyforme doctrine of Christ Religion'.<sup>237</sup> The act had six articles, of which Askew regularly defied the point related to transubstantiation, 'Whether there be in the sacrament of the altar transubstantiation of the substance of bread and wine into the substance of flesh and blood, or not.'<sup>238</sup> Anyone to deny transubstantiation by:

worde writinge ymprintinge cyphringe or in enye otherwise doe publishe preache teaches aye affirme declare dispute argue or hold any opinion...shalbe demed and adjudged heritick, and that evy suche offence shalbe adjudged mantfest heresy, and that everie such offendor and offenders shall therfore have suffer judgment execucon payne and paynes of waye of burning, without abjuracon<sup>239</sup>

The act is very clear in the potential punishments that would ensue if one denied the sacrament, this is reiterated in 1543 by Thomas Berthelet in the *Sacrament of the Aultare*.<sup>240</sup> The Act did not get the intended reception as they did not appear to halt Askew's apparent heretical behaviour as Beilin

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<sup>235</sup> Pender, P. (2010). Bale Reading Anne Askew: Contested Collaboration in the Examinations. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 73(3), p. 512. doi: 10.1525/hlq.2010.73.3.507.

<sup>236</sup> Beilin, p. xxvi.

<sup>237</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 739.

<sup>238</sup> 'Letters and Papers: June 1539, 1-5', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 14 Part 1, January-July 1539*, ed. James Gairdner and R H Brodie (London, 1894), pp. 488-494. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol14/no1/pp488-494> [accessed 12 February 2020].

<sup>239</sup> Tomlins & Taunton, p. 740.

<sup>240</sup> Berthelet, T. (1543). *A necessary doctrine and erudition for any Christen man*. London: Thomas Berthelet, pp. 74-82.

states, that after Askew's arrival in London, she began to partake in activities that attested to her position as a heretic and a martyr.<sup>241</sup>

For example, in June 1545 Charles Wriothesley, a herald and chronicle wrote:

Anne Askewe, a gentlewoman otherwise called Anne Keyme, wyfe to one Mr Keyme, gent. of Lincolneshire, and Joan Sawtery, wyfe to one John Sawtery of London, which sayd persons were endyted for sacramentaries by the Acte of the 6 Articles for certeine wordes by them spoken against the sacrament<sup>242</sup>

However, no witnesses came forward against Askew and Sawtery and they were found not guilty by '12 honest and substantiall men of the citye of London'.<sup>243</sup> However, Askew's behaviour was alerting the Henrician government and 'a great papiste of Wykham colleadge [Wadlow]...gott hymselfe lodged harde by hur at the nexte howse'.<sup>244</sup> It is obvious that this was an attempt to investigate her regarding her activities and behaviours in the hopes that she would further implicate herself. The surveillance on Askew proved beneficial for her as they only managed to prove that she was the most, 'devouteste and Godliest woman that he knew for at mydnyght she begynneth to pray, and cessayth not in many howers after, when I and others applye owr sleape or do worse'.<sup>245</sup> Watt states that nothing sinister was found or reported back by Wadlow and they were in fact impressed by Askew's piety.<sup>246</sup> It took a further nine months for authorities to gather enough information on Askew to bring her in for questioning, it is unclear what exactly she did during this period, however, Watt suggests that she may have been forced into hiding.<sup>247</sup>

Askew dates her first examination beginning in March 1545, however Beilin states that there is some ambiguity surrounding the dates and argues that her first examination may have been in March

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<sup>241</sup> Beilin, p xx.

<sup>242</sup> Wriothesley, C. (1875). *A Chronicle of England During the Reigns of the Tudors, from 1485 to 1559*. London: Camden Society, p. 155.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Nichols, J. (1859). *Narratives of the days of the reformation: chiefly from the manuscripts of John Foxe the martyrologist; with two contemporary biographies of Archbishop Cranmer*. London: The Camden Society, p. 40.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Watt, Askew [married name Kyme], Anne.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.



1546.<sup>248</sup> In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the new year began on March 25<sup>th</sup> alongside the new tax year, therefore the dates between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 24<sup>th</sup> March still used the calendar year 1545.<sup>249</sup> Theresa Kemp states that Askew was detained under the *Six Articles* on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1545 and imprisoned there for twelve days until the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1545.<sup>250</sup> However, from Askew's *Examinations*, Askew states that she was not released on this day:

And the xxiii. daye of Marche, my cosyne Brittayne came into the counter to me, and asked there, whether I might be put to bayle or no? Then went he immedyatlye unto my lorde Mayre, desyerynge of hym to be so good lorde unto me, that I might be bayled. My lorde answered hym, and sayd, that he wolde be glad to do the best that in hym laye. Howbeyt he coulde not bayle me without the consent of a spirytual offycer. So requyrynge hym to go and speake with the chauncellour of London. For he sayd, lyke as he coulde not commytt me to pryson without the consent of a spirytual offycer, nomore coulde he bayle me without consent of the same.<sup>251</sup>

Askew was bailed after four days later according to her timeline in her *Examinations* which would make the date the 27<sup>th</sup> March 1546 if she was writing to the old style.<sup>252</sup> This would also mean that there was only four months between Askew's first and second examinations, (see Figure 2). Whereas if she was writing in the new style the first examination would have been in March 1545 with the second fifteen months later in June 1546. Therefore, it would make more sense for Askew to be writing in the old style as it would mean that when she was arraigned at the Guildhall before her first examination in this timeline, this gave the Henrician government a reason to monitor her as she was publicly denying transubstantiation. It would also mean there were four months in-between Askew's examinations as opposed to fifteen months which is more realistic and believable of the Henrician government as they would have wanted to remove the threat of her as soon as possible.

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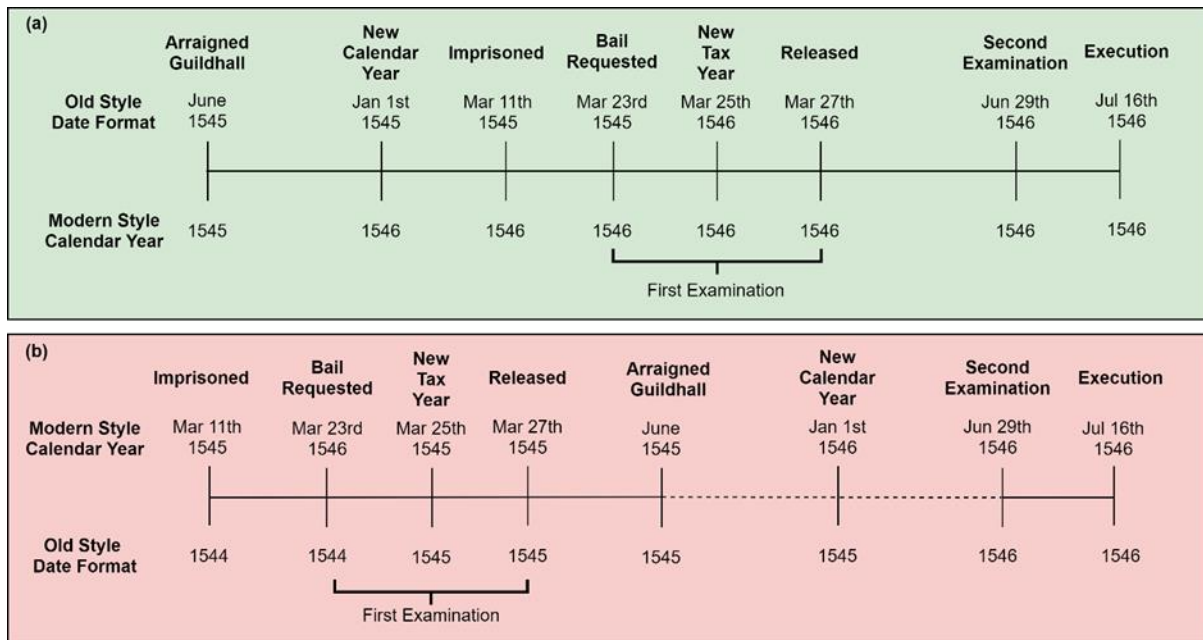
<sup>248</sup> Beilin, p. xx.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Kemp, p. 1021.

