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Italianate Englishwomen: Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney

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Abstract

The classical revival of the Italian Renaissance did not just reshape art and politics; it quietly revolutionised the lives of some elite English women, enabling them to participate in the intellectual, political, and religious discourses of their time. This thesis focuses on the spread and adoption of ideas which originated in Renaissance Italy, particularly in Florence, in sixteenth-century England, and how the impact of these ideas on English society affected the lives of women. It first establishes the presence of Italians and dissemination of their ideas in England, and then more closely investigates how the expression of ideas about women in English texts followed the classical model spearheaded in Italy. Finally, it reexamines the lives and surviving writings of three elite English women, demonstrating that women were beneficiaries and participants in the recovery of a classical literary inheritance in England via the Italian Renaissance, despite primarily being consigned to private life by their patriarchal society.

Two of the most important ideas of Florentine origins that affected society in sixteenth-century England were humanism and the classical education paradigm that developed from it. This thesis argues that classical education, as part of an intellectual inheritance from Italy, allowed some elite English women to participate in politics and religious reform. Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney are often noted as some of the most educated sixteenth-century English women, but what has been unexplored, until now, is the fact that their education, and in turn the works and lives that they created by using their education, was shaped by the adoption of Italian cultural practices in England. By contextualising these women into broader patterns of transnational intellectual and cultural diffusion, their role as powerful and important English historical figures can be understood more thoroughly.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements……1
Abstract……..2
Table of contents……3
List of abbreviations……...5
List of figures……6
Notes on conventions……7
Introduction……..……..8
Methodology……..……9
Defining humanism……..18
Timeline and survey of scholarship……..24
The argument……41
Chapter One: Italian Ideas in Sixteenth-Century England……...44
Italians in England……44
The English encounter with Italian culture and ideas……..57
Italian books in England……62
Impact of Italian literature: translations and adaptations.....72
The *studia humanitatis* in England……...83
Conclusion……87
Chapter Two: Humanism and Ideas About Women in Italy and England……..…….89
Historiographical review……..90
Theories of men – a selected corpus……93
Thoughts on marriage and women across the corpus……96
Italian influence on the expression of ideas about women…….110
Italian works about women in England……..112
Summary of the English texts and their authors……115
Ideas about marriage and the nature of women……..123
Conclusion……..149
Chapter Three: Margaret More: A Daughter for All Seasons…….153
Introduction……153
Historiographical review……154
Political context and education……..155
Margaret's education put to use……..161
Conclusion……..181
Chapter Four: Anne Bacon: Italianate Reformer……183
Introduction……183
Historiographical review ……...184
Political context and education……..186
How Anne's classical education shaped her life and works……...191
Conclusion……..219
Chapter Five: Mary Sidney: Italianate Commentator…….221
Introduction……221
Historiographical review ……...222
Political context and education……..225
How humanism inspired Mary Sidney's 'The Triumph of Death'….229

Mary Sidney's 'A Dialogue between two shepheards': a result of her classical education……..234
Conclusion……..253
Conclusion……255
Bibliography……263
Primary sources……..263
Manuscripts……263
Printed editions of manuscripts……...263
Printed books……...265
Secondary sources……..271
Books……...271
Articles and chapters……...287
Reference material……...310
Theses……..311

List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (online edition)
PLRE	*The Private Libraries in Renaissance England*
TNA	The National Archives
USTC	The Universal Short Title Catalogue

List of Figures

Figure 1: Language variations of works by Italian authors owned in early modern England (*PLRE*).

Figure 2: Languages listed for works by Italian authors owned in early modern England (*PLRE*).

Figure 3: Lockey, R., *Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants* (1593), © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Figure 4: Study for a portrait of Thomas More's family c. 1527 by Hans Holbein the Younger in Trapp, J. B. and Schulte Herbrüggen, H., *'The King's Good Servant': Sir Thomas More: Exhibition Catalogue* (London, 1977) pp. 84-6.

Figure 5: Artist unknown, woodcut on title page of Roper, M., *Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster* (London, 1526).

Notes on conventions

Original spelling from primary sources has been preserved. Women's names were often repeated within families, so the women in this thesis will be referred to by whichever name provides the most clarity about their identity. Mary Sidney is referred to by her maiden name while Margaret Roper and Anne Bacon are referred to by their married names. Men are referred to by their last names rather than their titles except for John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, to avoid confusion with Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester. Year is taken to begin on 1 January rather than 25 March.

Finally, to conserve words, I have given the classical and biblical women who were particularly relevant in the Italian and English texts or who were discussed by the medieval and early modern authors at length brief biographical information either in the prose or in a footnote.

Introduction

In a glistening stairwell of Hardwick Hall, the home of Bess of Hardwick, the wealthiest woman in Elizabethan England second only to the queen, hang four exquisitely embroidered tapestries depicting inspirational women from antiquity: Penelope, the ever-faithful wife of Odysseus from the Odessey; Lucretia, who was seen as a paragon of wifely virtue; Zenobia, the ancient queen who supported her husband's rule and served faithfully as regent for her son; and Artemisia, regarded for her constancy and piety. Sixteenth-century elite women, including Bess who commissioned the tapestries, modelled their behaviour on classical women like these.[1] The virtue, piety, modesty, and loyalty represented by the four ancient women were the traits deemed most admirable for sixteenth-century English women. This fact can be seen in numerous male-authored texts discussing the nature and roles of women in sixteenth-century England. It is well-established that women in the early modern period were taught to emulate the virtue of classical women, but what has not yet been considered, until now, is that the English practice of discussing ideas about women based on figures and stories from the ancient world has roots in late medieval Italy. The ways in which English women's lives were affected by Italianate ideas permeating their world as a sort of classical inheritance has also not been considered. This thesis explores how English expression of ideas about women in the sixteenth century was based on ideas which originated in Italy during the Middle Ages, and it argues that the lives of elite women were shaped in part by appreciation, adoption, and adaptation of Italian cultural practices in England. By examining sixteenth-century English women as recipients of and participants in this classical inheritance from Italy, their role as powerful and important figures can be understood more thoroughly. Examining their roles can provide a richer and more nuanced perspective on transnational networks and intellectual discourse.

[1] M. E Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, fourth edition (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 32-8.

Methodology

The research undertaken in this thesis is mostly qualitative, but Chapter One includes some quantitative data in terms of tracing the various languages in which Italian texts were produced and owned in early modern England. Three elite women were selected as case studies in this thesis for their diverse aristocratic and religious contexts, classical education, active participation in political, religious, and social events, and extant written works they produced. Margaret Roper was a devout Catholic who played a major role in helping her father Thomas More—a humanist who was a close friend and advisor to Henry VIII and served as Lord High Chancellor of England, during his downfall at the beginning of the English Reformation. Anne Bacon lived during the reigns of five English monarchs and used her language and translation skills to fight for Protestant reform in a time of religious turbulence. Finally, Mary Sidney used her classical education to comment on contemporary politics during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. These women show how classical education, originating in medieval Florence and spreading across Europe, enabled the cultural participation of sixteenth-century English women. Though they were not able to travel to Italy and immerse themselves in Italian culture in the same ways as their male counterparts, these women can be described as 'Italianate Englishwomen' in their own right. Elite women are the focus of this thesis simply because they belonged to the socio-economic group that received classical education and because, due to their education, they have left behind more written records to examine than did women of lower socio-economic status. Non-elite women may have been affected by the influence of Italian, as well as more broadly European, ideas in English society in other ways, but that is a topic which needs to be explored in a separate project.

Before analysing how classical education affected these women's lives, it is essential to understand the broader intellectual framework that led to the adoption of the *studia humanitatis* as an educational paradigm. This thesis argues that the humanist tradition of

using classical figures and narratives to define women's roles, originating in late medieval Florence, influenced England in similar ways. To demonstrate this, Chapter One traces the transmission of Italian humanist ideas to England, establishing that English audiences actively engaged with Italian intellectual currents. Chapter Two examines texts from late medieval Florence and sixteenth-century England, respectively, written by male authors who employed classical sources to express ideas about women. I analyse these texts through the same thematic lenses: general conceptions of women's nature and the virtues deemed desirable in them. This comparative approach highlights the continuity of humanist thought from Florence to England. The final three chapters present case studies of individual women, illustrating how these intellectual traditions shaped their education and social roles. By linking textual traditions with lived experiences, this study demonstrates the broader cultural impact of classical education on elite sixteenth-century English women.

This thesis employs traditional empirical research while contributing to subfields such as translation studies, book history, and intellectual history. A key methodological approach involves tracing how late medieval Italian ideas about women were mirrored in sixteenth-century England, incorporating intention and reception theory.[2] English audiences engaged with Italian texts—whether in the original or in translation—adapting and reshaping these ideas in their own works. While direct proof of this process is unattainable, evidence of English adoption of Italian intellectual currents emerges through records of Anglo-Italian interactions, book ownership, and textual analysis. Examining English encounters with Italians, both in England and abroad, reveals how cultural transmission occurred. The presence of Italian books in England demonstrates their availability for intellectual consumption. Further validation comes from English literary works demonstrably influenced by Italian humanist poets,

[2] For a foundational work, see Q. Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', *History and Theory*, 8/1 (1969), pp. 3-53.

supporting the argument that English texts on women similarly reflected Italian ideas. These aspects of translation studies and reception theory are explored in Chapter One. Chapters Three, Four, and Five further engage with translation studies, demonstrating that classical education, shaped by Italian humanism, influenced the lives of elite sixteenth-century English women through their own translations, which serve as evidence of this intellectual inheritance.

Reception theory also provides a central methodological framework by shifting analysis away from origins and authorial intention toward processes of transmission, transformation, and appropriation. Instead of treating Italian texts and classical models as fixed sources, reception theory asks how sixteenth-century English readers, patrons, and authors reconfigured Italian humanist materials so that those materials entered discourses about women in distinctive English ways.[3] This approach foregrounds reception as an active, context-sensitive process.

Three conceptual strands from reception theory proved particularly useful. First, Hans Robert Jauss's notion of a 'horizon of expectation' enabled me to examine how elite English educational contexts shaped by Italian practices determined what classical learning could mean for women.[4] By attending to the texts available to patrons, tutors, and female learners, I showed how classical pedagogy became a resource for female authority and literary production rather than only a mechanism of exclusion. This follows Jauss's and Wolfgang Iser's reader-focused arguments that reception alters a text's significance when relocated within a new social field.[5]

Second, Hans-Georg Gadamer's ideas about the history of effects clarified how the Italian classical inheritance functioned as an

[3] R. C. Holub, *Reception Theory: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1984).
[4] H. R. Jauss, T. Bahti (trans.), *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Minneapolis, MN, 1982).
[5] W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore, MD, 1978).

interpretive tradition in England.[6] Gadamer's work on historical consciousness and later treatments of reception history provided a framework for discussing how inherited classical norms both constrained and enabled female authorship, and how those norms were rearticulated through English education. Reinhart Koselleck's analysis of conceptual history further refined this perspective by illuminating how humanist and classical terms shifted in meaning as they were translated into new intellectual and linguistic contexts.[7]

Third, models of cultural translation and memory illuminated the institutional and textual channels by which Italian humanist forms reached elite English women. Peter Burke and Ronnie Po-chia Hsia's work on cultural translation and popular culture provided a model for examining the authors and translators who used classical examples and strategies to contribute to discourses on gender, education, and morality.[8] Likewise, Aleida Assmann's theory of cultural memory offered a framework for understanding how inherited classical ideals were selectively preserved and reinterpreted by English women writers as part of a broader humanist inheritance.[9]

Reception theory encouraged close attention to variation. By comparing the works of three women who benefited from classical education, I demonstrated how their similar backgrounds produced distinct rhetorical strategies: one used classical rhetorical strategies to disseminate humanism more effectively to an English audience, another engaged these classical strategies to promote Protestant reform, and a third adapted Italian poetry and classical ideals to covertly discuss politics and queenship. Reception theory thus reconciles close textual analysis with broader questions about

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[6] H. G. Gadamer, J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (trans.), *Truth and Method* (New York, 2004).
[7] R. Koselleck, T. Presner, K. Behnke, and J. Welge (trans.), *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford, CA, 2002).
[8] P. Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (eds.), *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2007).
[9] A. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives* (Cambridge, 2011).

transmission, memory, and institutional practice.[10] In this way, Italian humanism is treated not as a static influence but as an inherited resource that acquired new meanings when received by English educational institutions and elite women. Reception theory made it possible to account for both constraint and creativity in the circulation of classical ideals, thereby revealing how women participated actively in an Italian classical inheritance rather than serving merely as its passive bearers.

