

THE REFORMATION: FROM HENRY VIII TO JAMES I

Key Words and Related Topics

Temario de la Guía Docente: 1. The Origins and Evolution of English Institutions. 2. From *Magna Carta* to the Glorious Revolution: the origins of modern English Political Culture. 4. From Henry VIII to Elizabeth I: the Tudor Dynasty, its role in English history and culture, and its current hold on English imagination. 5. Aspects of English National Identity: The Monarchy, the Protestant Reformation, and Liberalism. 6. The Anglican Church, the Monarchy and Parliament: their historical origin, their evolution and their cultural roles today. 7. The British Empire and the Origins of a Global, English-Speaking Culture.

- Church and State
- England and the Papacy
- Anglican Protestantism and English national identity
- Republicanism and radical religious reformation
- The translation of Scripture: The political and religious culture of the Reformation, the 1611 King James Bible and the evolution of Anglo-American Culture
- The cultural and religious capital that the King James Version enjoys, and its role in the establishment of a global Anglo-American culture.
- The Anglican Church vs the Dissenters.

Introduction

The history of the Reformation is still a controversial topic which continues to stir debate in England—even doctrinal controversies between Catholics and Protestants. Given the importance of Protestantism in the construction of English national identity, the role that the Reformation played in the history of the country and its long-lasting impact still lie at the center of public debate. The 16th and 17th centuries—with episodes and characters like the Reformation, Henry VIII, Elizabeth, the Gunpowder Plot, the Civil War, and the Commonwealth—are viewed as founding moments in the history of the country. The way in which these events are interpreted constitutes part of the narrative of English national identity. The importance of this period for English mentality is proved by the proliferation of popular books and



Henry VIII, by Hans Holbein, 1536

documentaries on its protagonists: Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots... And this interest has spilled over to popular media, with movies like *Elizabeth*, *the Golden Age*, or TV series like *The Tudors*. This proves that, at a time when traditional notions of English national identity appear to be under threat by the winds of globalization, there is a renewed interest in this particular period because it is generally perceived as a founding moment that defined the essence of the country. The following texts deal with events and characters that play a central role in this narrative of English national identity.

As we saw in the introduction to this course (see 0.Introduction), a culture, or a community—be it national, linguistic, or in general any group with a set of shared features—articulates this sense of common identity through narratives, or stories. In a well-established version of English national identity, Protestants generally play the roles of heroes, and consequently they appear as patriotic and God-fearing English subjects who fought the wicked influence of Catholics. And in this narrative, English Catholics play the part of evil and treacherous allies of the foreign enemies of England. They appear as accomplices of a foreign invasion—as was the case with the episode of the Armada in 1588, when Protestant England was attacked by the navy of the most Catholic Spanish Empire, led by the wicked Philip II. They can even be viewed as terrorists, bent on destroying the English Parliament, the monarchy, and the country's elite through schemes like the Gunpowder Plot. In this narrative, England, with the moderate Anglican Church, its Parliament and its limited monarchy, appears as a champion of liberty against the political absolutism and religious obscurantism of Catholicism.

But naturally this is only one side of the story—or rather, one side of the narrative of English national identity. Every historian has an agenda—that is, a point of view, an ideological position, a certain religious doctrine. Inevitably, every historian produces an account of events that is determined by his or her own perspective. This might be a personal opinion held by a particular historian, but it is frequently part of more general trends too. Thus, since Protestants, and Anglicans in particular, have for centuries ruled England, English historians have traditionally written the history of the country, and the role played by the Reformation in it, from a Protestant point of view. But there are also English Catholics who would naturally like to see the role of their faith in the history of the country under a new perspective.



Henry VIII with his young son (by Jane Seymour, wife number 3), who would become King Edward VI after Henry's death in 1547. Edward was only 10 years old when he became king, and would reign for just a few years. Edward VI died in 1553, when he was only 16 years old.



Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII's second wife

The following series of texts opens with one that deals with the kind of choices that a historian must confront when coming up with a narrative of the events he or she is trying to explain, and how these choices necessarily determine the historian's outlook. When studying a culture, we must be aware of the fact that (no matter how complex and sophisticated) it is a story built with episodes, characters, and a certain narrative structure that results from choices on the part of the historian and the status quo or the official position that he is voicing. In this regard, we must also remember that texts have a performative, pragmatic dimension. By selecting some documents instead of others, by emphasising the role of certain historical characters over others, and by presenting a certain sequence of events from the episodes he has decided to include (as he also excludes others), a historian always engages in the construction of a text that has its own performative value—in this case, to support a certain version of national identity, instead of other alternative views.

TASK. Read text number [1] and answer the following questions:

1. What does the text mean by claiming that “history is edited”?
2. How does this apply to history, and to the interpretation of its texts?

[1]

The Legacy of the Reformation

By Bruce Robinson (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

The causes and impact of the Reformation have attracted debate for centuries. So what theories have been put forward, and why has all the research failed to provide any consensus? Can it ever be possible to draw conclusions from an event such as the Reformation?

History is edited. Imagine you've just had an argument with your mother and you're telling a friend about it. Do you include the whole story? No, you make a judgement and you edit the details.

Now go back 500 years. The argument is between Henry VIII and Mother Rome. As a historian, you have the same problems, and more. What have the contemporary accounts forgotten, hidden or ignored? Some of the documents may be in Latin, French or Spanish Are you reading a good translation or translating correctly yourself. To make life even more challenging, do you have all the documents? Are they all there? Some you know have been lost in the intervening centuries, but maybe others are lost that you never knew existed.

So before you turn up, history has already been edited, both by design and by accident. But there's still a huge amount of material, so you make priorities, you make judgements: some

sources are more valuable than others. ... Then you write your thesis, article or book. You have reams of notes to analyse and not enough space for everything. Again you make professional judgements regarding their relative value. You edit.

So when the history we read is the product of a series of value judgements, some of which we know, some of which we don't, is it surprising that those judgements are questioned by others? Maybe they have their own agenda, maybe they have seen documents you have not. Either way, they disagree with your interpretation. No wonder historians disagree when there is so much to disagree on. The history of historical disagreements is so established that it even has its own word - historiography. This is about the historiography of the Reformation.



Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury (around 1545). He was the theologian who helped Henry VIII with his divorce and with the implementation of the break from Rome.

TASK: Read texts [2] and [3] and answer the following questions:



Catherine of Aragon, ca. 1503, by Michael Sittow. She was Henry VIII's first wife.

1. Text number [2] describes that one of the events that constitute the background to the Reformation was the late-medieval power struggle between the Bishops and the Pope. Which consequences did this power struggle have? Can you establish any parallelism between this power struggle and other sorts of struggles we have already mentioned in this class?
2. What kind of church practices had already caused discontent among certain sections of the faithful before the Reformation?
3. What sort of social, cultural, and economic changes also facilitated the onset of the Reformation?
4. What was the White Horse Group? Why does the text say that some things never change?
5. What role did Catherine of Aragon, Henry VIII, and Anne Boleyn play in the English Reformation?
6. What is the *Collectanea*? Find online information about the *Collectanea satis copiosa*, and briefly describe it. How does the *Collectanea* relate to the concepts of translation and the appropriation of discursive legitimacy of all types? How does it relate to the claim of text number [1] that "history is edited"?
7. What is the *Act of Supremacy*, and what did this text perform?
8. Who succeeded Henry VIII when he died?
9. Which were the main features of Mary Tudor's reign, and of her predecessor in the throne?
10. What was the Act of Settlement of 1559, and which were its main features? Which monarch was responsible for it?
11. Why was the Anglican Church, as a result of the Act of Settlement of 1559 and other subsequent settlements, in the words of its critics, 'but halfly reformed'? Who were these radical critics?
12. Why is the Reformation important, according to text number [2]?

[2]

An Overview of the Reformation

By Bruce Robinson (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

The Reformation was a culmination of events and circumstances, both here and abroad, which led to a seismic shift in the religious framework of this country. So what exactly happened, and what lasting impact did the Reformation have?

The story really begins over a hundred years earlier, when the Papacy began to reap the effects of centuries of compromise. The Great Schism saw two, even three individuals claiming to be the Pope, and the Council of Constance in the early fifteenth century saw a power struggle between Bishops and Pope. Combined, they hindered Papal government and harmed the reputation of the Church in the eyes of the laity. They led early sixteenth century popes to resist reform and bolster their own position by using their spiritual power, along with war and diplomacy, to become territorial princes in Italy, building their bank accounts on the way.

In England, the same period saw John Wyclif, an Oxford academic, anticipate the arguments of Martin Luther over a century later, and also produce the first English Bible. *Piers Plowman*, a popular poetic satire, attacked abuses in the entire church, from Pope to priest. But nothing happened. Wyclif's supporters, the Lollards, were driven underground after their failed rebellion of 1414, and remained a persecuted minority for another hundred years. The church carried on unabashed and proud, selling offices and indulgences, a political plaything for princes and a useful source of income for second sons and men on the make. And forget celibacy.

So European anticlericalism was nothing new; it had been seething for centuries. What was new this time round was a by-product of the infant capitalism: wealth, urbanisation and education. Whilst still a minority, the literate laity were no longer confined to those in on the game, and were better educated than many priests who claimed to be the path to salvation (while taking their money in taxes). It rankled somewhat.



Thomas More, by Hans Holbein, 1527. A humanist, and a close friend of Erasmus, he was also Henry's chancellor. The king executed him in 1535 for his opposition to Henry's break from Rome

Criticism was stepped up, at home and abroad, by the Humanists. Led by Colet, More and Erasmus, they went back to basics, studying the Scriptures as they would any classical text. Yet they remained Catholics, attacking corruption but keen to reform from within, stressing toleration and man's inherent dignity. It was a depressed German cleric, Martin Luther, who lit the fuse for the first, European, Reformation. Provided no comfort by Catholic ritual and horrified by abuses in Italy, he concluded that salvation was a personal matter between God and man: traditional church ceremonial was irrelevant at best and at its worst - the sale of indulgences, for example - fraudulent. Nailing his 95 Theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany, he prompted massive theological debate and was condemned as a heretic and an outlaw.

It is one of history's great ironies that the man who publicly refuted him was none other than Henry VIII, rewarded with the title of *Fidei Defensor* - Defender of the Faith - in 1521. But it was too late. Luther's ideas were white hot and they spread fast. They soon reached England and were discussed by academics here, most notably the White Horse Group who were named after a Cambridge pub where scholars would meet, drank and put the world to rights. Some things don't change.

So England by the mid 1520s was hearing grumbles of lay dissatisfaction, grumbles that remained. Catholicism addressed many important needs and enjoyed general popular support. Even though the grumblers could point to Europe as a lead, the same situation existed in France, yet that remained Catholic. What France didn't have was a Defender of the Faith; it didn't have a Henry. King since 1509, England's Renaissance Man lacked but one thing in his life - a son. Catherine of Aragon had produced six children but only a daughter, Mary, survived. Henry had become convinced that God was punishing him for marrying the wife of his dead elder brother, Arthur. He had also become infatuated with Anne Boleyn, daughter of a well-connected London merchant whose family he knew well: her sister had been a mistress. No beauty but no fool, Anne insisted that she be Queen or nothing. Henry was keen. He was also married. It was his search for a solution that triggered the break from Rome.

In 1527 he asked Pope Clement VII for a divorce on Scriptural grounds. But unfortunately for both Clement and Henry, Rome was surrounded by the Emperor Charles V of Spain, Catherine's nephew. Unsurprisingly, Charles was unsympathetic to Henry's requests, which meant the Pope had to be as well. Henry had to find another way.