<sup>251</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 36-37.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid, pp. 38-65.



*Figure 2: Timeline Showing Differences Between Old Style (a) and Modern Style (b) in Relation to Anne Askew's Examinations. The Old Style Format (a) is Assumed in this Thesis.*

Under the new style timeline, her arraignment at the Guildhall happened after her first examination in June 1545, which includes a further eleven months until her latter examination and twelve months before her execution, (see Figure 2). This extended timeline is quite unrealistic of the Henrician government as they would have wanted the issues resolved and Askew removed as a threat especially as she had already been questioned on her religious beliefs and her denial on transubstantiation in her first examination. Therefore, it does not make sense why she would have been arrested and then released without charge for the same offences in June 1545 if she was being as closely monitored as described previously. However, Wort notes that Askew does not mention the arrest in June 1545 in either the first or latter examination, but this could be because she is writing in the old style and this event happened nine months before she was imprisoned and Askew is specifically writing about her examinations, not events that happened nine months prior.<sup>253</sup> It could also mean that Askew was aware that she was under time restrictions, and in order to get a concise account of her examinations, she had to make the executive decision to cut out some portions of her account, which may have included events that happened nine months prior to her first examination. Beilin argues that it is

<sup>253</sup> Wort, p. 634.

possible that Askew wrote the entirety of the first and second examinations between her condemnation on 28<sup>th</sup> June 1546 and her execution on 16<sup>th</sup> July 1546, which would have given her only twenty-three days to write both examinations.<sup>254</sup> There are a few occasions in her first examination where she stated that she could not recall certain conversations she had, which would support the argument that she wrote her examinations in one sitting a period of time after the events themselves. For example, 'Onlye do I remember thys small porcyon of it,' and 'there was sumwhat more in it, which because I had not the coppie, I cannot now rembre'.<sup>255</sup> However, it is evident that Askew did not want to falsify her account by recounting information that was not grounded in fact as it appears that she only recalled the facts that she could remember at the time of writing. It is for these reasons it is be assumed that Askew was using the old style calendar and this chapter refers to dates in this manner.

*Askew's Examinations* is a unique text due to its first-hand account of Askew's experiences from when she was arrested to her execution. Askew created a narrative throughout her examinations, whilst she fought against the Henrician government, and used her knowledge of the Bible and scripture to do so. However, Askew's narrative did not escape being altered by men, as John Bale, a reformist scholar and playwright, published the work, with his own additions.<sup>256</sup> Despite Askew having the ability to create a raw manuscript without the active engagement of a man, Patricia Pender states that prefaces to women's work in early modern England adopted a rhetoric designed to facilitate the printed books entry into a potentially hostile literary market.<sup>257</sup> *Askew's Examinations* can be read without Bale's

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<sup>254</sup> Beilin, p xxii.

<sup>255</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>256</sup> King, J. (2009, October 08). Bale, John (1495–1563), bishop of Ossory, evangelical polemicist, and historian. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. Ed. Retrieved 31 Mar. 2019, from <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1175>.

<sup>257</sup> Pender, P. (2012). Framing the Reformation Women Writer: John Bale's Prefaces to Anne Askew's Examinations. *Parergon*, 29(2), p. 30. doi: 10.1353/pgn.2012.0057.

interjections as they are interruptive, intrusive, and undermine the strong voice Askew tried to portray; as Bale is consistently characterising her as a weak woman.<sup>258</sup>

Bale originally studied at Cambridge University where he received his Bachelor of theology, and abroad at Louvain and Toulouse universities in Belgium and France respectively he was also awarded doctorate of theology in 1529 at Cambridge.<sup>259</sup> This suggests that Bale was well educated and on the continent when the early evangelical movement began, however, despite being influenced by Lutheran ideas, John King states that Bale remained firm at this point to the old religion.<sup>260</sup> Bale returned to England and became Prior of the White Friars' Convent in Essex, he was later promoted to the Carmelite convent at Ipswich in 1533 and finally became prior at Doncaster in 1534.<sup>261</sup> This suggests that he was still practicing Catholic beliefs in the early 1530s, however, Leslie Fairfield states that with the spread of Protestant ideas, the break with Rome, and Bale's history on the continent he finally succumbed to the influence and began his Protestant conversion and left the Carmelite order in 1536.<sup>262</sup> However, Fairfield argues that the steady decline of the Carmelite order in discipline and intellectual vigour may have contributed to Bale deciding to leave the order for good.<sup>263</sup> These factors, and the growing Protestant persuasion from Thomas, Lord Wentworth of Nettleworth, is what Bale credits with his Protestant conversion.<sup>264</sup> Bale, alongside Lord Wentworth, were attempting to further the Protestant cause at court when they came under suspicion of heresy but Bale escaped conviction.<sup>265</sup> His escape from conviction may have been due to the support of Thomas Cromwell, the king's secretary, who bargained Bale's release from prison via the use of polemic comedies.<sup>266</sup> However, with the passage of the Act of the Six Articles in 1539, whereby it stated that any Protestant

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<sup>258</sup> Freeman, T. & Wall, S. (2001). Racking the Body, Shaping the Text: The Account of Anne Askew in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs". *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54 (1), p. 1167. doi: 10.2307/1261970; Wort, p. 634.

<sup>259</sup> King, *John Bale*.

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>262</sup> Fairfield, L. (1971). The vocacyon of Johan Bale and Early English Autobiography. *Renaissance Quarterly*, 24(3), p. 328.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, p. 335.

<sup>264</sup> King, *John Bale*.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid*.

tracts would be burnt if they disagreed with the strict policy that the Henrician government were trying to reimpose, Bale fled abroad to avoid further investigation.<sup>267</sup> It was during this exile that Bale acquired Askew's *Examinations* and published the first examination just after her execution in 1546 and the latter in 1547.<sup>268</sup>

After Askew's arrest on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1545, her first examination occurred over the period of her sixteen-day imprisonment. Askew began her *Examinations* by stating to the readers, 'to satisfie your expectation, good people this was my first examynacyon'.<sup>269</sup> However, this is not the first impression of Askew that the readers get, as in Bale's extensive preface, he characterises her before the readers have a chance to read her prose:

Which the faythfull servaunt of Jesu Anne Askewe, a gentylwoman, very yonge, daynty, and tender, had with that outragyng Synagoge, in her ii. Examynacyons, about the xxv yeare of her age, whom she sent abroad by her owne hande writyng<sup>270</sup>

Whilst Bale is specifically stating that he received the manuscript from Askew in her own handwriting, he appears to be purposefully altering her persona to suit his own agenda. The voice that Askew consistently emanates in her narrative is one of an intelligent, independent, politically, and religiously aware woman. Bale compares Askew to a second century martyr, 'Blandina was Yonge and tender. So was Anne Askew also. But that which was frayle of nature in them both, Christ made most stronge by hys grace'.<sup>271</sup> John King argues that Bale distorts the victim's own fashioning of herself as a strong woman motivated by intense religious conviction.<sup>272</sup> Bale compares both women, 'Blandina was geven fourth to wylde beastes to be devoured. So was Anne Askew to cruell Byshoppes and prestes'.<sup>273</sup> However, this is a widely inaccurate and unfair comparison as Blandina of Lyon was undoubtedly

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<sup>267</sup> King, *John Bale*; Tomlins & Taunton, p. 743.

<sup>268</sup> Pineas, R. (1962). John Bale's Nondramatic Works of Religious Controversy. *Studies in the Renaissance*, 9, 218-233, p. 219. doi: 10.2307/2857117.

<sup>269</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 19.

<sup>270</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, p. 7.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

<sup>272</sup> King, J. (Eds). Traitsky, B., & Cullen, P. (1996). *Anne Askew. The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works. Part 1: Printed Writings, 1500-1640. Volume 1*. Aldershot: Scolar, p. ix.