To show that the expression of ideas about women in England mirrored the way this was done in late medieval Italy, in-depth thematic analysis of multiple Italian and English texts is included in Chapter Two. Evidence that the existence of these ideas in England contributed to women's education and their lives is analysed mainly through their extant written texts. Literature produced by men discussing women and by women discussing various subjects are the key pieces of evidence that support the main argument of this thesis. The field of literary studies has also provided an essential methodological framework for my thesis because it offers interpretive strategies that reveal how Italian humanist ideas circulated into sixteenth century England and how elite women adapted these ideas within their own writing. Literary approaches to historical inquiry allow texts to be read not only as aesthetic objects but also as cultural artifacts that register forms of intellectual transmission and social negotiation. This is particularly significant for a project concerned with women's access to classical learning because the evidence through which such access can be reconstructed is frequently textual and often encoded in rhetorical choices, translation practices, and references to classical authorities.

Consideration of New Historicism is especially important because it offers a model for understanding literature as a site where cultural forces are negotiated. The work of Stephen Greenblatt

demonstrates how authors shape their identities through engagement with classical materials, and this insight informs my argument that elite women used classical education to obtain various degrees of intellectual authority that were compatible with their social positions.[11] Louis Montrose's formulation of the mutuality of text and context strengthens this claim because it encourages attention to the ways women's classical learning both reflected and reshaped cultural expectations.[12] These approaches help illuminate the dynamic relationship between women's reading of Italian humanism and their authorial strategies.

Several scholars of early modern literature provide models for studying transnational literary customs and the specific ways women engaged with classical traditions. Ann Rosalind Jones's work on women's lyric production across Europe demonstrates how women reinterpreted inherited forms to articulate moral and intellectual authority.[13] Her comparative method supports my analysis of women who encountered Italian humanism and applied its rhetorical strategies in English contexts. Margaret Ferguson's research on women, classical texts, and translation practices further clarifies how translation operates as a site of intellectual participation.[14] Her work helps reveal how elite women used translation to signal erudition, moral authority, and engagement with the Italian classical inheritance. Debora Shuger also connects literary form with intellectual and cultural history and demonstrates how theological and philosophical traditions shape literary expression.[15] Her approach assists my reading of women's texts that merge classical learning with moral instruction.

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[11] S. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980). C. Gallagher and S. Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago, 2000).
[12] L. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture', in H. Veeser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (New York, 1989), pp. 15-36.
[13] A. R. Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620* (Bloomington, IN, 1990).
[14] M. W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago, 2003).
[15] D. Shuger, *Habits of Thought in the English Renaissance: Religion, Politics, and the Dominant Culture* (Berkeley, CA, 1990).

Together, these scholars demonstrate how literary studies can illuminate the cultural conditions through which Italian humanism was received in England and how women shaped that inheritance through their own learned practices. Their work supports the argument that close textual analysis, informed by rhetorical theory and reception history, is essential for understanding the ways women participated in and reshaped the intellectual traditions made available to them.

Gender theory also provides critical framework for my thesis by demonstrating that gender norms and ideology were constructed through language, performance, and institutional practice. Through this theory, Chapter Two discusses Italian ideas as active models that shaped how English writers and patrons conceptualised female virtue, authority, and education rather than merely as transplanted content. Joan W. Scott's influential argument that gender functions as a category of historical analysis that both orders social relations and produces political meanings underpins my attention to how rhetorical and symbolic forms mediated claims about women in sixteenth-century England.[16] Italian humanist models travelled to England and were reframed to discuss English ideas about gender. By attending to gender as a constitutive category, this thesis demonstrates how classical ideals could enable female learning while simultaneously policing the limits of female authority. This contradiction explains the ambivalence that appears across the sources that I analyse and provides the conceptual vocabulary for explaining continuity and change in discourses about women.

A second productive insight from gender theory is its attention to performativity and the routine practices that reproduce gender. The influential formulation of gender as an activity by Candace West and Don Zimmerman highlights how daily practices and institutional interactions produce the appearance of gendered subjects.[17] Judith

[16] J. W. Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', in J. W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 2018), pp. 46-69.
[17] C. West and D. Zimmerman, 'Doing Gender', *Gender & Society*, 1/2 (1987), pp. 125-51.

Butler's definition of gender as a social performance also provided a useful framework, especially for the analysis of Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney.[18] Applying this approach to elite education reveals how pedagogical choices, patronage networks, and household rituals enacted learned femininity as well as produced intellectual authority for certain women. In the context of the Italian classical inheritance, performativity helps explain how classical learning became a resource for articulating elite female roles that combined erudition with morality.

Scholarship that integrates gender with early modern social and intellectual history also informs my empirical chapters. Studies that recentre women within cultural and religious practices demonstrate how longstanding scholarly attention to women can be combined with gender theory to recover the complex uses of the Italian classical inheritance. Works on the history of women and gender supply methodological models for combining close reading with archival attention to networks of patronage, translation, and education. My project follows this model by tracing how three elite women used the classical education they received to create influential works that contributed to the Italian classical inheritance in England.[19]

It is possible to prove that ideas which originated in late medieval Florence existed in England and were available for English people to engage with by tracing book sales, publishing, and ownership. The main limitation of this research, though, is that it is nearly impossible to prove that sixteenth-century English men who wrote about women engaged with those texts and were directly

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[18] J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 2007).

[19] See, for example, M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 4th ed. (Cambridge, 2019); K. Aughterson, *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England* (Abingdon, 1995); S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 2000). M. R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early Modern Society* (London, 1995).

influenced by the ideas expressed in them. The trend of using classical women as examples for how contemporary women should behave emerged from late medieval Florentine texts written by men, and the trend continued in texts written by men in sixteenth-century England, but finding direct evidence which concretely shows that one influenced the other is nearly impossible. Indirect rather than direct influence must be considered.

A key distinction in the first two chapters is the focus on ideas, principally humanism, that originated in a Florentine context, meaning ideas that were created or promoted by authors who were from, or at least based in, Florence. Another key distinction is that these ideas originated and were popularised during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth centuries, during the period widely recognised as the Italian Renaissance. The term Renaissance is often used to mean different things, so for the sake of clarity, the ideas discussed here will be described as 'late medieval Florentine' ideas rather than 'Renaissance' ideas.[20] Describing the ideas as Florentine does not suggest that they did not exist or flourish in other places on the Italian peninsula during this time; indeed, they were present in many other places, like Venice, Genoa, and Rome for instance.[21] The focus here is on Florence because, as discussed below, humanism, the main idea which informed the expressions of ideas about women discussed in this thesis, spread from Florence to the rest of Europe.

[20] For the earliest works which sought to define the 'Renaissance', see J. Michelet, *History of France* (Paris, 1855 published in English in New York, 1882); J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Basel, 1860 republished London, 1990). For more recent discussions, see L. de Jensen, 'The 'Renaissance' in Recent Thought: Fifteen Years of Interpretation', *Brigham Young University Studies*, 6/1 (1964), pp. 3-23; A. Tricomi (ed.), *Contextualizing the Renaissance: Returns to History* (Turnhout, 1999); J. Moran, 'The R/renaissance(s), Humanists And Classics', *Journal of Classics Teaching*, 19/38 (2018), pp. 96-8.

[21] For important works on the Italian Renaissance beyond Florence, see C. L. Stringer; *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington, IN, 1985); P. Fortini Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (Cambridge, MA, 1997); C. M. Rosenberg, *The Court Cities of Northern Italy: Milan, Parma, Piacenza, Mantua, Ferrara, Bologna, Urbino, Pesaro, and Rimini* (Cambridge, 2010); and B. de Divitiis (ed.), *A Companion to the Renaissance in Southern Italy (1350-1600)* (Leiden, 2023).

Defining humanism

The central concept in this thesis is humanism, a term with varied applications depending on historical and intellectual contexts. This study focuses on 'original Italian humanism' and 'northern humanism'. At its core, humanism has always been concerned with conceptions of humanity and the refinement of human potential through education. The term derives from *humanitas*, a classical ideal promoted by Cicero (106-43 BCE), which emphasised the cultivation of virtue through rhetoric, philosophy, and literature.[22]

In the late medieval period, Italian figures like Francesco Petrarch (1304-1374), adapted this ancient concept into an educational paradigm centred around the *studia humanitatis*, which prioritised classical learning as a means of producing well-rounded, virtuous, and civic-minded individuals.[23] This intellectual movement, later termed 'humanism' (a designation introduced only in 1809), was recognised in its time through the Italian term '*umanisti*', referring to teachers and students of classical education as early as 1490.[24] The English translation, 'humanists', first appeared in print in 1589.[25] Over time, humanism evolved beyond its pedagogical origins, integrating religious dimensions and expanding its influence across Europe.

By the early modern period, humanism had diverged considerably from its medieval origins. Samuel Johnson's 1755 dictionary defined a 'humanist' merely as a philologer or grammarian, signalling a shift from the movement's original integration of classical learning and religious inquiry.[26] By the twentieth century, humanism came to denote secularism, autonomy, and moral rationalism. This

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[22] P. O. Kristeller, 'Humanism', *Minerva*, 16/4 (1978), p. 588.
[23] N. Mann, 'The Origins of Humanism', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 1.
[24] Mann, 'Origins', p. 1. For the origins of 'umanisti' in a document from the University of Pisa dated 1490, see P. O. Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and the Arts: Collected Essays* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), p. 111.
[25] It was found in Andrew Fleming's English translation of *The Georgiks [sic]* by Publius Virgilius Maro printed in London in 1589. A. Copson, 'What is Humanism?' in A. Copson and A. C. Grayling (eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Humanism* (Chichester, 2015), p. 1.
[26] S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1755), *LEME*.

thesis, however, examines humanism in its earlier, religiously embedded form.[27] Paul Grendler defines it as a synthesis of scholarly skill, reverence for antiquity, and critique of medieval learning.[28] Although classical revivalism appeared intermittently across medieval Europe, Paul Oskar Kristeller and Ronald Witt locate its true renewal in Italy, where the loss of classical familiarity necessitated rediscovery.[29] Roberto Weiss and Witt trace the beginnings of Italian humanism to a deliberate revival of classical Latin by Italian poets during the late thirteenth century.[30]

The first fully developed form of Italian humanism, though not recognised as such at the time, extended beyond textual study and found its true expression in fourteenth-century Florence, marking the beginning of the Renaissance. While Latin remained central, this period brought renewed appreciation for classical languages, ideas, and culture, integrating them into contemporary learning. Petrarch, often regarded as the father of humanism, led this transformation through his program of the *studia humanitatis*, referred to as his 'new learning'.[31] Rejecting the dominance of theology and lamenting intellectual stagnation, he sought to revive the moral and intellectual practices of antiquity, making ancient models the foundation of a new educational

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[27] For more on the modern definitions and applications of 'humanism' see H. J. Blackham, 'A Definition of Humanism', in P. Kurtz (ed.), *The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism* (Pemberton, 1974), pp. 35-7; J. D. Fowler, *Humanism: Beliefs and Practices* (Liverpool, 1999), p. 9; and Copson, 'What is Humanism?', pp. 6-24.