It was Thomas Cranmer, one of the White Horse Group, who in 1530 suggested a legal approach. The Collectanea argued that Kings of England enjoyed Imperial Power similar to that of the first Christian Roman Emperors. This meant that the Pope's jurisdiction was illegal: if Henry wanted a divorce, he could have it, as long as the Archbishop of Canterbury agreed. But William Warham didn't. Henry applied some pressure, charging the clergy with Praemunire, the unlawful exercise of spiritual jurisdiction. In 1532 they had capitulated, and the next year a new Act asserted England's judicial independence. By now, matters were pressing: Anne was pregnant. Henry had to marry for the child to be legitimate. Luckily, Warham had just died. Henry replaced him with Cranmer and the divorce came through within months.

The Act of Supremacy (1534) confirmed the break from Rome, declaring Henry to be the Supreme Head of the Church of England. But the Reformation was far from over. The Protestant Anne Boleyn had the motivation, the power and the intelligence to push reform as far as it would go. She also had the means: Cranmer and Cromwell. In the Orwellian atmosphere of the Tudor state, Cranmer was the thought, Cromwell the police. Thomas Cromwell combined managerial genius with Machiavellian ruthlessness. The years to 1540 saw his hitsquads travel the country, assessing the church's wealth. Once he knew how much to take, he took.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries lasted four years to 1540. Two thirds of all the land was sold to the laity and the money squandered in vanity wars against France. With the destruction of priceless ecclesiastical treasures it was possibly the greatest act of vandalism in English history but also an act of political genius, creating a vested interest in the Reformation: those now owning monastic lands were unlikely to embrace a return to Catholicism.



Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister between 1532-1540. He helped Henry obtain his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, and also supervised the Dissolution of the Monasteries. He was executed for treason in 1540.

But for all the work carried out in his name, Henry was never a Protestant. Further doctrinal reform was halted by the Act of Six Articles in 1539 and following Cromwell's sudden fall the next year the court hung between religious conservatives and radical reformers with the Reformation stuck in the mud. But on the quiet, Henry's young son, born to Jane Seymour (wife number three), was being educated by Protestants. Edward was only ten when he became king in 1547 but his two regents accelerated the pace of Protestant reform considerably. The 1539 Act was repealed, priests were permitted to marry - creating another vested interest - and more land was confiscated. Altars and shrines were all removed from churches and the stained glass was smashed.



Mary Tudor, by Antonio Moro, 1554. This was the year she married Philip of Spain (later Philip II). She had become queen of England after the early death of her half-brother, the young Edward VI. During her brief reign she brought England back into the Catholic fold. When she died childless in 1558 she was succeeded by Queen Elizabeth I.

Becoming Queen in 1553 Mary, Edward's devoutly Catholic sister, was always going to have a tough time undoing twenty years' work. Although Protestantism remained patchy and its followers a minority, this minority was entrenched and substantial, at least in London and the South East. Mary did her best, reinstating Catholic doctrines and rites, and replacing altars and images, but she handicapped herself by martyring almost 300 ordinary men and women, as well as bigger names like Cranmer.

The burnings were unpopular and immensely counter-productive, and she compounded her errors by marrying Philip II of Spain, son of Charles V who had so successfully thwarted Henry in 1527. Burning bodies, Spanish courtiers and Philip's awful English all fuelled further Protestant propaganda and confirmed fears of the Catholic menace that had been threatened since 1534. Fighting France for Philip, Mary's loss of Calais in 1558 - England's last territory in France - helped turn distrust into hatred and xenophobia. Tension mounted, Thomas Wyatt was rebelling in Kent, and religious civil war seemed not too far away.

However, chance rolled the dice once more. After two phantom pregnancies Mary died childless in November 1558: the only heir was Elizabeth, Anne Boleyn's daughter. A moderate Protestant, she inherited a nervous kingdom

where Catholicism dominated everywhere but the major cities, the South East and East Anglia. She had to inject some stability. The religious settlement of 1559 was intended to be inclusive. It restored Royal Supremacy and the Act of Uniformity but, in a conciliatory gesture, reintroduced clerical vestments and a more Catholic Eucharist. Altars were allowed, and clergy had to get permission to marry.

In reality, however, the settlement was very Protestant: it reissued Cranmer's Prayer Book of 1552 and its 39 Articles were closely modelled on his work in 1553. All but one of Mary's Bishops were removed from office after refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, replaced by men hand-picked by Elizabeth's chief minister, Robert Cecil. Most were far more radical than their Queen, as were the clergy who filled the parishes vacated by resigning Catholic priests. While altars were theoretically allowed, in practice they were removed by church commissions that toured the country to check compliance.

The church was further bolstered in 1563 when another Act of Uniformity made refusal to take the oath, or the defence of papal authority, a treasonable offence. But this time the foreign threat was real: a revolt in 1569, the papal invasion of Ireland, Elizabeth's excommunication and the arrival of priests from France all underlined the insecurity of the Anglican Church. The severity of the Treason Laws increased alongside anti-Catholic sentiment, effectively killing it as any real force by driving it underground for the rest of her reign.

And it was the length of her reign that secured Anglicanism and established it as Protestant. After the stop-start policies of Edward and Mary, it had 45 years of Elizabethan rule to bed down. Had she succumbed to smallpox in 1562, a religious civil war might easily have followed. But luck struck again, and by her death in 1603 the country was united as had not been possible in the previous century, both by a common religion and a common enemy. Patriotism and

Protestantism were two halves of the same coin, a coin bearing Henry's title, 'Fidei Defensor'. They still do.

So why is the Reformation important? True, it happened a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, but it established in English minds the image of an island nation, separate and supreme, still resonant today. English policy became increasingly repressive in Ireland, importing Protestant landowners to oppress the locals who resisted conversion. That legacy still lingers, and the abiding sense of anti-Catholicism remained potent enough to be a cause of the Civil War a century later.



A young Elizabeth at 13. The daughter of Anne Boleyn, she was declared illegitimate after her mother's execution.

[3]

The English Reformation

By Professor Andrew Pettegree (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

Despite the zeal of religious reformers in Europe, England was slow to question the established Church. During the reign of Henry VIII, however, the tide turned in favour of Protestantism, and by the 1600s the new Church held sway over the old. How did all this come about?