<sup>273</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, p. 11.

thrown to wild beasts whereas Anne Askew was most definitely not.<sup>274</sup> Bale appears to be using the second century martyr to bolster the reputation of Askew if it is to be believed that they went through similar ordeals and further sully the receptibility of the bishops and priests that examined Askew. Rainer Pineas states that one of Bales's main objectives in his multiple works against the English bishops was to establish that they were really papists at heart and that they longed for a return for to Rome.<sup>275</sup> Bale was setting up Askew's *Examinations* as a platform to promote the Protestant agenda and that, he saw Askew as the perfect martyr.

Pender states that Askew's manuscript was smuggled out of England and delivered to Bale where he was exiled in the Protestant Duchy of Cleves, shortly after Askew's death in 1546.<sup>276</sup> Therefore, it is evident that Bale and Askew never met. The characterisation of Askew's personality was created either purely on unnamed second-hand sources or was a persona fabricated by Bale that fit his agenda. This second option seems more evident as it is very clear that Askew was not the weak, tender young woman that Bale consistently characterised throughout his prefaces and interjections. However, characterising Askew in such a way may have had a secondary benefit for both parties. Askew portrayed herself as a strong and independent woman in an era where women were still meant to be subservient to men, therefore, her readers may have seen her as disobedient, rude, or lacking respect for the hierarchy. However, Bale interjected and tried to impose these three characteristics in the hopes that it would accumulate some sympathy among readers. If it was seen that she was disobedient because she was inexperienced in how to behave in real-world scenarios, she may have been granted more leniency from her readers and given the benefit of the doubt. Whereas, if it was believed she had a true disrespect for authority it may have been difficult for her readership to relate to her and her plight.

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<sup>274</sup> Goodine, E. (2004). *Standing at Lyon: An examination of the martyrdom of Blandina of Lyon* (PhD Thesis). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/openview/55c5709486a3b00cf64ccaebc7da58ed/>, p. xi.

<sup>275</sup> Pineas, p. 219.

<sup>276</sup> Pender, *Framing the Reformation Women Writer*, p. 32.

Askew's *Examinations* then commenced, 'first Christofer Dare examyned me at Sadlers hall, beyng one of the quest, and asked yf I ded not beleve that the sacrament hangynge over the aultre was the verye bodye of Christ really'.<sup>277</sup> However, at this point Askew does not state whether she believes it to be Christ's body or not, despite that fact that she has already been arrested for denying for transubstantiation, a confession is still needed. This pattern of silence and avoidance forms a theme throughout the entirety of Askew's examination using the Bible, her gender, and scripture to her advantage. Thomas Freeman and Sarah Wall argue that Askew employs this tactic frequently when asked to give her opinion of a controversial passage from scripture, for example, she refuses to comment, only saying, 'I wolde not throwe pearles amonge swine, for acorns were good ynough'.<sup>278</sup>

Askew stated that the bishop's chancellor challenged her on using scripture:

...forebode women to speake or talke of the worde of God. I answered hym, that I knewe Paul's meanynge so well as he, which is, i. Corinthiorum xiiii. That a woman ought not to speake in the congregacyon by the way of teachynge. And then I asked hym, how manye women he had seane, go into the pulpett and preache. He sayde, he never sawe non. Then, I sayd, he ought to fynde no faute in poore women, except they had offended the lawe.<sup>279</sup>

Bale in the following portion of the text, stated that her answer was 'plenteous enough' and evident of a 'unlearned chancellor' this would have been sufficient however, he continued to discuss other women who also taught and preached in scripture and are not rebuked for it. This is disruptive and intrusive to Askew's narrative and is unneeded and can be read without the interjections from Bale.

Askew continued with her clever act of avoidance of implicating herself so much so that she had to continually defend herself:

'Then he asked me, whye I had so fewe words? And I answered. God hath geven me the gyfte of knowledge, but not of utterance. And Solomon sayth, that a woman of fewe wodes, if a gyfte of God, Prover, 19'.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, p. 19; Freeman & Wall, p. 1168.

<sup>279</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

Bale used this example to show Askew as a 'faythful women' and to further admonish bishop Bonner, 'lyke as thys bloudye Bishopp Bonner, of the same wicked generacycon'.<sup>281</sup> This further clarifies that Bale is only using Askew and her *Examinations* to further the Protestant cause and attempt to ruin the reputation of any bishops involved.

To conclude the First Examination Askew, was forced to sign her name to a confession of faith:

Be it knowne (sayth he) to all men, that I Anne Askew, do confesse thys be my Faythe and beleve...the bodye and bloude of Christ in substaunce reallye. Fynallye I do beleve in thys and in all other sacraments of holye church<sup>282</sup>

Askew stated that she was asked if she agreed to it and if she would sign her name to it, but when she signed; 'I Anne Askew do beleve all maner thynges contained in the faythe of the Catholyck church, he flonge into hys chamber in a great furyre'.<sup>283</sup> Bale mused at the word 'Catholyck' and questioned 'How becometh it than now a name so odyouse?'<sup>284</sup> Once again, Bale's commentary subtracts from Askew's own narrative; she had just reached the pinnacle point in her examinations. Askew had been forced to sign a confession and she had rebelled and added what could be seen as the most offending addendum to those examining Askew yet Bale muses about the pejoration of the word Catholic. This was a discussion that Bale could have had elsewhere as it is out of place in Askew's *Examinations* and in this instance, Bale may have misunderstood Askew's intentions. Askew was clearly frustrated by her long stay in confinement, and the addition of the word Catholic in this instance, was to initiate a reaction, to potentially regain a little bit of control.

Askew stated that the bishop forced her to stay in prison again for another night and eventually 'after moche a do and reasonynge to and fro...thus I was at the last, delyvered'.<sup>285</sup> Askew was finally

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<sup>281</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 51.

<sup>282</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 59.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid*, p. 62.

<sup>284</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, p. 62.

<sup>285</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 65.



released, however, she was imprisoned again only four months later and endured her latter examination, torture at the rack and her execution.

Bale concludes the first examination by making it clear his intentions:

clerely beholde our Byshoppes and prestes so spirytuallye to be occupied now a days, as is the gredye wolfe that ravenously ronnethe upon hys praye. For the tyrannouse behaver in their cruell predecessours have they no maner of shame. Neyther yet repent they their owne blasphemouse treason against God<sup>286</sup>

Bale was once again portraying Askew as weak, and nothing more than prey that could not defend herself. Ultimately, Bale was accusing the bishops and priests of treason against God by committing Askew to death for her religion. This was treading on dangerous ground for Bale and would have effectively confined him to the continent until Edward VI. Belin states that Bale was named under the king's proclamation of 8<sup>th</sup> July 1546 listing forbidden authors, meaning the work could not be printed in England, therefore, the place of publication is given as 'Marpurg in the lande of Hessen' to ensure Bale's safety.<sup>287</sup>

Askew was arrested again in June 1546 and this time her examination was much more intense and ended in her torture and execution. In Bale's opening preface he discusses many 'horrible persecucyons' that have increased 'in the prymatyve churche' but:

In the conferryng of their olde canonysed martyrs, with our newlye condemned martyrs here, Anne Askewe and her other iii. companyons, with soch lyke, their difference wyll be moch more easelye perceived.<sup>288</sup>

This suggests that the latter examination, the one that demonstrates her martyrdom was easier for Bale to market to the Protestant audience. The first examination was perhaps not radical enough, whereas the second demonstrated her torture and refusing to succumb. However, Fairfield argues that Bale may not have been entirely faithful to Askew's words in general, and referenced one phrase

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<sup>286</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, p. 66.

<sup>287</sup> Beilin, p. xlv.