[28] P. F. Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning, Criticism, Schools and Universities', in A. Mazzocco (ed), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006), p. 73.

[29] R. Black, 'The Origins of Humanism', in A. Mazzocco (ed), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 37, 40-1. C. H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1927), p. 93. P. O. Kristeller, *Eight Philosophers of the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford, CA, 1964), pp. 160-2. R. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2000), p. 17.

[30] R. Weiss, *The Dawn of Humanism in Italy* (London, 1947), pp. 1-16. Witt, *Footsteps*, p. 17. Black, 'Origins', p. 38.

[31] Witt, *Footsteps*, p. 230. Petrarch is famously called the father of humanism, but there were other humanists like Boccaccio and Salutati who were perhaps more effective humanist leaders. This is not the appropriate arena to debate whether Petrarch deserves the title, but chapter six in this Witt text does it well.

paradigm.[32] Together with Giovanni Boccaccio, he promoted the recovery and translation of Greek texts, granting Florentines access to classical thought after centuries of loss.[33] Petrarch's synthesis of classical rhetoric and Christian values redefined spirituality and civic engagement, shaping the moral life of Florence.[34] His influence extended to a broader reform of education and culture, as Italian humanists sought to recover ancient wisdom while reshaping language, ethics, and literary history for their own time.[35] Grounded in Cicero's concept of *humanitas*, they developed an educational program encompassing grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, which came to replace medieval traditions like the *ars dictaminis*.[36] By the fifteenth century, humanists, inspired by earlier figures like Dante and Petrarch, had secured positions within universities and chanceries, embedding the *studia humanitatis* at the heart of learning and linking intellectual cultivation with civic virtue.[37] During the fifteenth century, Italian humanism expanded beyond its focus on language, grammar, history, poetry, moral philosophy, and rhetoric to incorporate religion and science. While Petrarch sought to

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[32] A. A. MacDonald, Z. R. W. M. von Martels, and J. Veenstra, *Christian Humanism: Essays in Honour of Arjo Vanderjagt* (Leiden, 2009), p. 3. Witt, *Footsteps*, pp. 239-40. Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning', p. 80.
[33] V. Cronin, *The Florentine Renaissance* (London, 1992), pp. 52-3.
[34] W. Bouwsma, *The Culture of Renaissance Humanism* (Richmond, VA, 1973), pp. 16-7.
[35] R. G. Witt, 'Medieval 'Ars Dictaminis' and the Beginnings of Humanism: a New Construction of the Problem', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 35/1 (1982), p. 32. T. Kircher, *Before Enlightenment: Play and Illusion in Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2020), pp. 6-7.
[36] Cicero wrote about the *studia humanitatis* in his speech *Pro Archia*, and Coluccio Salutati was the first Italian Renaissance humanist to use the phrase in 1369. For more on the role of Cicero in Italian humanism, see Mann, 'Origins', p. 1; B. J. Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 2-3; M. D. Reeve, 'Classical Scholarship', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 21; V. Cox, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy, 1260-1350', *Rhetorica*, 17/3 (1999), pp. 239-40. For a more thorough explanation of how *ars dictaminis* used ancient examples differently than fourteenth- and fifteenth-century humanists, see Witt, 'Medieval', pp. 6-33.
[37] For more on the *studia humanitatis* in fifteenth-century education, see Witt, 'Medieval', p. 3; P. Baker, *Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Mirro*r (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 91-2; P. F. Grendler, *The Universities of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD, 2002), pp. 201, 209-14; Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought*, pp. 9-10; K. Gouwens, 'What Posthumanism Isn't: On Humanism and Human Exceptionalism in the Renaissance', in J. Campana and S. Maisano (eds.), *Renaissance Posthumanism* (New York, 2016), p. 49.

broaden intellectual pursuits beyond theology, humanism remained deeply intertwined with Christianity. A central aim of Italian humanists was to reconcile classical, secular ideas with Christian doctrine.[38] To achieve this, humanists used classical texts to analyse and explain Christian ideals and the natural world, thereby integrating humanist thought with religious beliefs.[39] This work eventually inspired northern humanists, like Erasmus, in the sixteenth-century.[40]

Although Florence is often viewed as the centre of the Italian Renaissance, humanism flourished throughout the Italian peninsula.[41] Twelfth-century reproductions of Latin texts, likely used in schools, attest to early classical study across Italy.[42] By the fifteenth century, important humanists emerged from diverse regions, engaging in intellectual exchange across cities.[43] Universities were crucial in sustaining this movement, particularly Pavia, Bologna, Ferrara, and Padua.[44] The diffusion of humanist thought during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was shaped by a network of intellectual, cultural, and material exchanges that extended well beyond Italy. The end of the Hundred Years War and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, together with the rise of transnational trade, facilitated the movement of scholars, merchants, and diplomats who carried humanist ideals across Europe.[45] Italian universities, particularly Ferrara and Padua, became

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[38] C. Trinkaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Chicago, 1973).
[39] A. Hamilton, 'Humanists and The Bible', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 100.
[40] For instance, Lorenzo Valla's analysis of ancient Christian texts and his exposure of the Donation of Constantine as a forgery inspired Erasmus to publish the first complete Greek translation of the New Testament in 1516. For more on this, see Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning', pp. 81-2; D. S. Pfeiffer, 'The Peopling of Valla's *De Falso* (1440): Character Fiction at the Origin of Modern Philology', in D. S. Pfeiffer, *Authorial Personality and the Making of Renaissance Texts: The Force of Character* (Oxford, 2022), pp. 123-68l D. Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum Omne* (Basel, 1516). See also H. J. de Jonge, 'Novum Testamentum a Nobis Versum: The Essence of Erasmus' Edition of the New Testament', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 35/2 (1984), pp. 394-413.
[41] G. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (New York, 1969), p. 213.
[42] Black, 'Origins', pp. 40-1.
[43] Maxson, *Humanist World*, p. 19.
[44] P. F. Grendler, *Humanism, Universities, and Jesuit Education in Late Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 2022), pp. 212, 217-8, 236.
[45] M. McGlynn and K. R. Bartlett, *The Renaissance and Reformation in Northern Europe* (Toronto, 2014), p. xvi-xvii.

vital centres for the study and transmission of humanism, attracting students from across the continent who shared ideas before returning to their own regions.[46] By the sixteenth century, the spread of humanism had transformed institutions like Oxford, where scholars including William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre, and John Colet introduced the study of classical grammar, rhetoric, and moral philosophy.[47] Alongside these personal exchanges, the circulation of manuscripts and printed books reinforced the intellectual transformation. Figures like Lorenzo Valla, Agostino Dati, and Niccolò Perotti challenged the authority of the medieval Latin Vulgate and promoted a purer classical Latin that influenced scholarly communication and pedagogy.[48] Humanists like Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, and Poggio Bracciolini advanced this movement further through the creation of a distinct humanist script that aided the broader dissemination of texts.[49] Supported by patrons such as Pope Nicholas V and the ruling families of Ferrara, Milan, and Naples, vast libraries and educational institutions emerged to preserve and promote humanist learning.[50] By the early sixteenth century, these developments had established humanism as a defining intellectual force across Europe, reshaping academic traditions.[51]

Northern humanism, often termed Erasmian humanism after Desiderius Erasmus, emerged as the northern expression of Italian humanism, shaped by distinct political, social, and religious contexts.[52] Erasmus, born in Rotterdam in the late 1460s, received a classical

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[46] Grendler, *Universities*, pp. 104, 222.
[47] J. McConica, 'Thomas More as Humanist', in G. Logan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 22; R. J. Schoeck, 'Humanism in England,' in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, Volume 2, Humanism Beyond Italy* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), p. 7; D. Rush, 'English Humanism', in D. Rush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto, 2016), p. 71.
[48] J. R. Henderson, 'Valla's *Elegantiae* and the Humanist Attack on the *Ars Dictaminis*', *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 19/2 (2001), p. 260.
[49] M. Davies, 'Humanism in Script and Print in the Fifteenth Century', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 51.
[50] Davies, 'Humanism in Script', p. 52.
[51] C. Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 246.
[52] J. Parrish, 'Education, Erasmian Humanism and More's 'Utopia'', *Oxford Review of Education*, 36/5 (2010), p. 590.

education and travelled widely, fostering the spread of humanist ideals across Europe.[53] Unlike the more secular Italian model, northern humanism developed within a clerical framework because universities remained under Church influence and theologians frequently taught alongside humanists.[54] This close relationship between theology and classical learning distinguished it from Italy, where most humanists focused on secular subjects and rarely collaborated with theologians.[55] A central difference between Italian and northern humanism was their treatment of religion. Northern humanists regarded their scholarship as a devotional pursuit.[56] They valued ancient wisdom most when aligned with theological understanding.[57] This synthesis of faith and reason later informed the Reformation, as reformers like Luther and Zwingli used humanist principles to challenge Church authority.[58] Nevertheless, northern scholars preserved the *studia humanitatis*, producing new educational texts that engaged with classical authors, especially Aristotle, and emphasised mastery of Latin and Ciceronian rhetoric.[59] Leading northern humanists like Erasmus, Guillaume Budé, and Thomas More believed that humanistic education was vital for maintaining morality in public life.[60]

While both Italian and northern humanism emphasised the *studia humanitatis*, northern humanism placed more importance on integrating classical learning with Christian teachings. The concept of humanism evolved over time, with modern definitions diverging from their original association with the study of ancient languages and philosophy. In this thesis, 'humanism' refers specifically to the promotion of the *studia humanitatis* in fourteenth- to sixteenth-century

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[53] J. McConica, *Erasmus* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 4, 18-29.
[54] McGlynn and Bartlett, *Renaissance and Reformation*, p. xvi.
[55] Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning', pp. 92-3.
[56] Hamilton, 'Humanists and The Bible', pp.100-1; Parrish, 'Education', pp. 591-2.
[57] McGlynn and Bartlett, *Renaissance and Reformation*, p. xviii.
[58] Grendler, 'Humanism: Ancient Learning', p. 94.
[59] P. Mack, 'Humanist Rhetoric and Dialectic', in J. Kraye (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 90.
[60] Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature,' p. 246. For more on northern humanism in other European contexts, see Rabil *Renaissance Humanism Volume 2* and McGlynn and Bartlett, *Renaissance and Reformation*.

Italy, and the more religiously contextualised humanism of sixteenth-century England.

Timeline and survey of scholarship

This thesis is structured into three parts: the transmission of Italian ideas and adoption of Italian methods of expression in England, a survey of late medieval Italian and sixteenth-century English ideas about women, and an analysis of three English women's lives which reflected a classical inheritance from Italy. An important scholarly context for this thesis is the political, intellectual, and cultural connections that have already been recognised between Italy and England. This scholarship is discussed at length in Chapter One, which examines the transmission of ideas from Italy to England during the sixteenth century. The timeline and survey of scholarship immediately below explores the larger themes of this thesis: popular ideas about women, women as wives, and women's education in late medieval Florence and early modern England. This survey is by no means exhaustive, but it presents the main trends, arguments, and themes in the scholarship of women's studies in these periods.