The progress of the Reformation in England was closely bound up with Henry's personal affairs. His increasing desperation to secure release from his marriage to Catherine of Aragon forced him to contemplate radical steps that went very much against the grain of his own instinctive theological conservatism. ... Although England had its own indigenous mediaeval heresy in Lollardy, Luther's attack on the church had initially produced little resonance in England.

All of this changed when Henry made the fateful decision that only drastic action could extricate him from a marriage that, in the absence of a male heir, now threatened the future of his dynasty. In rapid succession from 1532, legislation was passed through Parliament curbing the influence of the papacy in England and appointing the King as Supreme Head of the Church. Once this and the divorce were achieved, the king moved to take control over much of the Church's property through the dissolution of the monasteries.

[...]

As Henry's health failed in the last years of his life it became clear that his own actions had encouraged the growth of a powerful evangelical party at Court. On his death in 1547 they moved quickly to establish their supremacy in the regency government made necessary by the youth of the new king, Edward VI (1547-1553). So, the short reign of Edward VI saw a determined attempt to introduce a full Protestant church polity into England, modelled on that of the Swiss and German Reformed churches and driven on by a powerful alliance of Archbishop Cranmer and the Lord Protector, the Duke of Somerset.

In the five years of the king's life, much was achieved: two evangelical Prayer Books, a new English order of service and the stripping of the remaining Catholic paraphernalia from the churches. But time was too short to put down roots. On Edward's death in 1553, the changes were reversed easily by his Catholic half-sister, Mary (1553-1558). Only Mary's devotion to the papacy (which threatened the continued possession of former monastic property in the hands of those who had purchased it from the crown), and her determination to marry her cousin, Philip of Spain, provoked a half-hearted reaction. English Protestantism was reduced once again to a



Elizabeth I in her coronation robes. After the death of her half-sister Mary Tudor, she became queen of England at 25.

persecuted remnant; many of its ablest figures taking refuge abroad, to avoid martyrdom - the fate of those whom remained behind.

So, in 1558 Elizabeth acceded to a troubled throne, after a five-year period in which Catholicism had been re-established in England with little apparent difficulty. Although the changes of Mary's reign were now reversed once more, Elizabeth and her councillors were under no illusions that many of her subjects remained obstinately attached to the old ways. It would be well into the last two decades of Elizabeth's long reign before it could be said with confidence that Protestantism was the religion of the majority in England.

For the first decades those who opposed the religious policies of the Elizabethan government could take comfort from the evident insecurity of a regime embodied by a mature, childless Queen who obstinately refused to marry and whose nearest heir was the Catholic Mary Queen of Scots. Had Elizabeth died early (as she nearly did in 1563, from smallpox), England too might have plunged into the same religious civil war convulsing neighbouring lands on the Continent.

[...]

A Parliament gathered to settle religion in 1559 compliantly reinstated the Protestant Prayer Book of Edward VI. But Elizabeth balked at the introduction of the full Calvinist Church order urged upon her by foreign theologians and by some of the English exiles who, having withdrawn to the continent during Mary's reign, now returned to assist the new regime. The English church retained Bishops and ecclesiastical vestments, which many of the hotter Protestants regarded as an unacceptable Popish survival. When in 1566 Elizabeth insisted upon uniformity in clerical attire, a substantial proportion of the English clergy (up to ten per cent in London) refused to submit and was deprived. Further attempts to move the Queen to a more perfect Reformation, whether by Parliamentary statute or subtle pressure from the bench of bishops, proved equally unavailing. The Church of England would remain, in the words of its Protestant critics, 'but halfly reformed'.

Despairing at the Queen's obstinacy and at the apparent indifference of broad sections of the population to the call to a godlier lifestyle, evangelicals took refuge in brotherhoods and congregations that became increasingly detached from the mainstream church. The frustration of reform measures in the Parliaments of 1571 and 1572 led some into formal separation. In the latter years of Elizabeth's reign Puritanism gave way to sectarian non-conformity, and eventually into outright confrontation with the established church.

[...]

By the time Elizabeth's long reign came to an end in 1603, English people had come to esteem their Church. The trials of the last three decades had in a very real sense secured England's Protestant identity. Through a generation of conflict in which the enemy had been foreign, Catholic and dangerous, English people had come to identify their Church and Protestantism, as a cornerstone of their identity.



Queen Elizabeth I, the Ditchley Portrait, ca. 1592

This was not manifested, necessarily, in any very profound grasp of the theological tenets of faith. While English readers seem to have been avid consumers of catechisms and other cheap volumes of religious instruction, their clergy, as elsewhere in Europe, continued to lament how shallow was their grasp of doctrine. Yet the identification could be more subtle and oblique, but still very real. The Catholic festival year, for instance, had been gradually superseded by a calendar of new, largely unofficial and profoundly Protestant patriotic festivals: the defeat of the Armada, Coronation day, the date of Elizabeth's accession. In 1605 they would be joined by 5 November, the date of the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, proof, if proof were needed that Catholicism was still considered perfidious, deadly and deeply un-English. The celebration of Guy Fawkes' day with bonfires and fireworks is a reminder of how fresh these Reformation controversies remained in the consciousness of the people for many centuries.



Raphael, St. George and the Dragon, 1503-1505. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

QUEEN ELIZABETH, PROTESTANTISM, CATHOLICISM AND CURRENT NARRATIVES OF ENGLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY

The role played by Protestantism and Catholicism in English national identity, and its lasting presence in current iconic narratives of the history of the country can be illustrated by the following video clips, from the movie *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*. The title of the movie already shows the current vision of this age as a “golden age” for England. In the age of feminism, the image of a heroic female ruler who stood alone leading her nation against its enemies is a very powerful one. In the movie Elizabeth appears as a benevolent queen, selflessly devoted to safeguard her people from foreign occupation.

Elizabeth is also portrayed as a tolerant ruler (“I will not punish my people for their beliefs, only for their deeds”, she says), who will respect the religious beliefs of her subjects as long as they remain faithful subjects). In contrast with her luminous and heroic image, Philip II appears in the movie as a sinister and deranged religious fanatic, physically and morally crooked, bent on destroying England and invading the country with the Armada.