<sup>288</sup> Bale, *The First Examinacion*, pp. 75-79.

that Askew had used to describe the Eucharist.<sup>289</sup> Askew wrote, 'The breade ane the wyne were left us, for a sacramentall comunyon, or a mutuall perycypacyon of the inestimable benefyghtes of hys most precyouse deathe and bloude shedyng'.<sup>290</sup> Fairfield argues that the two specific words, 'mutuall perycypacyon' raised suspicion as they were words that Bale used frequently when speaking of the eucharist and otherwise do not seem common.<sup>291</sup> Freeman and Wall suggest that Bale may have omitted passages of Askew's narrative as Askew's *Examinations* were printed by Adriaan Van Haemstede in his 1559 martyrlogy and included an exchange that was not included in Bale's account. Freeman and Wall quote Haemstede's version which Stephen Gardiner reprimands Askew by telling her 'A woman has no more business with Scripture than a sow wearing a saddle', and Askew retorts, 'My Lord, a sow has as much business wearing a saddle as an ass does wearing a bishop's miter'.<sup>292</sup> Askew had mocked her examiners before, in her first examination she said she 'perceyved him a papyst' so it is in character for her continue if she was feeling under pressure.<sup>293</sup> Freeman and Wall suggest that Bale may have suppressed this passage as Askew's rudeness to her superiors may have alienated even her sympathetic readers, however, apart from this passage the two documents are mostly similar.<sup>294</sup> Although it is more than likely that Bale did remove the passage for his own benefit to ensure that the reputation of Askew remained that of a weak and tender young, woman and this passage most certainly did not represent that.

So far throughout her examinations, Askew had remained elusive on her beliefs regarding the Eucharist sacrament. However, Elizabeth Malson-Huddle argues that Askew's refusal to accept the doctrine of the Real Presence should not be mistaken for a disregard for the Eucharistic rite.<sup>295</sup> In her first examination Askew was asked whether she would take the sacrament at Easter; she responded

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<sup>289</sup> Fairfield, L. (1973). John Bale and the Development of Protestant Hagiography in England. *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 24(2), p. 158.

<sup>290</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 88.

<sup>291</sup> Fairfield, p. 158.

<sup>292</sup> Freeman & Wall, p. 1170.

<sup>293</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 24.

<sup>294</sup> Freeman & Wall, p. 1170.

<sup>295</sup> Malson-Huddle, E. (2010). Anne Askew and the Controversy over the Real Presence. *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 50 (1), p. 3.

that she would not be a Christian woman if she did not take part in the sacrament.<sup>296</sup> However, during her latter examination she finally gave a straightforward answer regarding her beliefs on the matter:

Then wolde they nedes knowe, if I wolde denye the sacrament to be Christes bodye and bloude: I sayd yea. For the same sonne of God, that was borne of the vyrgyne Marie, is now gloriouse in heaven, and wyll come agayne from thens at the latter daye lyke as he went up, Acto. 1. And as for that ye call your God, is but a pece of breade. For a more profe thereof lete it lye in the boxe but iii. monthes, and it wyll moule, and so turn to nothyng that is good. Whereupon I am persuaded, that it can not be God.<sup>297</sup>

This was a dramatic change in stance and partly due to the increased intensity of the questioning and Askew's fear of death after falling ill during the examinations. Henry Kelly states that that this was more to benefit the future readers of her examinations as she was 'sent to Newgate in my extremyte of sycknesse'.<sup>298</sup> She was asked if she would like to recant, but she refused on several occasions despite being warned that she was in danger of being burned.<sup>299</sup> Askew stated that she was 'wyllled to have a prest' and when she refused she was 'condempned without a quest'.<sup>300</sup> Askew stated that the examiners were very insistent and kept asking the same questions:

then wolde they nedes know, whether the breade in the boxe were God or no? I sayd. God is a sprete, and wyll be worshypped in sprete and truthe. Then they demaunded. Wyll you planelye denye Christ to be in the sacrament? I answered that I beleved faythfullye the eternall sonne of God not to dwell there.<sup>301</sup>

However, Askew remained true to her faith and did not relent or recant and Bale used Askew's faith to endorse that, 'God was a sprete and no waffer cake, and wolde be worshipped in sprete'.<sup>302</sup> At this point in the text, Bale's contributions far outweigh Askew's in length and are disruptive, intrusive and unneeded. By reinforcing what Askew has already stated previously about God not being present in the sacramental bread, Bale makes it abundantly clear to the audience that she was a martyr who died for the Protestant faith. In her short segments, Askew portrayed herself as a strong, determined, and

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<sup>296</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 36.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 110-111.

<sup>298</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 102; Kelly, H. (2015). Mixing Canon and Common Law in Religious Prosecutions under Henry VIII and Edward VI: Bishop Bonner, Anna Askew and Beyond. *The Sixteenth Century Press*, 46 (4), p. 939.

<sup>299</sup> Kelly, p. 939.

<sup>300</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 112.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

<sup>302</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 116; Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, pp. 116-117.

faithful woman who would not be disparaged, however, Bale is constantly challenging this by characterising Askew as weak in his commentary which oftentimes is twice as long as Askew's prose. This is problematic for Askew as it means that to the added readership that Bale garnered for Askew, she was represented as weak and tender as per Bale's intentions.

Clare Costley King'oo states that Bale was extremely successful in both publishing and publicising Askew and her *Examinations* despite the criticism he has gained in modern times.<sup>303</sup> Kimberly Coles estimates that there may have been between 2,100 and 3,000 copies of the *Examinations* in circulation in England during Edward VI's reign, which she states is a 'terrific commercial success'.<sup>304</sup> Kate Lilley suggests the rarity of published women during the early modern period, particularly one willing to sign her own name, indicates that female authorship was most strenuously interpreted and mediated.<sup>305</sup> Consequently, if Askew's work had been published independently, without any prefaces or additions from any male editor or publishers, her work may have struggled to have been as politically successful. King'oo highlights this argument by arguing that it:

fails to properly take into account, or to theorize, the important role that excess of any kind, including the excess of paratext, of "elucydacyon," or of inter-textual analogizing, might play in the representing the real (or, in this case, the real Anne Askew) to begin with.<sup>306</sup>

Bale makes it clear throughout his prefaces that the manuscript he received was written by Askew's own hand, however, it could be that Bale was the only person to ever see the full autographed text.<sup>307</sup> This makes it difficult to authenticate who the real Askew was, as explored earlier, Bale made changes to Askew's *Examinations* to suit his agenda that did not appear in future, republished versions.

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<sup>303</sup> King'oo, C. (2015). Authenticity and Excess in The Examinations of Anne Askew. *Reformation*, 19 (1), p. 24. doi: 10.1179/1357417514Z.00000000017.

<sup>304</sup> Coles, K. (2008). *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 17-18,192 n.5.

<sup>305</sup> Lilley, K. (2008). 'Imaginarie in Manner: Reall in Matter': Rachel Speght's Dreame and the Female Scholar-poet. In K. Hodgkin, M. O'Callaghan, & S. J. Wiseman (Eds.) *Reading the Early Modern Dream*. (pp. 97-108). New York: Routledge, p. 97.

<sup>306</sup> King'oo, p. 24.

<sup>307</sup> Freeman & Wall, p. 1168.

Proceedings thereafter developed exceedingly fast, Askew was moved to the tower and was questioned and tortured on her connections to Queen Catherine Parr and her ladies. Askew's clever style of silence and avoidance when interrogated on her religious beliefs, which mostly related to her beliefs concerning transubstantiation, created an unintentional, unexpected, and unforeseen partnership between Askew and Bale. After Askew's execution, the journey of the manuscript was out of her hands, she had no control over how it was published or who it was published by. However, what did develop was a partnership that, without each, other their individual goals may not have been achieved to the same extent.