Women in late medieval Florence

Until the mid-twentieth century, women in medieval Italian society were largely regarded as wives and mothers with limited roles beyond the domestic sphere.[61] The prevailing scholarly belief, often traced back to an observation by Grangier de Liverdes in 1610, claimed, 'in Florence, women are more enclosed than in any other part of Italy; they see the world only from small openings in their windows'.[62] In 1860, Jacob Burckhardt's influential work on the Italian Renaissance introduced the notion that women enjoyed equality with men, though

[61] Some early scholarship focused on the different roles, freedoms, and limitations of Italian wives throughout time. See, for example, P. Molmenti, *La dogaressa*, second edition (Turin, 1887). For the roles of the elite Venetian wives in the late medieval period, see pp. 195-223; 224-43; 244-77.
[62] S. Weddle, 'Women's Place in the Family and the Convent: A Reconsideration of Public and Private in Renaissance Florence', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55/2 (2001), p. 64.

he argued that their education and influence were framed largely in relation to men.[63] Burckhardt highlighted intellectual women like Vittoria Colonna and Isabella Gonzaga, but attributed their significance primarily to their connections with prominent male figures such as Castiglione, Michelangelo, and Bandello.[64] In 1897, W. H. Woodward agreed with Burckhardt that both men and women received humanist education, though he emphasised that girls were trained in ways that reinforced their future domestic roles.[65] Emmanuel-Pierre Rodocanachi, in 1907, expanded on this by exploring the roles of women throughout their lives and reaffirmed that although women participated in the Renaissance intellectually, their learning was more superficial than that of men.[66] That same year, Isidoro Del Lungo began a study of Florentine society through the lens of its women, although this approach did not gain widespread attention until the 1970s.[67] The scholarship of this period continued to view women's contributions through the prism of men's influence. William Boulting, in 1910, acknowledged the existence of female scholars but diminished their work, arguing it lacked the substance and value of their male counterparts.[68] In 1916, Mary Cannon challenged this view, citing numerous educated women to assert that they pursued education and engaged in classical discourse just as actively as men.[69] Cannon's work laid the foundation for a more inclusive understanding of women's roles in intellectual life.

The historical understanding of women's roles during the Italian Renaissance has evolved significantly over the past century, with scholars challenging traditional interpretations that restricted

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[63] Burckhardt, *Civilization,* pp. 395-6.
[64] Burckhardt, *Civilization*, pp. 385-6.
[65] W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators: 1400-1460* (Cambridge, 1897), p. 247.
[66] E. Rodocanachi, *La femme italienne à l'époque de la Renaissance: sa vie privée et mondaine, son influence sociale* (Paris, 1907), pp. 28-34.
[67] I. Del Lungo, *Women of Florence* (London, 1907).
[68] W. Boulting, *Woman in Italy: From the Introduction of the Chivalrous Service of Love to the Appearance of the Professional Actress* (North Yorkshire, 1910), p. 323.
[69] M. A. Cannon, *The Education of Women During the Renaissance* (Washington, D.C., 1916), p. 7.

women to the private domestic sphere. Initially, the Burckhardtian tradition emphasised the flourishing of humanism and intellectual freedom during the Renaissance but largely ignored or minimised the contributions of women. From the mid-twentieth century onward, historians began to reassess this narrative, exploring the multifaceted roles women played during this period. In 1948, Wallace K. Ferguson's study of the renaissance introduced new methods that challenged the Burckhardtian view.[70] In 1956, Ruth Kelso further challenged this view by arguing that women's education stifled individuality and primarily focused on chastity and marriage preparation, in contrast to the humanistic education men received.[71] In the 1970s, scholarship, such as that by Margaret L. King, further critiqued the Burckhardtian view by arguing that it was exceedingly rare for women to receive a humanist education, challenging the notion of equality in education.[72] No one challenged the Burckhardtian tradition more than Joan Kelly-Gadol, who argued that women, despite the intellectual and cultural advancements of the Renaissance, did not experience a renaissance in the same way as men.[73] She examined the social, political, and economic limitations imposed on women and suggested that these constraints significantly altered their experiences of the Renaissance. Her work spurred extensive scholarship in the following decades, with scholars looking more deeply into the complexities of women's lives during this period. Other scholars, like Joan Gibson, agreed with Kelly-Gadol, arguing that while some late medieval Italian women received humanist education, this primarily reinforced traditional gender roles, conditioning them for chastity and obedience, whereas men's education was more intellectually rigorous.[74]

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[70] W.K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, MA, 1948), p. 213.
[71] R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana, IL, 1956), p. 50.
[72] M. L. King, 'Thwarted Ambitions: Six Learned Women of the Italian Renaissance', *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 59 (1976), p. 281.
[73] J. Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in R. Bridenthal, C. Koonz, and S. Stuard (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, second edition, (Boston, MA, 1987), pp. 175-202.
[74] J. Gibson, 'Educating for Silence: Renaissance Women and the Language Arts', *Hypatia*, (4) 1989, p. 10.

In the late twentieth century, Ian MacLean investigated how perceptions of women were expressed, as well as the philosophical, political, medical, and religious reasons behind these perceptions.[75] Mary Beth Rose addressed how the traditional focus on women's domestic roles failed to capture the full complexity of their lives.[76] Renaissance conceptions of gender as a social construct rather than a fixed biological trait were also examined.[77] These views suggested that perceptions of femininity and masculinity were more fluid and learned than had been previously recognised. Samuel Cohn analysed women's experiences within legal systems, particularly their control over sexuality, and supported Kelly-Gadol's position that women were not equal to men, but added nuance by exploring how patriarchal systems were structured to control women's bodies and roles.[78] At the same time, Thomas Kuehn reinterpreted Kelly-Gadol's analysis, and suggested that her focus on individualism and modern Western ideas of patriarchy overlooked the relational nature of social personhood in Renaissance Italy, arguing that women's positions were not solely defined by dominance and submission but by more complex social relationships.[79] Judith Brown and Robert Davis also expanded the examination of women's roles in multiple areas, including the family, workforce, law, politics, and religion, and helped to dispel simplistic views of Renaissance women, demonstrating that women were active participants in the intellectual, cultural, and social fabric of the time.[80]

By 2000, the scholarly landscape had changed dramatically, as scholarship exploring women's contributions to religion, the arts, law,

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[75] I. MacLean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: a Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, 1980).
[76] M. Rose, *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Syracuse, NY, 1986), p. xiii.
[77] P. Joseph Benson, *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, PA, 1992).
[78] S. Cohn, *Women in the Streets: Essays on Sex and Power in Renaissance Italy* (Baltimore, MD, 1996).
[79] T. Kuehn, 'Understanding Gender Inequality in Renaissance Florence: Personhood and Gifts of Maternal Inheritance by Women', *Journal of Women's History*, 8 (1996), p. 59.
[80] J. C. Brown and R. C. Davis (eds.), *Gender and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Abingdon, 1998).

humanism, and the workforce stressed the active participation of women in shaping the Italian Renaissance, rather than simply being passive recipients of cultural change.[81] This expansion of scholarship continued and offered counter-narratives to Kelly-Gadol's argument. Saundra Weddle challenged the long-standing notion that women were confined to private lives in Renaissance Florence.[82] She argued that while women of ruling families were encouraged to remain out of the public eye to maintain familial honour, many women outside the ruling class engaged with public life in a variety of ways.[83] This argument highlighted the diversity of women's experiences during the Renaissance, further complicating the narrative of female confinement to domestic roles. Gaia Servadio argued that Renaissance women like Vittoria Colonna, Isabella d'Este, and Catherine de' Medici exemplified a 'new vision of womanhood'.[84] These women played key roles in shaping Renaissance culture, and their lives exemplified a more inclusive and empowering understanding of femininity. Servadio even suggested that the Renaissance itself could be seen as a 'feminine' movement, driven in part by the elevated status of women.[85] This perspective significantly broadened the scope of women's contributions during the period, in contrast to the more restrictive views proposed by Kelly-Gadol.

Scholars have increasingly emphasised the political and social power wielded by women during the Renaissance. Scholarship contested the idea that women were powerless in political roles, particularly challenging the notion that women in the Medici family, for example, held no real power. For instance, Natalie Tomas argued that these women, including Catherine de' Medici, were active political players who exercised significant influence in Florence, Rome, and

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[81] L. Panizza, *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society* (London, 2000); M. Rogers and P. Tinagli, *Women in Italy, 1350-1650: Ideals and Realities: A Sourcebook* (Manchester, 2006).
[82] Weddle, 'Women's Place', pp. 64-72.
[83] Weddle, 'Women's Place', p. 64.
[84] G. Servadio, *Renaissance Woman* (London, 2005), p. 1.
[85] Servadio, *Renaissance Woman*, p. 2.

beyond.[86] Similarly, Gabrielle Langdon examined the ways in which the Medici family's commissioning of portraits of women helped to project an idealised image of femininity that reinforced their power.[87] Letizia Arcangeli and Susanna Peyronel also examined how women like Paula Gonzaga and Bianca Maria Visconti navigated the political and social systems designed to oppress them.[88] Their contributions, alongside those of figures like Isabella d'Este and Lucrezia Tornabuoni, showcased the political, economic, and cultural roles women played in Renaissance Italy. These studies demonstrated that, despite the patriarchal structures in place, women from elite families could wield considerable political and social power.

Scholars have also examined marriage as a strategic tool for economic and political advancement. Women played a crucial role in this system, primarily as brides securing alliances and as wives expected to produce heirs for further matrimonial negotiations. While integral to the social fabric, their contributions were often undervalued. Scholarly analyses of tax records, legal statutes, household accounts, personal correspondence, and artistic representations have revealed the extent to which women's identities were shaped by their relationships with men—as daughters, wives, and mothers.[89] Marriage functioned as a mechanism for consolidating elite power. Institutional measures incentivised marriage and childbearing while also funding military campaigns.[90] Scholars like Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe have assessed how the regulation of marriage, wedding rituals, and associated legal structures represented its economic, political, and religious significance across different social strata in late medieval

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[86] N. R. Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (London, 2003).
[87] G. Langdon, *Medici Women: Portraits of Power, Love, and Betrayal from the Court of Duke Cosimo I* (Toronto, 2006 republished in 2018).
[88] L. Arcangeli and S. Peyronel, *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 2008).
[89] C. Klapisch-Zuber, *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, IL, 1985); S. Strocchia, 'Remembering the Family: Women, Kin, and Commemorative Masses in Renaissance Florence', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 42/4 (1989), pp. 635-54; M. L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago, IL, 1991).
[90] A. Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 29.

Florence.[91] Cristelle Baskins examined how visual and material culture reinforced prevailing notions of women's roles within marriage, reflecting humanist ideals of domesticity and gendered expectations.[92] Artistic representations of marriage ceremonies, dowry exchanges, and family portraits served not only as documentation but as ideological tools that reinforced social hierarchies and expectations of female obedience and fertility.

Scholars like Mary Hollingsworth have also questioned how the Medici's use of marriage as a tool for political dominance challenges the notion of their enlightened rule.[93] Rather than benevolent patrons, they pragmatically engineered unions to solidify their influence.[94] This demonstrates how marriage was essential to the stability of Florentine society, structuring alliances, and ensuring dynastic continuity.[95] Despite their pivotal role in maintaining the socio-political order, women's autonomy within these arrangements remained limited, as evidenced by the fate of widows who were often separated from their children and returned to their natal families for remarriage.[96] This practice further illustrates the transactional nature of marriage, where a woman's status was inextricably tied to her relationship with male authority figures.

Beyond marriage, scholarship has explored women as artistic patrons, subjects, and creators. While earlier studies acknowledged female poets and artists, academic interest in their contributions emerged more prominently in the late twentieth century.[97] Geraldine Johnson and Sara Matthews Grieco demonstrated that women occasionally attained a degree of independence in the art world, despite continued marginalisation.[98] The identification of numerous female

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[91] T. Dean and K. J. P Lowe, Marriage in *Italy, 1300-1650* (Cambridge, 2002).
[92] C. Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism, and Gender in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, 1998).
[93] M. Hollingsworth, *The Medici* (London, 2017).
[94] M. Hollingsworth, *Princes of the Renaissance* (London, 2021).
[95] Hollingsworth, *Princes*, pp. 19-20.
[96] Strocchia, 'Remembering the Family', p. 683.
[97] Burckhardt, *Civilization*, p. 396.
[98] G. A. Johnson and S. F. Matthews Grieco, *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy* (Cambridge, 1997).

artists operating during the Renaissance, as well as an examination of commissioned works, has provided insight into their artistic and patronage roles.[99] Nevertheless, their significant contributions were often overshadowed by their male counterparts, as societal perceptions continued to equate artistic genius with masculinity.[100]

Margaret King also established that women's engagement with art extended beyond creation to commissioning works that reflected their values and ambitions.[101] Patronage offered a means of asserting influence, as demonstrated by prominent figures who leveraged artistic commissions to consolidate power and display status. Sheila Ffolliott examined how female patrons left a visual record of their authority, often embedding subtle messages of personal and familial ambition within the imagery.[102] These works not only contributed to the broader artistic movements of the period but also challenged contemporary notions of gender roles by positioning women as influential tastemakers. Beyond the kinds of works commissioned by female patrons, scholars have examined the socio-economic conditions in which these women, like Isabella d'Este, Alfonsina Orsini, and Vittoria Colonna, operated.[103] Their patronage highlights the interconnectedness of gender, power, and artistic production, demonstrating that, even within restrictive social structures, women found avenues for influence and self-expression.