Elizabeth also appears as an idealized warrior-queen (a sort of feminist *avant la lettre*), a female version of St. George (the patron saint of England) defending the country from the evil monsters of foreign

Catholicism, represented by the obscure figure of Philip II. Watch the clip here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7hd209WDAU&feature=related>



Raphael, St George and the Dragon, 1505-06. National Gallery of Art, Washington

TASK: Read the text on Elizabeth and answer these two questions.

1. There were many peculiarities about Elizabeth's background, upbringing, and overall situation. List them and explain why Elizabeth was an unusual woman for her times.
2. What kind of compromise did Elizabeth reach during her reign?

[4]

Elizabeth I: An Overview

By Alexandra Briscoe

Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/tudors/elizabeth_i_01.shtml

A different kind of Queen

The reign of Elizabeth I is often thought of as a Golden Age. It was a time of extravagance and luxury in which a flourishing popular culture was expressed through writers such as Shakespeare, and explorers like Drake and Raleigh sought to expand England's territory overseas. This sense of well-being was embodied by Queen Elizabeth who liked to wear sumptuous costumes and jewellery, and be entertained in style at her court. But life in Tudor England did not always reflect such splendour. The sixteenth century was also a time when the poor became poorer, books and opinions were censored, and plots to overthrow the Queen were rife. Elizabeth's ministers had to employ spies and even use torture to gain information about threats to her life.

In 1558 the Protestant preacher John Knox wrote, 'It is more than a monster in nature that a woman should reign and bear empire over man.' So was he right? Were women fit to rule the country? The people had lived through the unpopular reign of Mary I, known as 'Bloody Mary'

for her merciless persecution of Protestants. Lady Jane Grey was Queen for only a matter of days before being toppled and eventually executed. And Mary Queen of Scots made a series of ill-judged decisions which led her to the executioner's block in 1587.

[...]

So what influences had shaped the young Elizabeth? Her mother was the ill-fated Anne Boleyn who had caught the eye of Henry VIII at court. He was soon bewitched by her, arranging to divorce Catherine of Aragon and quickly making Anne his second wife. But her fate was sealed when she failed to provide Henry with what he desperately wanted - a son. Everyone, from court astrologers to Henry himself, was convinced Anne would give birth to a boy. It was a girl, Elizabeth. Henry, beside himself with disappointment, did not attend the christening. When Elizabeth was just two years old her mother was beheaded at the Tower of London.

Elizabeth was brought up in the care of governesses and tutors at Hatfield House and spent her days studying Greek and Latin with the Cambridge scholar, Roger Ascham. In later years Katherine Parr, Henry's sixth wife, took a keen interest in the young Elizabeth and made sure that she was educated to the highest standards. Elizabeth was taught the art of public speaking, unheard of for women at the time. But the ability to address a large number of people, from ministers in Parliament to troops on the battlefield, stood Elizabeth in good stead for the future. She learnt how to turn the tide of opinion in her favour, and this became one of her most effective weapons.

[...]

As soon as her Council had been appointed, Elizabeth made religion her priority. She recognised how important it was to establish a clear religious framework and between 1559 and 1563 introduced the acts which made up the Church Settlement. This returned England to the Protestant faith stating that public worship, religious books such as the Bible and prayers were to be conducted in English rather than Latin. The new Book of Common Prayer was introduced, adapted from earlier Books used under the Protestant Edward VI.

But Elizabeth was careful not to erase all traces of Catholic worship and retained, for example, the traditions of candlesticks, crucifixes and clerical robes. By pursuing a policy of moderation she was attempting to maintain the status quo and, although Puritans were particularly upset by the continuance of some Catholic traditions, an uneasy compromise was reached and maintained throughout her reign.



Elizabeth I, the Armada Portrait (after 1588)

PROTESTANTISM, CATHOLICISM AND THE GUNPOWDER PLOT. THEIR ROLE IN NARRATIVES OF ENGLISH NATIONAL IDENTITY.



James I, by Nicholas Hilliard, around 1603-1609

Queen Elizabeth never married, and died childless in 1603. The crown then passed on to the moderately Protestant King King James VI of Scotland, who became King James I of England. After the death of Elizabeth, Catholics set high hopes on the new monarch. They thought that his conciliatory approach to theological issues would allow them more freedom to worship openly, and participate in public life. The signing of a peace treaty with Catholic Spain in 1604 increased these hopes. Protestant and Calvinist pressure however managed to thwart attempts to leave more space for Catholics in England. Frustrated, a group of radical Catholics unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the monarch and the elite of the country. This is the so-called Gunpowder Plot, which is still celebrated in England every fifth of November.

TASK. Read texts [5] and [6] and answer the following questions:

1. Why were some Catholics encouraged by some of the early policies and decisions of the new monarch, James I?
2. What was the Hampton Court Conference? Describe its main features and some of the important decisions that were made as a result of it.
3. Why was Robert Catesby forced to leave university?
4. Describe in a few words the plans of those involved in the Gunpowder Plot.
5. Which were the long-term consequences for Catholics after the Gunpowder Plot?

[5]

The Gunpowder Plot

By Bruce Robinson (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

The failed plot to assassinate James I and the ruling Protestant elite would, however unfairly, taint all English Catholics with treason for centuries to come. Who were the conspirators and what did they hope to achieve?

Spying and shoot-outs, treachery and torture, not to mention gruesome deaths. The Gunpowder Plot has it all. Why were Catholics so bitter, and what did they hope to achieve?

The year 1603 marked the end of an era. After 45 years on the English throne, Elizabeth I was dying. All signs suggested her successor would be James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Queen of Scots [a Catholic].

English Catholics were very excited. They had suffered severe persecution since 1570, when the Pope had excommunicated Elizabeth, releasing her subjects from their allegiance to her. The Spanish Armada of 1588 had made matters worse. To the Tudor State, all Catholics were potential traitors. They were forbidden to hear Mass, forced instead to attend Anglican services, with steep fines for those recusants who persistently refused.