There are two conflicting characterisations of Askew throughout her *Examinations*, one that Bale tries to solidify and another that Askew attempts to instil through her prose. It would seem more prudent to take the characterisation from Askew herself, especially as it has been established that Askew and Bale never met. However, it is obvious that Askew herself had her own agenda, to ensure that there was a written record of her interrogations that show she was being persecuted for her faith. However, Bale did feel it necessary to impose three characteristics on Askew; weak, tender, and young, these characteristics were reinforced multiple times throughout both the prologues and his interjections within the text. These characteristics are mostly reinforced when Askew breaks the mould of what is expected of women, for example, when she is challenging or mocking her examiners, which she did several times throughout.<sup>308</sup>

### 5.3 Anne Askew's Torture and the Plot against Catherine Parr

This subchapter investigates Askew's torture and investigates its necessity as she had already received a sentence of death by fire for crimes of heresy. It also determines whether Askew was used and tortured as a political scapegoat at the expense of attempting to expose a potential Protestant plot. It was also extremely unorthodox to subject a woman, let alone a woman of Askew's status, to the torture that she endured, which suggests, either the desperation the council felt, or they were certain

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<sup>308</sup> Askew, *The First Examinacion*, p. 24.

of their suspicions. The councils suspicions being that Catherine Parr and her ladies were sympathetic to the Protestant faith and it was believed that Askew had information of Parr's religious sympathies.<sup>309</sup> Lucy Wooding argues that in pursuing Askew in this manner reflected how anxious Henry VIII's councillors were about the influence of Queen Catherine Parr as Henry was fading in his illness.<sup>310</sup> J.J. Scarisbrick states that by June 1537 Henry had many bouts of illnesses seemingly originating from ulcers on his legs that, due to poor care, did not heal properly.<sup>311</sup> In March 1541 Henry was once again unwell with another fever derived from his ulcers and again in March 1544, however, his obesity was now becoming problematic and his appearance, and further health problems, were harder to disguise.<sup>312</sup> By 1546 Henry was severely ill, and it is conceivable that his privy councillors took the responsibility of torturing Askew for information without further worrying Henry for fear of worsening his condition.<sup>313</sup> However, it can be surmised that it was Askew's gender and how she infiltrated Henry VIII's court and swayed Henry's sixth wife Catherine Parr and her ladies to the reformed religion, that led her to be tortured the way she was.

Torture by the rack was usually reserved for the worst and most unrelenting kind of criminals, those committing treason. Harry Potter states that the years between 1540 and 1640 torture warrants were issued a total of eighty-one times, he estimates no more than one a year.<sup>314</sup> In these warrants there were two main torture methods used; the manacles and the rack, the latter of which was used to torture Askew. Therefore, due to the small number of warrants issued, it is fair to hypothesise that Askew was the first woman to be tortured in this manner by Henry VIII's government. The rack was a frame with rollers at each end and the wrists and ankles were tied firmly. The frame was pulled apart, stretching the limbs and joints past their bounds eventually ending in dislocation.<sup>315</sup> This chapter

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<sup>309</sup> Wooding, L. *Henry VIII* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge, p. 287.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> Scarisbrick, J. J. (1968). *Henry VIII*. London: Eyre Methuen, p. 486.

<sup>312</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>313</sup> Wooding, p. 287.

<sup>314</sup> Potter, H. (2015). *Law, Liberty and the Constitution: A Brief History of the Common Law*. Suffolk: Boydell Press, p. 110.

<sup>315</sup> *Ibid.*

argues that those torturing Askew held no regard for what life she had left as they used her as a political tool in an attempt to gather more information about the reformist movement within Henry's court.

The tone of Askew's *Examinations* changes dramatically after this point. Askew named one of her torturers, 'mastre Riche' a lawyer and privy councillor.<sup>316</sup> P.R.N. Carter states that although Richard Rich 'held no major office, he remained active and eagerly assisted Edmund Bonner, Bishop of London, in pursuing heretics in Essex'.<sup>317</sup> Bishop of London, Edmund Bonner, conducted Askew's first examination and Megan Hickerson argues that Bonner had all the evidence to either compel her to reconversion or facilitate her death for heresy, yet he did neither.<sup>318</sup> Hickerson argues that when Askew was released, according to the law, she was a heretic, a fact that Bonner would have been aware of.<sup>319</sup> Brad Gregory described the concept of a man's willingness to kill someone for their religious beliefs, and Bonner demonstrated that he did not have this willingness despite receiving orders from above.<sup>320</sup> However, when Askew imprisoned again, both Bonner and Rich came together when Askew was being sent 'from Newgate to the sygne of the crowne where master Ryche and the Byshopp of London with all their power and flatterynge wordes went aboute to persuade me from God'.<sup>321</sup>

Askew also identified the 'Byshopp of wynchestre', who was Stephen Gardiner from 1531. Gardiner continued questioning Askew but Askew wrote, 'Then he sayd I was a paratte', which suggests that she was not relaying any new information. However, Askew wrote:

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<sup>316</sup> Carter, P. (2004, September 23). Rich, Richard, first Baron Rich (1496/7–1567), lord chancellor. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 1 Apr. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23491>.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Hickerson, *Negotiating Heresy in Tudor England*, p. 779.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Gregory, B. (2001). *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 74-96.

<sup>321</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 119.

Then desyered the Byshopp to speake with me alone. But that I refused. He asked me, whye? I sayd, that in the mouthe of two or thre witnesses everye matter should stande, after Christes and Paules doctryne. Math. 18. And 2. Cor. 13.<sup>322</sup>

It is possible that Gardiner wanted to talk to Askew alone to persuade her to recant one last time to clear his own conscience before he made the damning recommendation that she, 'should be brent'.<sup>323</sup>

However, Henry Ansgar Kelly argues that this was an attempt by Gardiner to warn Askew that she was in danger of being burnt, but she refused to sign the orthodox statement they presented her with.<sup>324</sup>

However, it does not make sense as to why Gardiner would make so much effort to try and talk to Askew alone to get her to recant when, according to C.D.C Armstrong he was imprisoned for speaking the sacrifice of the mass during the reign of Edward VI and he was not released until the reign of Mary I.<sup>325</sup>

Askew does however identify another one of her torturers as the lord chancellor who was Thomas Wriothesley from 1544 to 1547.<sup>326</sup> Askew stated that 'my lorde chauncellour beganne to examine me agayne of the sacrament. Then I axed hym, how long he wolde halte on both sydes?'<sup>327</sup> Michael A. R. Graves states that Wriothesley did not restrict his activity to punishing Protestants as, in 1545 he publicly punished a Catholic priest for counterfeiting a miracle.<sup>328</sup> This could have been what Askew was referring to; however, it seems more likely to be an attempt to annoy and disrupt Wriothesley. Askew is trying to make both Gardiner and Wriothesley feel uncomfortable, question their beliefs, and motivations because Askew wrote that her response to her sentence of death was:

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<sup>322</sup> Ibid, p. 97.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, p. 98.

<sup>324</sup> Kelly, p. 939.

<sup>325</sup> Armstrong, C. (2008, January 03). Gardiner, Stephen (c. 1495x8–1555), theologian, administrator, and bishop of Winchester. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 15 May. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10364>.

<sup>326</sup> 'Henry VIII: May 1544, 1-5', in *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, Volume 19 Part 1, January-July 1544*, ed. James Gairdner and R H Brodie (London, 1903), pp. 288-296. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/letters-papers-hen8/vol19/no1/pp288-296> [accessed 1 April 2020].

<sup>327</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 97.

<sup>328</sup> Graves, M. (2008, January 03). Wriothesley, Thomas, first earl of Southampton (1505–1550), administrator. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 25 Jun. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30076>.



I had searched all scriptures yet I coulde never fynde there that eyther Christ or hys Apostles put anye creature to deathe. Well, well, sayd I, God wyl laughe your threttenynges to scorne, Psal. 2. Then was I commanded to stande a syde.<sup>329</sup>

However, Askew, believed that she would die after she got seriously ill, and committed to print a statement of her beliefs concerning the sacrament. Arguably, Askew may have, until now, believed that, until now she would have been able to survive or that her life was not in danger, as this was the only time she had expressed such fears of dying, 'then on the sondaye, I was sore sycke, thynkyne no less than to dye.'<sup>330</sup> Although, this created a paradox for Askew for, if she died at this point, her martyrdom might not have been secured. Susannah Brietz Monta argues that Askew was well aware of the common notion that a 'martyr should not be too eager for suffering' and that Askew wrote that she 'neyther wyshe deathe, nor yet feare hys myght'.<sup>331</sup> This would suggest that Askew knew at this point that she would die, but did not want to succumb to an illness as it would undo her suffering. She released the statement, knowing it would signal the end for her, she would not survive, however, she was afraid of dying of her illness instead of dying for her cause. Monta states that Askew repeatedly characterised herself as a martyr which does suggest that the illness was a turning point for Askew.<sup>332</sup>

Henry Ansgar Kelly argues that the long statement of her beliefs was for the benefit of her readers, which suggests that she may have started to write her examinations around the same time, if she had been planning to attempt to martyr herself, she needed a tract of explanation.<sup>333</sup> However, she produced a shorter explanation to the council which increased her questioning.<sup>334</sup> Her views (which are examined in the previous subchapter in more detail) however did not lead to just her execution they led to the illegal torture of a gentlewoman.<sup>335</sup> Henry VIII's illnesses were getting worse by the

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<sup>329</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 98.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid*, p. 106; Monta, S. (2003). *The Inheritance of Anne Askew, English Protestant Martyr. Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 94 (1), p. 142.