Since the early 2000s, scholarship has increasingly focused on the education and intellectual contributions of women in Renaissance Italy. While earlier studies, such as those by Burckhardt and Kelly-

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[99] F. H. Jacobs, *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa: Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge, 1997); P. Tinagli, *Women in Italian Renaissance Art: Gender, Representation, Identity* (Manchester, 1997).
[100] C. King, *Renaissance Women Patrons: Wives and Widows in Italy c. 1300-1550* (Manchester, 1998); K. McIver, *Wives, Widows, Mistresses, and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art and Patronage* (Farnham, 2012).
[101] King, *Renaissance Women Patrons,* pp. 1-18.
[102] S. Ffolliott, 'Wife, Widow, Nun, and Court Lady: Women Patrons of the Renaissance and Baroque', in V. Fortunati, J. Pomeroy, and C. Strinati (eds.), *Italian Women Artists from Renaissance to Baroque* (Milan, 2007), p. 31.
[103] S. E. Reiss and D. G. Wilkins, *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy* (Kirksville, MO, 2001); V. Fortunati, J. Pomeroy, and C. Strinati (eds.), *Italian Women Artists from Renaissance to Baroque* (Milan, 2007).

Gadol, concentrated on comparing women's education to men's, later research has examined how women were educated and how they made use of their learning. Scholars like Virginia Cox and Stefanie Solum have explored the experiences of Italian women writers such as Isotta Nogarola, Vittoria Colonna, Veronica Gambara, and Lucrezia Tornabuoni, highlighting the social and political conditions that allowed noblewomen to write and circulate their works, particularly within courts.[104] Sarah Gwyneth Ross focused on how elite women, including Laura Cereta, Helena Bembo, and Cassandra Fedele, published works advocating intellectual equality, expressing proto-feminist ideas which challenged traditional notions of gender rooted in the story of Eve.[105] Along with well-known female authors, Cox also explored the poetry of more obscure women, further emphasising their literary contributions.[106] Aileen Feng examined how Florentine women engaged with contemporary authors and intellectual movements, for example, linking the rise of Petrarchan poetry with increasing numbers of educated women.[107] Women like Cassandra Fedele, Costanza Varano, and Isotta Nogarola adopted this well-established literary form to gain legitimacy and assert their intellectual presence.[108] Brian Richardson explored women's ability to create and publish books, finding that while book production remained largely the domain of the elite, well-connected women actively engaged in intellectual and literary discourse, whether by writing, circulating manuscripts, or collecting books.[109]

Taken together, these studies have reshaped understandings of women's roles in late medieval Florence, particularly in relation to

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[104] V. Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy*, *1400-1650* (Baltimore, MD, 2008); S. Solum, *Women, Patronage, and Salvation in Renaissance Florence: Lucrezia Tornabuoni and the Chapel of the Medici Palace* (Farnham, 2015).
[105] S. G. Ross*, The Birth of Feminism: Woman As Intellect in Renaissance Italy and England* (Cambridge, MA, 2009).
[106] V. Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore, MD, 2013).
[107] A. Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto, 2017).
[108] Feng, *Writing Beloveds*.
[109] B. Richardson, *Women and the Circulation of Texts in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, 2020).

marriage, family, the arts, and education. Scholars emphasise that marriage functioned as a political and economic tool, positioning women as assets in securing alliances and sustaining elite family legacies. Despite societal constraints, women found ways to exert influence, particularly through literature and the arts. The historiography has shifted from portraying women as passive participants in Florentine culture to recognising their active engagement in intellectual, artistic, and political spheres. By examining women's writings, patronage, and education, scholars have illuminated the complexities of their lived experiences, challenged traditional narratives, and broadened understandings of gender dynamics in medieval Italy.

Women in sixteenth-century England

The scholarly exploration of women's lives and education in early modern England dates back to the early twentieth century. Foster Watson examined the influence of prominent educators, such as Juan Luis Vives and Thomas More, on the education of royal and noble women.[110] Chilton Latham Powell analysed how conduct manuals shaped perceptions of women and influenced marriage laws.[111] In the mid-twentieth century, scholars like Carroll Camden began to look more deeply at women's education and their roles as wives, arguing that while literacy was permitted, education primarily reinforced obedience and virtue.[112] Ruth Kelso expanded this argument, asserting that Renaissance women across Europe were educated to serve as submissive counterparts to men.[113]

In 1975, Gerda Lerner posited that women's history evolved through two phases: a compensatory phase that sought to include women in historical narratives, followed by an analytical phase

[110] F. Watson, *Vives and the Renascence Education of Women* (London, 1912).
[111] C. L. Powell, *English Domestic Relations, 1487-1653* (New York, 1917).
[112] C. Camden, *The Elizabethan Woman* (Houston, TX, 1952).
[113] R. Kelso, *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana, IL, 1956).

examining their experiences and contributions.[114] Around the same time, Kelly-Gadol published her argument that women in Renaissance Italy did not experience a 'renaissance,' prompting scholars to investigate whether women in other European regions, including England, faced similar constraints.[115] Since then, studies of sixteenth-century English women have increasingly explored intersections between religion, marriage, and education, focusing on how these factors shaped women's broader experiences. Scholarship from the 1980s onward has looked at how education prepared women for marriage and the extent to which it reinforced or challenged gender constraints.

Numerous edited collections have provided broader analyses of English women's lives. Mary Prior examined their experiences across diverse areas such as fertility, widowhood, religion, and labour, moving beyond elite perspectives to present a more nuanced social history.[116] Kate Aughterson explored perceptions of women through religion, biological theories, conduct literature, and proto-feminist writings, demonstrating that attitudes toward women were varied, often contradictory, and sometimes subversive.[117] Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford also offered comprehensive studies of women's lives from birth to death, analysing themes including law, religion, marriage, friendship, work, and politics and underscoring that, while England was dominated by a patriarchal framework, women's lives were complex and determined by their own desires and ambitions rather than rigid societal constraints.[118]

One of the foundational works in this field is Merry Wiesner-Hanks's *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, first published in 1977 and updated in 2019. Drawing from Kelly-Gadol's argument,

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[114] G. Lerner, 'Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges', *Feminist Studies*, 3 (1975), pp. 5-14.
[115] Kelly-Gadol, 'Renaissance?', p. 176.
[116] M. Prior, *Women in English Society, 1500-1800* (Abingdon, 1985).
[117] K. Aughterson, *Renaissance Woman: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England* (Abingdon, 1995).
[118] S. Mendelson and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford, 2000).

Wiesner-Hanks argued that Renaissance women faced systemic oppression across law, economy, education, and marriage.[119] She also highlighted that some women managed to navigate and challenge these constraints, illustrating that female authority existed despite societal limitations.[120] Subsequent scholarship has built upon these foundations, continuing to refine and expand the study of women's lives in sixteenth-century England.

Women's education in early modern England

In the 1980s, David Cressy investigated literacy during the early modern period. He argued that the ability to sign one's name was a reliable indicator of literacy rates over time, and he found that between 1500 and 1600, the percentage of women who could sign their name increased from one percent to eight percent.[121] Cressy's methods and conclusions have been both contested and built upon by subsequent scholars. Betty Travitsky, for example, examined the writings of over 100 English women, arguing that, while this number suggests an increase in access to education, it does not reflect a period of intellectual freedom.[122] Travitsky contended that although the spread of humanism did lead to increased literacy among women, their education primarily prepared them for roles as wives and mothers, rather than fostering intellectual autonomy, echoing Kelly-Gadol's perspective.[123]

Other scholars expanded this research. Retha Warnicke explored how humanism influenced the education of women in sixteenth-century England, focusing particularly on the wives of Henry VIII and the daughters of Thomas More, highlighting the intellectual achievements of these women while also discussing the societal perceptions of women during this period.[124] Warnicke also argued that

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[119] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender.*
[120] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, p. 14.
[121] D. Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980).
[122] B. Travitsky, *The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance* (Westport, CT, 1981).
[123] Travitsky, *Paradise of Women*.
[124] R. M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, CT, 1983).

acceptance of women's humanistic education was widespread in the first half of the sixteenth century but diminished during the Reformation, disappearing entirely by 1603.[125] Alice Friedman further developed this idea by analysing the gendered differences in education during this time, and finding that humanism was introduced amid significant social and economic change, and while education was seen as a means of upward mobility, girls, especially from noble and gentry backgrounds, were often taught only the basic literacy skills needed for their expected roles as wives and mothers.[126] Margaret Hannay and Mark Moran supported this view, arguing that women's education during the Reformation was primarily limited to religious study and translation and that humanist education was viewed as a tool for power, which was largely denied to women in comparison to men.[127] Building upon the work of Kelly-Gadol, Miriam Balmuth asserted that during the early sixteenth century, humanist education for women in England was more inclusive, particularly among the upper classes.[128] As Puritanism gained influence by the century's end, women's education became more focused on enabling them to read the Bible, limiting their intellectual development.[129]

Scholars also focused on women's education and female writers. Sarah Gwyneth Ross examined the lives of accomplished women writers, such as Margaret Roper and the Cooke sisters, from families that valued female education, and argued that while these women did not advocate social, political, or legal equality, they did promote intellectual equality and challenged the belief that women were inherently less capable of intellectual thought than men.[130] Louise Schleiner examined the ways in which women could gain recognition as writers, arguing that reading circles, often composed of women

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[125] Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance*, p. 4.
[126] A. T. Friedman, 'The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England', *History of Education Quarterly*, 25 (1985), pp. 57-70.
[127] M. P. Hannay and M. P. Moran, *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH, 1985).
[128] M. Balmuth, 'Female Education in 16th & 17th Century England: Influences, Attitudes, and Trends', *Canadian Women's Studies*, 9 (1988), pp. 17-20.
[129] Balmuth, 'Female Education', p. 19.
[130] Ross, *Birth of Feminism*, p. 319.

connected to nobility, played a significant role in circulating women's works.[131] While the education provided to women in this period, especially among the nobility, often aimed to prepare them for domestic life, it also afforded some opportunities for intellectual engagement.[132]

By the 1980s and 1990s, historical consensus generally agreed that humanism created educational opportunities for women with connections to wealth and nobility, but that it still prioritised training them to be obedient wives and mothers. As religious concerns increased during the Reformation, educational opportunities for women increasingly centred on the Bible and religious texts. Investigations of women's literacy continued. James Daybell, for instance, challenged Cressy's assertion that the ability to sign one's name accurately reflected literacy levels. Daybell argued that signatures alone were inadequate indicators of literacy, and he examined letters written by women in Tudor England as a more reliable gauge.[133] His analysis of over 3,000 letters, written by over 650 women between 1540 and 1603, revealed that women in elite, mercantile, and professional groups demonstrated higher literacy and writing skills than previously acknowledged.[134] Daybell's research also showed how women used letter writing for self-fashioning and self-exploration, thus revealing a more complex relationship to literacy.[135] Building upon Daybell's work, other scholars contended that literacy rates among women in early modern England cannot be accurately determined through signature analysis alone, and argued that works such as letters, legal documents, translations, and books written for

[131] L. Schleiner, *Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (Bloomington, IN, 1994).
[132] Schleiner, *Women Writers*.
[133] J. Daybell, 'Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England', *History of Education*, 34 (2005), p. 695.
[134] Daybell, 'Interpreting Letters', p. 698; J. Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford, 2006).
[135] J. Daybell, 'Women's Letters, Literature and Conscience in Sixteenth-Century England', *Renaissance Studies*, 23/4 (2009), pp. 532-3.

women, such as marriage and conduct manuals, are better indicators of women's literacy.[136]

Marriage in early modern England

In the 1970s, Lawrence Stone's foundational work explored marriage and family life in early modern England, looking at the complexities of courting rituals, child-rearing trends, and the institution of marriage itself.[137] Stone argued that marriage during this period was a strategic tool for securing and enhancing social, political, and economic status.[138] Building upon Stone's work, Barbara Harris examined the marriage of Mary Tudor, sister to Henry VIII, and Charles Brandon as a case study of aristocratic arranged marriages.[139] While she acknowledged the economic transaction aspect of marriage, Harris criticised Stone for overlooking the subjugation women faced during these unions. By analysing personal letters and exploring instances of women challenging their marital arrangements, Harris contended that the preservation of gender hierarchy was as important a goal in these marriages as economic or political advancement.[140] While her argument is valuable, it is arguably influenced by modern feminist perspectives, potentially misrepresenting how sixteenth-century women may have perceived their circumstances. While many women undoubtedly disapproved of their marriages, it is an anachronistic mistake to assume that all women in arranged unions felt oppressed by them.