Yet rumours suggested James was more warmly disposed to Catholics than the dying Queen Elizabeth. His wife, Queen Anne of Denmark, was a Catholic, and James himself was making sympathetic noises. The crypto-Catholic Earl of Northumberland sent one of his staff, Thomas Percy, to act as his agent in Scotland. Percy's reports back optimistically suggested that Catholics might enjoy protection in James' England.

The early signs were encouraging. Upon his accession as James I of England (VI of Scotland), the new king ended recusancy fines and awarded important posts to the Earl of Northumberland and Henry Howard, another Catholic sympathiser. This relaxation led to considerable growth in the number of visible Catholics.

Trying to juggle different religious demands, James was displeased at their increasing strength. The discovery in July 1603 of two small Catholic plots did not help. Although most Catholics were horrified, all were tainted by the threat of treason.

The situation deteriorated further at the Hampton Court Conference¹ of January 1604. Trying to accommodate as many views as possible, James I expressed hostility against the Catholics in order to satisfy the Puritans, whose demands he could not wholly satisfy. In February he publicly announced his 'utter detestation' of Catholicism; within days all priests and Jesuits had been expelled and recusancy fines reintroduced.

Although bitterly disappointed, most English Catholics prepared to swallow the imposition of the fines, and live their double lives as best they could. But this passive approach did not suit all.

Robert Catesby was a devout Catholic and familiar with the price of faith. His father had been imprisoned for harbouring a priest, and he himself had had to leave university without a degree, to avoid taking the Protestant Oath of Supremacy. Yet he possessed immense personal magnetism, crucial in recruiting and leading his small band of conspirators.



Robert Catesby, Guy Fawkes and some other Gun Powder conspirators

Their first meeting was on 20 May 1604. Catesby was joined by his friends Thomas Wintour, Jack Wright and Thomas Percy at the Duck and Drake, in the Strand. The fifth person was Guy Fawkes. Originally from York, he had been recruited in Flanders, where he had been serving in the Spanish Army. They discussed their plan to blow up Parliament House, and shortly afterwards leased a small house in the heart of Westminster, installing Fawkes as caretaker, under the alias of John Johnson.

With Parliament successively postponed to 5 November 1605, over the following year the number of plotters gradually increased to ten. [...] In March 1605 the group took out a lease on a ground-floor cellar close by the house they had rented from John Whynniard. The cellar lay

¹James I was a moderate protestant, and he was also a scholar who relished theological debate. When the more radical Puritans presented their case before the new king, he summoned a conference at Hampton Court Palace, outside London. During this conference several agreements were reached. One of the most important among these was the decision to produce a new translation of the Bible, which resulted in the King James Version. See the following:

“Hampton Court conference, 1604 . Although Elizabeth I established a protestant church in England in 1559 , it offended **puritan** opinion by retaining many catholic practices. In 1603 the accession of James I provided the puritans with an opportunity to state their case by presenting him with the **millenary** petition. James, who relished theological debate, responded by summoning a conference of puritans and bishops to Hampton Court in January 1604. Discussions produced considerable convergence on minor matters, but the only major achievement was the authorization of a new translation of the Bible—the ‘King James version’. Puritans were disappointed at the outcome, especially when a number of hard-line ministers were expelled from their parishes. But James was no persecutor and during his reign all but a tiny minority of puritans retained their commitment to the established church.”

Roger Lockyer, "Hampton Court conference", in *The Oxford Companion to British History*. Ed John Cannon. Oxford University Press, 2009. *Oxford Reference Online*. Oxford University Press. Universidad de Granada. 3 January 2012 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t110.e2005>>

directly underneath the House of Lords, and over the following months 36 barrels of gunpowder were moved in, enough to blow everything and everyone in the vicinity sky high, if ignited.

Still hoping for foreign support, Fawkes travelled back to Flanders. Unsuccessful, he was also spotted by English spies. They reported back to Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, James' first minister, and made the link between Fawkes and Catesby.



James I, around 1606, by John de Critz

Back in London in October, with only weeks to go, the final details were planned. Fawkes was to light the fuse and escape to continental Europe. To coincide with the explosion, Digby would lead a rising in the Midlands and kidnap King James's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, ready to install her as a puppet queen. In Europe, Fawkes would be arguing the plotters' case to continental governments, to secure their passive acceptance, even support.

Everything seemed ready. But on the night of 26 October, an anonymous letter was delivered to Lord Monteagle, warning him to avoid the opening of Parliament. He took the letter - generally thought to have come from Tresham - to Salisbury, who decided the best results would be achieved by striking at the last minute.

[...]

Salisbury ordered Westminster to be searched. The first search spotted a suspiciously large amount of firewood in a certain cellar. The second, at around midnight, found Fawkes. Immediately arrested, he gave only his alias, but Percy's name had already been linked with the cellar and house, and a warrant for his arrest was immediately issued.

[...]

It was ordinary Catholics ... who suffered the longest as a result of the Gunpowder Plot. New laws were passed preventing them from practising law, serving as officers in the Army or Navy, or voting in local or Parliamentary elections. Furthermore, as a community they would be blackened for the rest of the century, blamed for the Great Fire of London and unfairly fingered in the Popish Plot of 1678. Thirteen plotters certainly proved an unlucky number for British Catholics: stigmatised for centuries, it was not until 1829 that they were again allowed to vote.

[6]

The Enduring Memory of the Gunpowder Plot

By Alan Haynes (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

Every year on 5 November a failed conspiracy against the monarchy is remembered with fireworks and bonfires, even though the event took place 400 years ago. Why did the Gunpowder Plot take such a hold on the national memory?

The intention [of the plotters] was to target King James, his wife Queen Anne, their son and heir Prince Henry, the privy councillors, nobility, clergy, judges and principal gentlemen of England - and blast them all to kingdom come during the ceremony of the State Opening of Parliament.

The planned huge explosion would also have killed and maimed the many Londoners who would have gathered to view the event.

[...]