<sup>332</sup> Monta, p. 136.

<sup>333</sup> Kelly, p. 939.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>335</sup> Lilly, p. 61.

summer of 1546, and Alec Ryrie argues that Henry's ministers were 'jockeying for position' and there was 'a sudden, brutal purge against evangelicals'.<sup>336</sup>

Askew was clearly attempting to portray herself as a martyr after effectively setting up the encounter:

That for as moch as I am by the lawe condemned for an evyll doer, Here I take to heaven and earth to recorde, that I shall dye in innoceny. And accordyng to that I have sayd first, and wyll saye last, I utterlye abhorre and deteste all heresyys.<sup>337</sup>

However, after increased questioning, Askew's examinations developed extremely fast thereafter as her examiners had an ulterior agenda and they asked about specific women they were suspicious about:

Then mastre Riche sent me to the tower, where I remayned tyll thre of the clocke. Then came Riche and one of the counsel, charyngye me upon my obedience, to shewe unto them, if I knewe man or woman of my secte. My answeere was, that I knewe none, Then they asked me of my lady Sothfolke, my ladye of Sussex, my ladye of Hertforde, my ladye Denny, and my ladye Fizwyllyams.<sup>338</sup>

With the confession from Askew, her examiners, turned torturers, realised that through the 'interrogation of a self-confessed Sacramentarian heretic' they may have been able to implicate Queen Catherine Parr of sympathising with the reformed religion thus using Askew as a scapegoat.<sup>339</sup> Susan E. James argues that as Henry's health was declining, his temper was worsening; he particularly resented, 'the queen's spirited debates' and L. Wooding argues that Henry complained very openly about the queen, for which Gardiner obviously took as a message.<sup>340</sup> Instead of launching what would have been an openly public and offensive attack on the queen, Gardiner opted to torture Askew, a woman already sentenced to death for heresy as per her earlier confession. However, her gender and her status as a gentlewoman should have prevented her torture, but Gardiner and Riche's need for information overcame the law in this case. Watt states that the ladies that Gardiner and Riche were

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<sup>336</sup> Ryrie, A. (2013). *The Age of Reformation: the Tudor and Stewart Realms 1485-1603*. Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>337</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 117.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>339</sup> James, *Katherine [Kateryn, Catherine] [née Katherine Parr]*.

<sup>340</sup> *Ibid*; Wooding, p. 288.

most interested in, as seen above, were in the queen's immediate circle, those who were suspected of encouraging the spread of Protestantism.<sup>341</sup>

Gardiner and Riche began questioning Askew on how she 'maynteyned in the counter' and insisted to know who was sending her money. Askew stated it was 'by the meanes of my mayde' that she was kept whilst she was in the counter as her maid 'went abroade in the stretes, she made to the prentyses, and they by her ded sende me moneye. But who they were, I never knewe'.<sup>342</sup> Askew continued in this fashion and refused to name anyone but they then resorted to torture:

Then they ded put me on the racke, bycause I confessed no ladyes nor gentyllwomen to be of my opnyon, and theron they kepte me a longe tyme. And bycause I laye styll and ded not crye, my lorde Chauncellour and master Ryche, toke peynes to racke me their owne hands, tyll I was nygh dead.<sup>343</sup>

Watt states that Askew was removed to a house to recover and await her execution and was offered yet more opportunities to recant, however Askew had made it abundantly clear that would rather die for her religion.<sup>344</sup> On 16<sup>th</sup> July 1546, John Louthe, the archdeacon of Nottingham, who was an eyewitness to Askew's execution stated that Askew 'was so racked that she could not stand, but the dounge carte was holden up between ii sarjantes, perhaptes syttyng there in a cheare'.<sup>345</sup> The racking had been carried out by Gardiner and Riche in secret, however, the effects of the brutal torture were now visible to anyone who observed her execution. Unfortunately for Gardiner and Riche, Askew's feeble condition at her execution, and the subsequent posthumous publication of her examinations, significantly helped advance her status as a martyr.

Askew should have been exempt from torture, however, her torture relieved anxieties within the Privy council surrounding the growing influence of Queen Catherine Parr and Henry VIII's declining health. Gardiner and Riche were desperate for information regarding a Protestant plot within Queen

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<sup>341</sup> Watt, *Askew [married name Kyme], Anne*.

<sup>342</sup> Askew, *The Latter Examinacion*, p. 124.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*, p. 127.

<sup>344</sup> Watt, *Askew [married name Kyme], Anne*.

<sup>345</sup> Nichols, pp. 44-45.

Catherine Parr's court and were willing to sacrifice Askew in order to bring the queen down. Askew had already confessed and provided a written script of her heresies when she feared that she would die of an illness, however, it was at this point that she should have been executed for her heresies. Askew remained true to her faith throughout and refused to relent, despite brutal torture. She had to be carried to the pyre where she would be burnt as she could not walk by herself, therefore, her torture was apparent to every observer present. However, it is clear that Askew's torture uncovered deep anxieties within Henry VIII's Privy Council, specifically concerning the influence that Queen Catherine Parr had garnered over Henry. This was especially concerning for Gardiner and Riche because Henry's health had been declining for some time and he may have been more pliable.

#### 5.4 Anne Askew's Posthumous Reputation

The final subchapter analyses Askew's posthumous reputation and investigates key themes including John Foxe and the influence of his text *Acts and Monuments*. It also analyses the woodcut that was made of Askew's execution and what influence and significance this had after Askew's death on her posthumous reputation. It also analyses Askew's representation as a martyr and compares her to contemporary female martyrs to establish tropes of female martyrdom. Askew's *Examinations* were published by John Bale in 1546 and 1547 shortly after her death in July 1546, in the midst of what G.W. Bernard argued was 'Catholicism without the Pope'.<sup>346</sup> Thus, with the introduction of Queen Elizabeth I's Protestant reign, John Foxe, a martyrologist, printed four editions of his *Acts and Monuments* during his life (in 1563, 1570, 1576 and 1583).<sup>347</sup> By 1684 Susannah Brietz Monta states that the text had gone through nine complete English editions and Foxe's had work also inspired abridgements 'written by those convinced of its value but concerned of its length and price'.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Bernard, *Catholicism without the Pope*, pp. 201-221.

<sup>347</sup> Freeman, T. (2008, January 03). Foxe, John (1516/17–1587), martyrologist. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Retrieved 27 Jul. 2020, from <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10050>; Monta, p. 148.

<sup>348</sup> Monta, p. 148.

The *Act of Monuments* more commonly known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* was a response to the persecution of Protestants under Mary I of England.<sup>349</sup> David Loades argues that the publication of the *Acts and Monuments* was an attempt to exploit that situation after Mary's death in 1558.<sup>350</sup> Eamon Duffy states that more than 280 Protestant men and women were burnt in just under four years from February 1555 to November 1558 – which was the most intense religious persecution of its kind in sixteenth century England.<sup>351</sup> However, as Askew was executed in the Henrician era she was already part of a 'well established tradition'. Carole Levin attributes this to the marked success to Bale when he released in two volumes entitled *The First Examinacyon of Anne Askew* in 1546 and *The Lattre Examinacyon of Anne Askew* in 1547.<sup>352</sup> Levin states that Foxe followed Askew's account very closely and thus the most striking difference of Foxe's editions, when compared to Bale's printed version, was that it lacked Bale's often intrusive narrative.<sup>353</sup> However, it has been well established that Askew's posthumous partnership with Bale allowed her to reach audiences that she may not have been able to reach on her own and despite his tactics, it paved the way for martyrologists such as Foxe to take over and further her influence as a Protestant martyr. Monta states that 'Foxe is determined to celebrate the bold and resolute Askew as the equal of any male martyr'.<sup>354</sup>

A significant difference between Bale's edited editions and Foxe's editions was the addition of a thirty-two lined Latin eulogy entitled: *Epitaph in Sapphic Verse Upon the Tomb of the Most Steadfast Woman and Martyr Anne Askew*.<sup>355</sup> The Epitaph was a memorial to Askew to illustrate how strong she remained throughout her torture, Monta states that this was a tactic of Foxe ensuring his editions are now used as 'the primary hook used to sell her story'.<sup>356</sup> The Epitaph is steeped in rage, and would

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<sup>349</sup> Loades, D. (2005). *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Face of England*. *History Today*, 55(12), p. 40.