Additional scholarship argued that women were active participants in negotiating and securing marriage alliances, patronage,

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[136] M. W. Ferguson and M. Suzuki, 'Women's Literacies and Social Hierarchy in Early Modern England', *Literature Compass*, 12/11 (2015), pp. 575-90. Work has also been done on Italian women's literacy. For example, see L. Miglio*, Governare l'alfabeto: Donne, scrittura e libri nel medioevo* (Rome, 2008); C. Frova, 'Maestre e scolare: tracce di percorsi scolastici di donne d'Italia nel tardo medioevo e primo rinascimento', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, 131/2 (2019), pp. 285-95.
[137] L. Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London, 1977).
[138] Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, p. 37.
[139] B. Harris, 'Power, Profit, and Passion: Mary Tudor, Charles Brandon, and the Arranged Marriage in Early Tudor England', *Feminist Studies*, 15 (1989), pp. 59-88.
[140] Harris, 'Power, Profit, and Passion', p. 84.

and courtly connections. While acknowledging that opportunities to negotiate, operate independently, and obtain influence within the worlds of matchmaking, patronage, and royal courts were less common for women than for men, Barbara Harris emphasised that they did exist.[141] Diana O'Hara provided more extensive analysis of marriage arrangements in Tudor England, revealing that they were far more complex and detailed than previously recognised.[142] Through the study of legal and church records, she demonstrated how factors such as gift-giving, familial pressure, the involvement of marriage brokers, and dowries played significant roles in the marriage process for both elite and non-elite individuals.[143] Other scholars focused on specific women. Retha Warnicke reevaluated the historical condemnation of six Tudor women—Anne Boleyn, Katherine Howard, Anne Seymour, Lettice Knollys, Jane More, and Alice More—by examining the attitudes toward women who married above their station and the risks they faced if their powerful husbands fell from favour.[144] Kimberly Schutte studied noblewomen who remarried after widowhood, such as Margaret Bourchier, Marjory Golding, and Frances Brandon, and argued that these women often had greater authority in their second marriages by choosing husbands below their social rank to exercise authority and gain some degree of freedom within the social order.[145] Collectively, these scholars have shown that while marriage in Tudor England was undoubtedly a patriarchal institution, elite women played active roles in securing matches and navigating social mobility.

Scholars have also examined how women were perceived in England. Linda Woodbridge analysed representations of women in English literature from 1540 to 1620, revealing how fictional

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[141] B. Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *The Historical Journal*, 33/2 (1990), pp. 259-81.
[142] D. O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint: Rethinking the Making of Marriage in Tudor England* (Manchester, 2000).
[143] O'Hara, *Courtship and Constraint.*
[144] R. M. Warnicke, *Wicked Women of Tudor England: Queens, Aristocrats, Commoners* (New York, 2012).
[145] K. Schutte, 'Marrying Out in the Sixteenth Century: Subsequent Marriages of Aristocratic Women in the Tudor Era', *Journal of Family History*, 38/1 (2013), pp. 3-16.

portrayals both mirrored and shaped societal views of real women.[146] Joan Larsen Klein focused on widely circulated writings about women from 1500 to 1640, arguing that connections between religion and humanism contributed significantly to contemporary ideas about women's roles and behaviour.[147] Patricia Crawford explored how women practiced and understood religion, concluding that they were able to accept and transcend prescribed beliefs about their inferiority.[148] Amy Louise Erickson challenged traditional views on women's property rights, showing that from the late sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries, women had a more significant role in property management and ownership than previously acknowledged, despite restrictive legal frameworks.[149] Carole Levin and Patricia Sullivan examined the rhetoric and strategies employed by powerful women such as Anne Boleyn, Anne Askew, Elizabeth I, and Elizabeth Cary, revealing the negative and pervasive views of women who challenged prescribed gender roles, while also uncovering widespread anxiety about women surpassing men in political, literary, and social spheres.[150] Expanding on Harris's ideas, Daybell explored women as political thinkers and participants in legal and political matters.[151] Though women have often been perceived as less influential than men in politics, Daybell argued that women were adept at wielding political power in private, familial, and courtly contexts, where their influence was less visible but no less significant.[152]

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[146] L. Woodbridge, *Women and the English Renaissance: Literature and the Nature of Womankind, 1540-1620* (Brighton, 1984).
[147] J. Larsen Klein, *Daughters, Wives, and Widows: Writings by Men about Women and Marriage in England, 1500-1640* (Urbana, IL, 1992).
[148] P. Crawford, *Women and Religion in England: 1500-1720* (Abingdon, 1993).
[149] A. L. Erickson, *Women and Property: In Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 1995).
[150] C. Levin and P. Sullivan, *Political Rhetoric, Power, and Renaissance Women* (Albany, NY, 1995).
[151] J. Daybell, *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Farnham, 2004).
[152] Daybell, *Women and Politics*, pp. 1-3.

The argument

The lives of elite early modern English women have been studied extensively for decades, though not exhaustively. Unless scholars wish to cease studying these women altogether, new approaches must be employed to learn more about their lives. Examining how Europeans engaged with one another during the period has immense scholarly value, and this thesis shows how women fit into this aspect of early modern history. The English appreciation of Italian culture is an area which has received some scholarly attention, but it has not been investigated exhaustively. Michele Campopiano and Helen Fulton examined Anglo-Italian cultural relations in the Middle Ages and from the fourteenth through nineteenth centuries.[153] This thesis focuses this examination on the sixteenth century specifically and prioritises how women were affected by this cultural connection. Kenneth R Bartlett examined cultural and political implications of English students, Marian exiles, and gentleman in Italy during the mid sixteenth century.[154] Michael Wyatt has examined the presence of Italians and the dissemination of their language and culture in Tudor England in a broad sense.[155] This thesis builds upon these contributions by considering how elite women were affected by these cultural, linguistic, political, and religious connections.

Sarah Gwyneth Ross and Pamela Benson have examined the literary and intellectual experiences of Italian Renaissance and Tudor women independently but alongside each other, and this thesis builds on these foundational works to establish deeper connections between Italian ideas and English women's education and experiences.[156] The

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[153] M. Campopiano and H. Fulton (eds.), *Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations in the Later Middle Ages* (York, 2018); A. Yarrington, S. Villani, and J. Kelly (eds.), *Travels and Translations: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions* (Boston, MA, 2018).
[154] K. R. Bartlett, *The English in Italy 1525-1558: A Study in Culture and Politics* (Geneva, 1991).
[155] M. Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (Cambridge, 2005).
[156] Ross' *Birth of Feminism* examines the expansion of education for early modern Italian and English women but does not examine how educational practices established in Italy affected English women. This thesis does. Benson's *The Invention of the Renaissance Woman* examines how Italian and English writers discussed women in similar ways from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries but

ways in which women participated in or benefitted from the promotion of Italian ideas in England have not been explored at all in such explicit terms. For instance, how humanism contributed to women's education in England has been explored by some scholars, but the impact of humanism on English education has never been examined as a result of the impact of Italian culture in England. This thesis offers the first sustained analysis of sixteenth-century English women through the lens of Italian cultural inheritance. It asserts that the lives of elite women were significantly affected by the reception, adaptation, and integration of Italianate ideas within England. By foregrounding these transnational influences, this study constructs a more nuanced and expansive portrait of these women's experiences, situating them firmly within the broader currents of European history. Placing the English case in dialogue with the Italian context challenges the insularity of traditional scholarship and calls for a more interconnected, cross-cultural approach to the study of women in the early modern period.

The structure of this thesis follows a progression from the wider transmission of Italian ideas to England to the ways these ideas shaped the experiences of elite English women. Chapter One examines the migration of both Italian people and ideas to England. This is foundational to the central argument that Florentine intellectual traditions influenced English conceptions of elite women. Chapter Two establishes prevailing ideas about women in late medieval Florence and sixteenth-century England. First, it examines six texts by influential Italian, male humanists who used classical female figures to define contemporary gender roles. Then, it analyses six texts by sixteenth-century English men that followed the same pattern. While the chapter does not claim that English ideas on women were entirely derived from Florence, it argues that humanistic practices originating there contributed to the expression of these ideas. Building upon this

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does not discuss how the Italian works influenced the depictions of women in England, which the thesis does explicitly.

foundation, Chapters Three, Four, and Five explore how English humanist theories on women influenced the lives of three women: Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney. This thesis demonstrates that the experiences of sixteenth-century English women were affected by the transmission of ideas, culture, and practices from Italy—an area of historical inquiry where women have been largely overlooked. Rather than seeking to overturn existing understandings of elite early modern women, this study expands the scope of scholarship, highlighting their active participation in this intellectual and cultural transference.

Chapter One: Italian Ideas in Sixteenth-Century England

This chapter explores how English people encountered Italians and their ideas during the early modern era. In order to demonstrate how Italian ideas affected the lives and works of Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney, it is crucial to first prove that these ideas existed in England and explain how they arrived there. Without proof that Italian ideas permeated English society, it is nearly impossible to prove that Margaret, Anne, and Mary engaged with them. This chapter provides vital context for the time and place that the three women who are the focus of this thesis operated within. A significant Italian presence in England—comprised of merchants, courtiers, political and religious figures, artists, and language instructors—contributed to various aspects of English life. By analysing the roles Italians played in the economic, political, religious, cultural, and intellectual spheres, this chapter identifies three key avenues through which English society engaged with Italian ideas: the private ownership of books by Italian authors, the influence of Italian literature on English writing, and the adoption of the *studia humanitatis* in English education. This examination reveals that the interaction between English and Italian culture was profound, significantly contributing to English society and thought, particularly in areas such as literature, education, and intellectual life.

Italians in England

In the fifteenth century, multiple Italian communities consisting of merchants, artists, humanists, bankers, and ecclesiastics emerged in England.[1] By the sixteenth century, there was a vast network of Italian trade and finance in England, operated mainly by Florentines.[2] There

[1] M. Wyatt, *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (Cambridge, 2005), p. i. Another relevant work on Anglo-Italian relations in England is B. Fuga and A. Petrina, *Moralizing the Italian Marvellous in Early Modern England* (Abingdon, 2024). A broader work about immigrants in England during the early modern period is N. Das (ed.*), Lives in Transit in Early Modern England: Identity and Belonging* (Amsterdam, 2021).