Never mind that most of the nation would feel nothing but grief, horror and rage at the outcome of the proposed explosion, and that this torrent of distress might unleash a civil war of unequalled violence. This cluster of plotters, all known to each other through family or

friendship, scarcely seemed to consider the shock waves that were likely to swamp the country if their plot succeeded.

[...]

After the collapse of the plot, the government, led by Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, set about grubbing out for scrutiny the name of anyone linked in any way to the conspiracy. The captured Guy Fawkes resisted attempts to force the information out of him, and there was a fierce campaign to blame the Jesuits for it.

[...]

Although the Gunpowder Plot was a calamity averted, its after-effects were a real calamity for English Catholics, however loyal they might have been to the Crown. The Protestant nation's imagination reeled at the thought of the horror that had been averted, and for several hundred years Catholic families were corralled by legislation as well as by popular hatred.

Many publications reviled them, and many sermons preached against 'Romish practices'. King James and his family were for a time immensely popular, and when the youthful Prince Henry died suddenly in 1612 there was a huge outpouring of grief, and endless (rather overstated) testimony to his brilliance.

In these ways, and as the result of the actions of a mere handful of men, the taint of guilt was transmitted to succeeding generations. The innocent suffered long after the discovery of the grotesque plot in which they had played no part, and the notion of religious tolerance was alien to the country for generations.

The date 5 November became earmarked as a day to celebrate national salvation and the joyful repudiation of terrorism. Anti-Catholic sentiment among most people remained strong throughout the 17th century, and 'No Popery!' was a rallying cry even as late as the 1780 Gordon Riots - when the mob controlled the city for four days.

Until 1797 no Catholic male could vote in local elections, and until 1829 they could not vote in elections to Parliament - and this level of repression over such a long time inevitably led to an impoverishment of the whole kingdom. The gunpowder that did not explode, despite the earnest tending of Guy Fawkes, nevertheless managed to cause a severe, albeit invisible, national wound.

PROTESTANTISM AND ICONOCLASM. THE DISSOLUTION OF THE MONASTERIES AND THE STRIPPING OF THE ALTARS

One of the most important impacts of the Reformation in England—and also in the rest of Europe—stemmed from its rejection of religious images and elaborate ornament as, respectively idolatrous and superfluous elements that distracted the faithful from the necessary focus on the word: both the written word of the Bible (remember the principle of *sola scriptura*, i.e. that only the Bible could provide salvation) and also the spoken word of the sermons. Protestantism—in particular its most radical faction—was iconoclastic. The following text discusses this particular aspect of the Reformation, which has determined the way Protestant temples are built and decorated. As a reaction against Protestantism, the Catholic Counter-Reformation emphasised the cult of saints, the worship of the Host—such as the celebration of the *Corpus Christi*—and the lavish ornamentation of churches. The contrast between the exuberance of Catholic baroque churches and the sober decoration of Protestant temples bears witness to their different doctrinal positions.

This video clip (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIPldk2YQTc>, from Simon Schama's *History of Britain*) illustrates this shift from outward spirituality, and the worship of images, towards a more subjective, interior type of spirituality that focused on texts, on the word. The clip shows how a former Catholic church was deprived of its figurative decoration: the colourful ornaments were eliminated, the walls were left blank, and texts from an English translation of the Bible substituted the images of the saints, which were expunged.

The video also shows a contemporary High Church² procession, that takes place in Walsingham. This is a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham. This was a popular Catholic shrine in pre-Reformation England. The procession represents certain rituals and ceremonies that Protestants reject, such as the adoration of images or the use of elaborate vestments by the priests. The video shows how strong anti-Catholic feelings still run through part of English public opinion. You can see people with placards demonstrating against Catholicism as the procession passes by. One of the placards features the following quotation, from William Prince of Orange: “The Protestant Religion and the Liberties of England I will maintain”; another one reads “No Popery”.³

TASK. After watching the video, read this text, and then describe some of the main physical changes in former Catholic churches. Which doctrinal principles were used to change the decoration and other components in these buildings?

[7]

The Reformation: The People's View

By Carol Davidson Cragoe (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/>)

The Reformation changed almost everything about community life - from the decor of parish churches, to care for the sick, the old and the poor.

The reaction of ordinary people to the Reformation is perhaps one of the most difficult to gauge. Despite the popular protest in 1536, known as the Pilgrimage of Grace, there was a general acceptance of the Dissolution. Indeed, the way in which society embraced Protestant doctrine suggests that there was a majority who thought the Church was ripe for change.

The way in which reform was expressed can be seen today, in churches stripped of ornamentation, imagery, colour and decoration. The absence of these items reflects the impact of liturgical practice on the way people worshipped, and how the architectural barriers were brought down.

²The High Church is the part of the Anglican Church which in terms of ritual and vestments resembles most Catholicism: it can be described as the part of moderate Protestantism that most resembles Catholicism, while still remaining part of the Protestant creed. This is one of the reasons why it has been recently used to build bridges between Catholicism and Anglicanism. As the video shows, however, some Anglicans do not appear to be very happy about this rapprochement between Catholicism and Anglicanism.

³For more information on William of Orange and his role in English political and religious culture, see unit 5.

Once the Catholic mystery of the sacrament had been removed, the way interior space was used inside churches altered forever. New parish churches built after the Civil War embraced some of the radical ideas that had found expression in the Commonwealth, whilst a growing number of 'secular' religions abandoned churches altogether in favour of meeting houses.

[...]

Within 20 years of the Reformation, parish churches were stripped of almost all of their ornaments, images, and liturgy - and the parishioners had made most of the changes themselves.

Furthermore, the new liturgy revolutionised the way space inside the parish church was used, as many of the physical barriers between priest and congregation were removed. Consequently the interiors of local churches took on the appearance that many have retained today.

'Superstitious images' were the first to come under attack. Up and down England, pictures of saints, roods, relics and miracle-working statues were ripped out of parish churches and destroyed. Vestments, crucifixes, candlesticks, and altar plates soon followed. Even church bells weren't safe.