<sup>350</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>351</sup> Duffy, p. 7.

<sup>352</sup> Levin, C. (1981). Women in The Book of Martyrs as Models of Behaviour in Tudor England. *International Journal of Women's Studies*, 4(2), pp. 200-201.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> Monta, p. 148.

<sup>355</sup> Beilin, E. (Ed.) (G. P. Goold, Trans.) (1996). *The Examinations of Anne Askew: Women Writers in English 1350-1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. liii, 194.

<sup>356</sup> Monta, p. 148.

most definitely have furthered her posthumous reputation as a Protestant martyr as stanzas such as: 'O Warder, whose wicked hands are drenched in blood, why do you vainly stretch her limbs on the rack and violently tear apart a virtuous girl far better than you?'<sup>357</sup> As previously discussed, due to Askew's gender and status, she should never have been tortured, and this quotation clearly plays on this notion. It also states that the torture was in vain, which must be a reference to the belief that she was never going to concede to the torture because she was believed in her cause. Foxe stated that, 'Her limbs are forced apart; her bones are broken, severed from their joints; nothing in that chaste body is left intact. Still one part of her defeats the tyrants.'<sup>358</sup> These horrifying details further clarify that Askew should never have been subjected to it in the first place. However, Foxe mentions that Askew's body is 'chaste' however in Bale's commentary he stated that she lived like a 'Christen wyfe, and had by hym ii. chyl dren'.<sup>359</sup> However, in this context, Foxe is referencing Askew's faithfulness as he 'explicitly refers to her marriage'.<sup>360</sup> Leonti argues that the decision of Askew's to return to her maiden name 'Askew' from her married name 'Kyme' constituted signs of transgression.<sup>361</sup> Megan Hickerson states that her now 'lone status is extrapolated into whoreishness, as is her wit'.<sup>362</sup> Foxe may have included this description of Askew as a reference to the belief that she was to 'exercise her religious duties unobstructed' once unattached from her staunchly Catholic husband but as to whether she took a vow to that effect is unknown.<sup>363</sup> However, Foxe had to reign in his views for fear of future criticism as Shannon McSheffrey states; Robert Parsons criticised Foxe in 1603, after Foxe's death, stating that Protestant women were disobedient to their husbands or even promiscuous.<sup>364</sup> Foxe is eternal in his praise for Askew for her strength and, for enduring torture, he wrote 'So she who

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<sup>357</sup> Beilin, (G. P. Goold, Trans), pp. liii, 194.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

<sup>359</sup> Bale, *The Latter Examinacion*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>360</sup> Leonti, M. (2016). *Sin, Salvation, and Female Sexuality in John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'*. In J. Willis (Ed.) *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England* (pp. 101-115). Oxon: Taylor and Francis, p. 104.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Hickerson, M. (2005). *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, p. 84.

<sup>363</sup> Leonti, p. 104.

<sup>364</sup> Hickerson, *Making Women Martyrs in Tudor England*, p. 84; McSheffrey, S. (2005). Hersey, Orthodoxy, and English Vernacular Religion, 1480-1525. *Past and Present*, 186(1), pp. 47-80.

could not otherwise be overcome by instruments of torture is at last dissolved by death in the flames, and her ashes are blessed with life everlasting'.<sup>365</sup>

However, here he uses the phrase 'at last'. At last, so Askew could finally become a martyr or more likely so she would be out of pain. The first seems more likely because it serves Foxe's agenda more closely; making and maintaining Askew's martyrdom since her death has been more of a priority rather than the pain she may have felt whilst being tortured. Yet Bale, and especially Foxe, used the sensationalism surrounding Askew's torture to sell her story, however, with her death, she had at last become a martyr, and that was the main selling point.

Bale had to effectively distinguish Askew from Catholic martyrs and rewrite her as the first female Protestant martyr in England. Watt states that the titular page of Askew's Examinations features a woodcut depicting Askew as an evangelist holding a Bible in one hand and holding a quill pen or a palm with the other.<sup>366</sup> However, this may have been a subtle sign that Askew was literate which suited a Protestant audience more especially as more women began to read. Bale attempted to portray Askew as the perfect Protestant martyr and compared her quite frequently to that of Blandina who died in 177AD. This comparison of Askew to Blandina, Bale further demonised those who tortured Askew as Watt suggests that a comparison was made whereby Blandina was literally thrown to wild beasts whereas Askew was figuratively given to the beasts, for example, when Askew was questioned by bishops and priests during her examinations. However, the most significant portrayal of Askew in this woodcut was the choice to dress her in white and display her faithfulness and purity of heart. She had not been unfaithful after she separated from her husband and therefore she had not broken any vows, thus Bale was attempting to increase her likeability to her audience.

A woodcut to display Askew's execution had been commissioned to be the titular page of Foxe's version to Askew's Examinations (Figure 3). The bolt of lightning escaping through the clouds over the

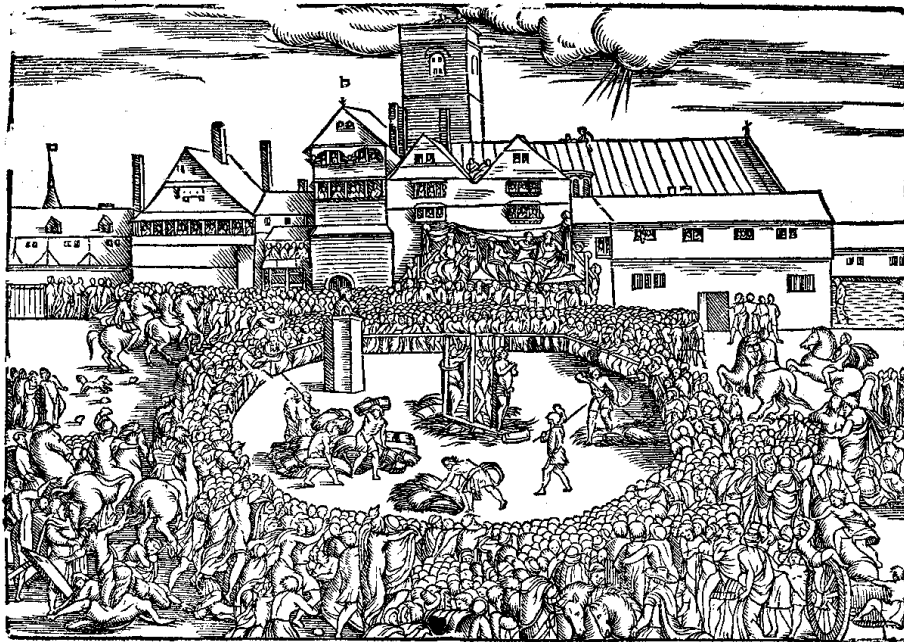
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<sup>365</sup> Beilin, (G. P. Goold, Trans), pp. liii, 194.