[2] C. M. Sicca and L. A. Waldman, 'Introduction', in C. M. Sicca and L. A. Waldman (eds.), *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors* (New Haven, CT,

was a large market for English wool in Florence, but in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, difficulties with the ports in Pisa and Venice, England's rapidly developing trade with the Ottoman Empire, and advances with English production of luxurious cloth put a strain on Florence's acquiring and control over the sale of English wool.[3] The Florentine merchants living in England, though, had much better success. Cinzia Maria Sicca argues that the writings of the Italian painter Giorgio Vasari reveal an extensive network of Florentine merchants in England and a massive commercialisation of Florentine goods like jewellery, furniture, textiles, pottery, and small-scale sculptures during the mid-sixteenth century.[4] Italian merchants were absolutely essential to the English economy.[5] They were so deeply embedded within it, that the Italian words for gold thread (*ora filado*) and silk (*ceta*) were commonly used and widely recognised among merchants across England.[6] English elites relied on Italian business for exotic goods and fashions, and because of these contacts Henry VIII was labelled the best-dressed sovereign in the world.[7] English merchants also highly respected and emulated Italian business practices.[8] During the reign of Henry VIII, the knowledge and adoption of Italian language, customs, literature, art, and fashion was essential in acquiring a reputation for elegance and refinement at court and in high London society.[9]

2012), p. 10. D. Hay and J. Law, *Italy in the Age of the Renaissance, 1380-1530* (London, 1989), p. 43.

[3] P. Laven, *Renaissance Italy, 1464-1534* (London, 1966), pp. 79-80.

[4] C. M. Sicca, 'Consumption and Trade of Art Between Italy and England in the First Half of the Sixteenth Century: the London House of the Bardi and Cavalcanti Company', *Renaissance Studies*, 16/ 2 (2002), p. 163.

[5] G. B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy, First Volume, The Middle Ages (to 1525)* (Rome, 1954), p. 608.

[6] H. Bradley, ''Saluti da Londra': Italian Merchants in the City of London in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries', in M. Campopiano and H. Fulton (eds.), *Anglo-Italian Cultural Relations in the Later Middle Ages* (York, 2018), pp. 103-4.

[7] S. Gunn, 'Anglo-Florentine Contacts in the Age of Henry VIII: Political and Social Contacts', in C. M. Sicca and L. A. Waldman (eds.), *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors* (New Haven, CT, 2012), p. 21.

[8] Laven, *Renaissance Italy*, pp. 106, 253.

[9] S. Brigden, 'Thomas Wyatt Among the Florentines', *The English Historical Review*, 134/571 (2019), p. 1405.

Henry VIII was not the only English monarch to recognise the benefits of Italian culture. Italians played an active role in the English court and political and commercial scenes throughout the period. As early as the 1370s, Venetian merchants were being officially recognised in England, but in the 1490s they were given more responsibility in England when the Venetian government tasked them with convincing Henry VII to join the Holy League, at which they were successful.[10] Henceforth, the goals of Venetians operating in England became more diplomatic, and the political involvement of Italians in England expanded. The accounts of the Venetian ambassadors reported the goings on at court as well as the daily lives and customs of normal workers who comprised much of the population, demonstrating that they gained exposure to English society at various levels. Venetian ambassadors were also required to complete reports, called *relazioni*, after each of their diplomatic missions in England. Although there are some flaws in the findings of the ambassadors, like their occasional inability to speak English and the English distrust of foreigners they sometimes faced, historians still use their accounts as some of the most important evidence of the Italian experience at the English court.[11]

Political involvement of Italians in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century England stretched beyond ambassadors. Many Italians were assigned important political and religious roles in Tudor England, which gave them direct access to the ruling monarch. Lewis Einstein long ago pointed out that the Italian presence at royal courts was fashionable all across Europe, including in England.[12] In 1495, Henry VII appointed Pietro Carmeliano, an Italian who had resided in England for fourteen years, as his Latin Secretary, later naming him King's Chaplain in 1500 and Archdeacon of Gloucester in 1511.[13]

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[10] Wyatt, *Italian Encounter,* p. 20.
[11] For a fuller discussion, see F. de Vivo, 'How to Read Venetian *Relazioni*', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 34/1-2 (2011), pp. 25-59.
[12] L. Einstein, *The Italian Renaissance in England: Studies* (New York, 1902), p. 190.
[13] D. Carlson, 'The Occasional Poetry of Pietro Carmeliano', *Avenum*, 61/3 (1987), p. 495.

Carmeliano later served as Henry VIII's tutor during the French campaigns in 1513.[14] Another notable Italian, Francesco Piccolomini, became the first Cardinal Protector of England in 1492.[15] He was succeeded by five Italians, including Giulio de' Medici (later Pope Clement VII) and Lorenzo Campeggio. Campeggio, also Bishop of Salisbury, advised Henry VIII on his divorce from Catherine of Aragon but, due to his papal and imperial ties, failed to secure the annulment.[16] Girolamo Ghinucci, another Italian cleric, advised Henry on the divorce and served as Bishop of Worcester from 1522 until his removal in 1535.[17] Ghinucci was one of four Italians who held the position of Bishop of Worcester between 1497 and 1535.[18] Ghinucci's nephew, Augustine de Augustinis, worked as a physician and occasional spy for Cardinal Wolsey before becoming Henry VIII's physician-in-ordinary.[19] These appointments reflect the significant but precarious roles Italians played in Tudor England's political and ecclesiastical affairs. Even after Henry VIII was excommunicated from the Catholic Church, Italians were important to the religious landscape in England. For instance, Peter Martyr Vermigli, an Italian Protestant, fled from Italy and was invited to teach theology at Oxford by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, though he often faced hostility there.[20] Aloisio Schivenoglia, who lived in England for a long time and was the secretary of the prominent Catholic politician Thomas Tresham, was an active participant in the Westminster Conference of 1559 which shaped religion during the reign of Elizabeth I and led to the establishment of

[14] Carlson, 'Pietro Carmeliano', p. 495.
[15] Piccolomini became Pope Pius III in 1503. S. J. May, 'Establishing the Tudor Dynasty: The Role of Francesco Piccolomini in Rome as First Cardinal Protector of England', *Royal Studies Journal*, 4/2 (2017), p. 103.
[16] T. F. Mayer, 'Campeggi [Campeggio], Lorenzo (1471/2–1539), diplomat and bishop of Salisbury', *ODNB*.
[17] A. F. Pollard, *Henry VIII* (London, 1919), pp. 568-9.
[18] K. Down, 'The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester Under the Italian Bishops, 1497-1535', *Midland History*, 20/1 (1995), p. 1.
[19] E. A. Hammond, 'Doctor Augustine, Physician to Cardinal Wolsey and King Henry VIII', *Medical History*, 19/3 (1975), p. 236.
[20] A. Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535–c.1585* (Burlington, VT, 2008), pp. 103-4. For more on Vermigli in England, see Chapters Four and Five in this work (pp. 81-102, 103-24 respectively).

the Elizabethan *Book of Common Prayer*.[21] Italians also still held positions at the English court after the Reformation. Giovanni Battista Castiglione was the Italian tutor of Princess Elizabeth when she was a child.[22] In 1544 he was made the Master of the Italian Tongue at the court of Henry VIII.[23] When Elizabeth became queen, she made him Groom of her Privy Chamber.[24] An Italian named Giulio Borgarucci became one of Elizabeth's court physicians in 1562 and was promoted to Physician of the Royal Household by 1573.[25] Petruccio Ubaldini, who had served as a soldier for Henry VIII and Edward VI, occasionally worked as a secretary for Elizabeth I and found consistent work at her court as a translator and editor of Italian books and teacher of the Italian language.[26] Most of Elizabeth's court musicians were from Italy, as well.[27]

While English interest in Italian art was never as extensive as it was in French or Dutch art, as Jonathon Woolfson claims, it still had a place, especially during the reign of Henry VIII.[28] Maurice Howard argues that architecture in the Italian Renaissance style, rather than painting or sculpture, was the more influential visual art form in Tudor

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[21] M. Bellorini, 'Da Londra a Mantova: Immagini Di Vita e Di Cultura Inglese Nella Corrispondenza Di Aloisio Schivenoglia', in S. Rossi (ed.), *Studi Di Letteratura Inglese e Americana* (Milan, 1980), p. 57.

[22] M. Bellorini, 'Giovan Battista Castiglione, Consigliere Di Elisabetta I', in S. Rossi (ed.), *Contributi Dell'istituto Di Filologia Moderna, Serie Inglese* (Milan, 1974), p. 115.

[23] A. Petrina, ''Perfit readiness': Elizabeth Learning and Using Italian', in C. Bajetta, G. Coatalen, and J. Gibson (eds.), *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence: Letters, Rhetoric and Politics* (Basingstoke, 2014), pp. 107-9. Castiglione also gave Italian lessons to others, including Edward Courtenay, Earl of Devon, who produced English translations of Italian texts by Benedetto da Mantova. K. R. Bartlett, 'Travel and Translation: The English and Italy in the Sixteenth Century', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 14 (1996), p. 497.

[24] W. Tighe, 'Familia Reginae: The Privy Court', in S. Doran & N. Jones (eds.), *The Elizabethan World* (London, 2013), p. 181.

[25] M. Bellorini, 'Un Medico Alla Corte Di Elisabetta: Giulio Borgarucci', *English Miscellany,* 19 (1968), p. 251.

[26] G. Iamartino, 'Under Italian Eyes: Petruccio Ubaldini's Verbal Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I', in A. Petrina and L. Tosi (eds.), *Representations of Elizabeth I in Early Modern Culture* (London, 2011), pp. 194-5. An older but reliable work is G. Pellegrini, *Un fiorentino alla corte d'Inghilterra nel Cinquecento: Petruccio Ubaldini.*(Turin, 1967). Also see C. H. Clough, 'Ubaldini, Petruccio', *ODNB*.

[27] Wyatt, *Italian Encounter*, p. 16.

[28] J. Woolfson, 'Renaissance Intersections: The Arts of Italy and Early Tudor Visual Experience', *Visual Resources*, 36/1 (2020), p. 4.

England.[29] During his reign, Henry VII frequently employed two distinguished Italian sculptors, Benedetto a Maiano and Guido Mazzoni, and built a hospital in the style of the Santa Maria Nuova in Florence.[30] He also commissioned Florentine sculptor Pietro Torrigiani to create the tomb of his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, and Torrigiani was later hired by Henry VIII to design and build the tomb of Henry VII and Elizabeth of York.[31] Torrigiani, who was a student at the Academy of Lorenzo de Medici in Florence alongside Michelangelo, found success in England in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Like most Italian artists living in England, of which there were many according to Cinzia Maria Sicca, Torrigiani was first brought to England by Florentine merchants already living there and for whom he had already completed small scale works.[32] One of Torrigiani's assistants, Antonio Toto, came to England from Florence around 1519 and was appointed Serjeant Painter at the court of Henry VIII in 1543. Bartolomeo Penni came to England about ten years after Toto and had a successful career as a court artist during the reign of Henry VIII. After Torrigiani's death, Benedetto da Rovezzano and Giovanni de Benedetto di Maiano, whom Torregiani recruited from Tuscany, worked on Cardinal Wolsey's tomb, which was later appropriated by Henry VIII.[33] Rovezzano worked closely with Thomas Cromwell on the tomb.[34] Another Florentine sculptor, Baccio Bandinelli, was later commissioned for Henry VIII's tomb.[35] Scholars remain divided on the extent of Tudor engagement with Italian art and

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[29] M. Howard, *The Early Tudor Country House: Architecture and Politics 1490-1550* (London, 1987), p. 122.
[30] E. Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', in E. Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (New Haven, CT, 2003), p. 32.
[31] Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', p. 32.
[32] C. M. Sicca, 'Vasari's *Vite* and Italian Artists in Sixteenth-Century England', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 9 (2013), p. 4.
[33] A. Darr, 'Pietro Torrigiani and His Sculpture in Henrician England: Sources and Influences', in C. M. Sicca & L. A. Waldman (eds.), *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors* (New Haven, CT, 2012), p. 73.
[34] D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life* (London, 2018), p. 42.
[35] G. Gentilini and T. Mozzati, "142 Life-size Figures . . . with the King on Horseback': Baccio Bandinelli's Mausoleum for Henry VIII', in C. M. Sicca & L. A. Waldman (eds.), *The Anglo-Florentine Renaissance: Art for the Early Tudors* (New Haven, CT, 2012), p. 203.

artists after the Reformation. While some contend that such patronage declined, others argue for a growing sophistication in artistic appreciation and continued royal interest in Italian masters, even as Elizabeth I ultimately rejected the Italian Renaissance style for political and representational reasons.[36]

Some, like Edward Chaney, have argued that, after the Reformation, Tudor patronage of Italian artists, art, and architecture fell into decline.[37] Others, like Tatiana String, argue that there was 'an emerging sophistication in art appreciation' towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII made evident by writings of English humanists such as Thomas Elyot.[38] John Izon argues that in the later 1530s Henry VIII was frequently sending for masters of painting, tapestry work, and music from Italy and France.[39] Queen Elizabeth I is reported to have declared Italians the best artists, although when it came to having her own portraits commissioned, Andrew and Catherine Belsey argue, she did not select the Italian Renaissance style of painting because she felt it could not sufficiently convey the image of power she wished to express.[40]

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[37] Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', p. 32.