Anything valuable found its way into the King's Treasury, with the remainder simply smashed or burned. The effect on church interiors was catastrophic - having been brightly coloured and highly decorated, they suddenly became plain, white and unadorned.



Caspar David Friedrich, *The Abbey in the Oakwood* (1809-10)
Schloss Charlottenburg, Berlin

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THE STRIPPING OF THE ALTARS. RUINED ABBEYS, ROMANTICISM AND GOTHIC LITERATURE

After the Reformation, abbeys, convents, and other religious buildings were either pulled down, or converted and transformed to be used for some other purpose. Many of these buildings were built in the typically late medieval Gothic style. Some of them were simply left to rot and decay, and they remained thus for centuries. In the late 18th and the 19th century Romantics found these buildings appealing: their melancholy ruined aspect evoked the passing of worldly glory, and inspired images of death and decay that were dear to the Romantic temperament. As a result, these semi-destroyed buildings became literary and artistic icons, which were used in paintings, poems, and also became part of horror novels (i.e. Gothic literature). Ruined abbeys as an icon of horror, death and ghostly presences have survived until the 21st century. One of the unintended effects of the destruction and dispossession of the monasteries conducted by Henry VIII's efficient ministers, has thus been the creation of these Gothic icons, which are so common today. Here you have a few of them.



Whitby Abbey, in North Yorkshire. Bram Stoker, the author of *Dracula*, found inspiration in the ruins of this religious building, whose decay resulted from the dissolution of the monasteries during Henry VIII's reign.

MARY TUDOR, PHILIP II, ELIZABETH I AND THEIR MAPS ON CARTOGRAPHY AND HERALDRY AS POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ICONS

Source: British Library <<http://www.bl.uk/learning/artimages/maphist/war/british1558extract/britishisles.html>>, accessed on 22 May 21, 2014 at 13:10

Look carefully at this map and you will see that it has been deliberately damaged: the left side of the heraldic shield over England has been scratched out. But who would have done such a thing to a valuable royal map?

To answer this question we need to go back to the 1500s. The map is part of an atlas known as the Queen Mary Atlas. Mary commissioned the atlas in 1558 from the Portuguese mapmaker Diego Homen. It was probably intended as a gift for Mary's Catholic husband, King Philip II of Spain. Mary died before the atlas was finished, and after her death, the atlas was presented to Elizabeth I, Mary's successor to the English throne.

The right side of the heraldic shield on the map shows Mary's coat-of-arms: lions quartering the fleurs-de-lis. Philip's coat-of-arms, on the left, has been scratched out. The sight of the arms of Catholic Spain emblazoned over England would have infuriated the new Protestant queen. It was well known that Elizabeth had a terrible temper, and she despised Philip. This may well have led her to scrape Philip's coat-of-arms off the map.



Taken from: The British Isles and Western Europe

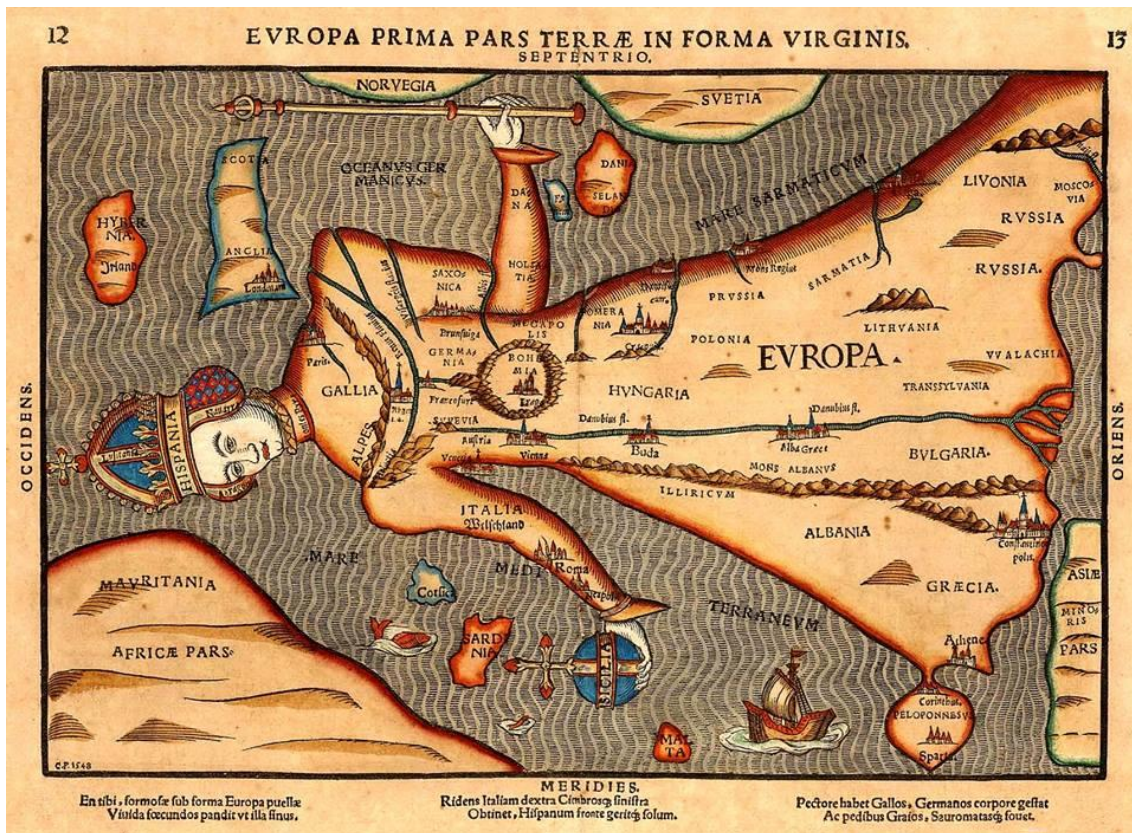
Author / Creator: Diego Homem

Date: 1558

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ON THE ICONIC VALUE OF MAPS

Map of Europe (source: Heinrich Bünting, *Itinerarium Sacrae Scripturae*, 1582)