<sup>366</sup> Watt, D. (1997). *Secretaries of God: Women Prophets in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*. Cambridge: D.S Brewer, p. 104.

top shows that that the designer had ‘faithfully’ followed the description given by Bale in the 1546-7 edition.<sup>367</sup> Watt argues that in Bale’s edition, her radiance ‘suggests that she fulfils the apocalyptic prophecy of the ‘Woman Clothed with the Sun’ as rays were shown around her head.<sup>368</sup> However, in this prophecy, the woman is pregnant which may have been a questionable decision on Bale’s part given the Catholic Polemicists Parsons attack on Protestant women’s sexuality as seen below.<sup>369</sup>

**The order and maner of the burning of Anne Askew, John Lacels,  
John Adams, Nicholas Belenian, with certayne of the Councell  
fitting in Smithfield.**



*Figure 3: Note. Reprinted from John Foxe, The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO (1576 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011). Available from: <http://www.johnfoxe.org> [Accessed: 28.07.20].*

The addition of the woodcuts in both Bale and Foxe’s editions would have transcended literacy skills and added a further element of engagement with the text. It shows Askew in the centre on the pyre waiting to die, and a vast number of observers including notable members seated in a raised platform.<sup>370</sup> On the pyre Askew is at the front, standing tall looking up to the bolt of lightening, despite her recent torture, and is shown clearly to be awaiting her death and journey to martyrdom. She is

<sup>367</sup> Foxe, J. *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO* (1576 edition) (HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011). Available from: <http://www.johnfoxe.org> [Accessed: 01.03.11].

<sup>368</sup> Watt, *Secretaries of God*, p. 104.

<sup>369</sup> Revelations 12:2.

<sup>370</sup> Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online*.



the focus of the woodcut as she was executed with three other men, John Lascelles, Nicholas Belenian and John Adams and yet only two of them feature, behind Askew, with their heads dipped as if they are weak where Askew is strong.<sup>371</sup>

Askew's posthumous reputation stalled throughout Mary I's reign when Catholicism was reinstated. However this caused a resurgence of Protestant propaganda that highlighted the brutal treatment of Protestants by the Catholic rule through the publication of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*. It is fair to say that Askew was already a well established martyr with work already published by Bale, however, Foxe used Askew's brutal torture story, and used it to sell more editions. In Foxe's lifetime, he published four complete editions showing that it was extremely popular and further abridgements were also commissioned, by those convinced of Askew's value to female martyrdom.

## 5.5 Conclusion

Askew denied transubstantiation and when she believed she would die of an illness wrote a statement confirming her beliefs. This carried the sentence of death, however, as a gentlewoman Askew should not have been tortured. She had already received her sentence of death before she was tied on the rack. Therefore, it is evident that the information that Rich and Gardiner required from her was of no relevance to her crime of heresy. They believed that it was Askew who had influenced Queen Catherine Parr and her ladies to the reformed religion. Askew had kept a written record of her examinations which were published after her death by John Bale. There are two differing representations of Askew throughout the prose; in one of which Bale attempts to characterise her as weak and tender whereas Askew attempts to portray herself as strong and without the need for a man. It is evident that although Askew's examinations can be read without Bale's narrative, which was proven when John Foxe republished it, Askew needed Bale's influence for it to reach the wide audiences – like Foxe. Foxe republished Askew's examinations four times in his lifetime, with the addition of an Epitaph and an additional woodcut depicting Askew's execution. Askew's posthumous

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

reputation after a brutal Protestant purge had been reignited. The woodcuts would have allowed those with no literacy skills to visualise the execution and engage with the narrative. Bale commissioned a woodcut for the titular page of Askew's *Examinations* to bolster Askew's representation, that Askew was the first Protestant female martyr.

Askew did not fit the mould of what was expected of an early modern woman, she was forthright and confident. She had separated from her husband to pursue the Protestant faith and as an educated woman, this was unconventional. Therefore, it would have been prudent for Henry and his government to get as much information from Askew as possible and execute her as quickly as possible, so she did not encourage women to leave their husbands to pursue Protestantism if they found that they did not have to obey their husbands, or men any longer.

## 6 Conclusion

This thesis has analysed Elizabeth Barton and Anne Askew to determine the situational circumstances surrounding their executions. This thesis has examined two questions throughout, whether Barton's gender made it easier to cast doubt and defame her character and if it made a significant impact as to how she was perceived prior to her execution. Secondly, it examined whether Askew was used as a political scapegoat to expose a Protestant plot. It is in these pre-execution incidents that this thesis is concerned.

Barton suffered an extended illness which appeared to give her the ability to prophesise. She was admitted to the St. Sepulchre's nunnery and where she took her vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, where she became known as the Holy Maid of Kent. However, when Barton prophesied that King Henry VIII would lose his kingdom if he divorced Queen Catherine of Aragon to marry Anne Boleyn; the execution of Barton would no longer be enough. Therefore, a sermon was organised with the sole goal of defaming Barton's character so thoroughly that she would not be remembered as holy or canonised after death. Barton's honour would have to be destroyed and it is clear that this was the target of the sermon, as her three vows were picked apart one by one in the sermon, chastity, poverty, and obedience.

Two shrouded accusations of sexual immorality were made to attack Barton's character and honour on two occasions throughout the sermon. Barton was attacked on her sexuality on two separate occasions. In the first, the speaker John Capon made the accusation that she spent the night with her spiritual adviser Edward Bocking. Although an outright allegation was never made, it was the uncertainty and doubt that was placed around Barton. The allegation disabled the trust with her followers purely because of the unknown and the tendency to gossip, among others. In the second, and more elaborate insinuation, Capon suggested that Barton organised the ruse that the devil was in her cell so she could escape to have sex with Bocking. This gave the impression that Barton was not only sexually immoral, but deviant, and deceptive and that it was not just a one-time occurrence.

Capon demonstrated that Barton had a growing sexual appetite that led to promiscuity and her vow of chastity clearly meant nothing to her and therefore, she could have been hiding other secrets.

However, it does not make sense that Barton and Bocking would have undertaken a sexual relationship. Bocking appeared to be genuinely inspired by Barton and her trances, he paved the way for her admission to a nunnery, where she would normally have been turned away. She was penniless and likely suffering from an illness and thus a sexual relationship would have undermined them both.

As a nun, Barton's vows, were to be held above all else, poverty, chastity, and obedience. She was attacked on all three. It was of paramount importance to Henry VIII's government that Barton was not venerated. An easy way to defame her character was found, as an accusation of sexual misconduct on a woman of poor beginnings was not going to win over the King's chosen bishop in a highly sensationalised arena.

Askew, on the other hand, although similar in age, was different in almost every single way to Barton. Askew was an educated gentlewoman and was previously married before she sought a divorce to pursue her conversion to Protestantism. Barton was thought to be poor, single, and Catholic which is why she so staunchly opposed Henry's divorce. Askew denied transubstantiation and was arrested under suspicion. However, after undergoing two lengthy examinations pursuing tactics of avoidance, she fell ill and fearing her death could be wasted to illness, she confessed to her beliefs. Askew was then taken to the rack and illegally tortured for information on a Protestant plot, which was highly unusual given her gender and her status. Askew was the first, and only woman, to be tortured on the rack during Henry VIII's reign which shows how desperate for information her torturers were.

Where Barton and Askew drastically differ in representation is that a first-hand account of Askew's experiences exists regarding her *Examinations* whereas no such account exists for Barton. Askew's first-hand account has numerous intrusive additions by John Bale, her posthumous publisher, who used these interruptions to further his own agenda. However, it has been established that Askew may not have reached the level of wide-spread recognition had her *Examinations* been published without

Bale. Bale attempted to fashion Askew as a Protestant martyr more to what people's expectations of what women should have been in the era such as, weak, and tender, however this ultimately failed. Askew's own characterisations of herself in her written prose shone through as she portrayed herself as strong willed and independent. Barton, on the other hand was illiterate, and relied on what educated men wrote about her. While Edward Bocking did compile a book about her prophecies, anything relating to the Holy Maid of Kent went through strict censorship and was burnt. Also, Bocking was executed alongside Barton thus eradicating the movement completely.

The sermon that Barton was forced to endure, and the brutal torture that Askew was subjected to, shows that both Askew and Barton's gender made a significant difference to how they were perceived in their arrests and subsequent executions. Barton's character and honour was so thoroughly destroyed that any resurgence was immediately discounted due to the belief that she was untrustworthy. Askew should have escaped torture due to her gender and status, however, Gardiner and Riche were instead worried about Queen Catherine Parr's religion and whether Askew could be used as an opportunity to get information about a potential Protestant Plot.

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