[38] T. String, 'The Concept of 'Art' in Henrician England', *Art History*, 32/2 (2009), p. 293.

[39] J. Izon, 'Italian Musicians at the Tudor Court', *The Musical Quarterly*, 44/3 (1958), p. 332.

[40] A. Belsey and C. Belsey, 'Icons of Divinity: Portraits of Elizabeth I', in L. Gent & N. Llewellyn (eds.), *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660* (London, 1990), p. 18.

This preference for a more symbolic and authoritative aesthetic over the Italian style did not negate the broader influence of Italianate artistic principles in Tudor England. This influence was largely mediated through a German-Swiss perspective rather than a directly Italian one. Woolfson argues that one of the strongest indicators of Tudor English appreciation for Italian renaissance artistic style is the success of the painter Hans Holbein, whose work was heavily influenced by the classical Italian style.[41] Holbein was the court painter for Henry VIII and many English courtiers, and he was commissioned to paint other important works, like those created for Anne Boleyn's coronation.[42] He found immense success in England as an artist, and his position at Henry VIII's court made him instrumental in introducing the Renaissance art style to England during the sixteenth century.[43] According to Susan Foister, Holbein's European prominence and success in England was due to humanism, the main intellectual product of the Italian Renaissance. Holbein received great praise and commissions from humanists and was brought to England with the help of two of the most famous European humanists, Desiderius Erasmus and Thomas More, and it was through humanism that Italian Renaissance art found function in early Tudor England.[44] The admiration of Italian Renaissance art in Tudor England extended beyond aesthetics, shaping political representation and propaganda. Monarchs like Henry VIII and Elizabeth I strategically used Italian art, tapestry, and portraiture to project authority, sophistication, and alignment with continental culture, reflecting a broader effort to position England within the sphere of European refinement and power.[45]

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[41] Woolfson, 'Renaissance Intersections', p. 3.
[42] S. Foister, 'Holbein, Hans, the younger', *ODNB*.
[43] Foister, 'Holbein, Hans', *ODNB*.
[44] S. Foister, 'Humanism and Art in the Early Tudor Period: John Leland's Poetic Praise of Painting', in J. Woolfson (ed.), *Reassessing Tudor Humanism* (London, 2002), p. 130.
[45] For example, Roy Strong hypothesises that the famous 'Darnley' portrait of Queen Elizabeth I was completed by Italian painter Federico Zuccaro, whom she met in 1575, though the identity of the artist remains matter for debate and speculation. R. Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1987), pp. 85-9.

The admiration of Italian Renaissance art in Tudor England had impacts beyond visual appeal. The employment of the Italian style of art influenced political decisions. In England, as elsewhere, art was a political tool. Portraits of monarchs were essential to controlling how they were represented and how their power was demonstrated. This emphasis on imagery and representation was particularly significant for the Tudors.[46] In this context, Roy Strong hypothesises that the famous 'Darnley' portrait of Queen Elizabeth I was completed by Italian painter Federico Zuccaro, whom she met in 1575, though the identity of the artist remains matter for debate and speculation.[47] In addition, Richard Williams argues that art and sculpture were weapons used by Henry VIII in spreading religious propaganda.[48] Thomas Campbell argues that in the 1520s Henry VIII started to collect tapestries in the style of Raphael, which he used for propagandistic purposes.[49] It was not until the late sixteenth century, though, that England began to follow in the footsteps of Italy and use the acquisition of art, and the sense of worldliness and high culture granted along with it, as an important strategy in times when a monarch's reputation may have suffered.[50] There was a desire to show that England, at times considered an isolated island, could keep up with Europe in terms of cultural refinement. The acquisition of the most

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Richard Williams argues that Italian art and sculpture were weapons used by Henry VIII in spreading religious propaganda. R. Williams, 'Collecting and Religion in Late Sixteenth-Century England', in E. Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (New Haven, CT, 2003), p. 161. Thomas Campbell argues that in the 1520s Henry VIII started to collect tapestries in the Italian style, which he used for propagandistic purposes. T. Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court* (New Haven, CT, 2007). By the late sixteenth century, England, once seen as culturally insular, began following Italy's example by using the acquisition of prestigious art to project sophistication, strengthen royal authority, and assert its place within the wider sphere of European power, a strategy particularly understood by Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey. See Williams, 'Collecting and Religion', p. 159; Sicca, 'Consumption and Trade of Art', p. 166.

[46] K. Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth Century England* (New Haven, CT, 2009), p. 6.

[47] R. Strong, *Gloriana: The Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 1987), pp. 85-9.

[48] R. Williams, 'Collecting and Religion in Late Sixteenth-Century England', in E. Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (New Haven, CT, 2003), p. 161.

[49] J. Woolfson, 'Renaissance Intersections' p. 8.

[50] Williams, 'Collecting and Religion', p. 159.

influential types of art during the period became important in demonstrating power and importance, which Henry VIII and Cardinal Wolsey especially understood well.[51]

There were also economic impacts of the commodification of Italian art in England. Italians, often Tuscans and Florentines, brought their art and the art dealing trade to England. One of the most prominent merchants and art traders in Tudor England was Giovanni Cavalcanti, whose family was one of the oldest and most powerful in Florence. As a key intermediary between Henry VIII and Italian artists, Cavalcanti not only secured Torrigiani's commission for Henry VII's tomb but also gained significant political influence in England. This was elevated when Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici ascended to the papacy as Leo X in 1513, deepening Cavalcanti's involvement in diplomacy and state affairs between the English court and the Vatican.[52] Cavalcanti is just one example of how the influence of Italian art in Tudor England influenced English artistic tastes as well as business, the economy, and politics. The various important political, cultural, and economic roles that Italians played in English society are significant for this thesis because they provide crucial context for the analysis of the English texts, which this thesis argues were shaped by Italian principles, analysed in Chapters Two, Three, Four, and Five.

With Italians making up a significant part of the elite social fabric of England in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was a need for Italian language instruction. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when formal instruction of Italian began, but there was an influx of Italian language instructors into England in the late 1540s and early 1550s.[53] These included well-known instructors such as Petrucchio Ubaldini, Michelangelo Florio, and Giovanni Battista Castiglione.[54] Along with being an Italian language teacher, Ubaldini also found

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[51] Sicca, 'Consumption and Trade of Art', p. 166.
[52] C. M. Sicca, 'Pawns of International Finance and Politics: Florentine Sculptors at the Court of Henry VIII', *Renaissance Studies*, 20/1 (2006), pp. 12-3.
[53] J. Lawrence, *'Who the Devil Taught Thee So Much Italian?': Italian Language Learning and Literary Imitation in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2006), p. 4.
[54] Lawrence, *'Who the Devil'*, p. 4.

consistent work as a court translator and editor of Italian books and occasionally worked as a secretary for Elizabeth I.[55] Florio was the Italian and Latin tutor of Lady Jane Grey. His son, the lexicographer John Florio, began his career in England as an Italian language teacher in the 1570s.[56] As noted previously, Castiglione was the Italian tutor of Elizabeth I when she was a child, and in 1544 he was made the Master of the Italian Tongue at the court of Henry VIII.[57]

Beyond the royal court, language learning, including learning Italian, was an important and thriving operation at Oxford and Cambridge, even though it would not be formally added to the curriculum until the eighteenth century. It contributed to the cultural and intellectual flourishing of the university experience even into the seventeenth century.[58] In 1615, George Buck described the city of London itself as an epicentre of informal learning of vernacular languages not only for those engaging with the booming Italian mercantile industry that existed there, but also for travellers and people involved in politics.[59] There were schools for learning languages in the city, but people also taught and learned many languages, including Italian, in churchyards, private houses, bookshops, and even coffee shops. Little is known about the pedagogical nature of these Italian learning experiences, but one thing is certain: the Italian language was taught at different levels of English society, and there were plenty of teachers to complete the task.

The prevalence of Italian in English society can also be seen in remaining pedagogical materials. In 1550, the first English manual of Italian titled *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar* was published by William Thomas, who had published the first English guide to Italy the

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[55] Iamartino, 'Under Italian Eyes', pp. 194-5.
[56] D. Pirillo, 'Voyagers and Translators in Elizabethan England: Richard Hakluyt, John Florio and Renaissance Travel Collections', in A. Yarrington, S. Villani, and J. Kelly (eds.), *Travels and Translations: Anglo-Italian Cultural Transactions* (Amsterdam, 2013), p. 31.
[57] A. Petrina, 'Perfit readiness', pp. 107-9.
[58] J. Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2019), p. 20.
[59] G. Buck, *The third universitie of England* (London, 1615), sig. aiii^{r}.

year before.[60] The text was meant to be used as a tool to read Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Dante, so Thomas was clearly catering to an audience that was actively seeking late medieval Italian texts.[61] John Florio published an Italian to English dictionary, *A Worlde of Wordes*, in 1598 followed by an expanded hybrid dictionary and grammar guide in 1611 under the new title *Queen Anna's New World of Words*.[62] Mariagrazia Bellorini has shown that some of Florio's works were adapted for English audiences based on Italian examples, such as Alessandro Citolini's *Grammatica della lingua italiana*.[63] These books reveal much about the way Italian was learned in England. For instance, many Italian language manuals assumed a prior knowledge of Latin.[64] This would suggest that the Italian language was being taught to people whose backgrounds permitted them to obtain a sophisticated education. A surviving workbook of a student of Giacomo Castelvetro, who taught at Cambridge in the early seventeenth century, reveals Castelvetro's teaching style of having his students practise translating texts and correcting them.[65] Finally, the existence of dictionaries, like John Florio's *Firste Fruites* (1578), which served as his initial Italian-English dictionary as well as a guide for how to respond to specific situations in which English speakers of Italian may have found themselves, also shows that there were English people who learned how to speak – not just read – Italian in England.[66]

There were also Englishmen who went one step further and immersed themselves in Italian language and culture at Italian

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[60] W. Thomas, *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar* (London, 1550). For more on William Thomas, see E. R. Adair, 'William Thomas: A Forgotten Clerk of the Privy Council', in R. W. Seton-Watson (ed.), *Tudor Studies presented by the Board of studies in history in the University of London to Albert Frederick Pollard* (London, 1924), pp. 133-60; P. J. Laven, 'The Life and Writings of William Thomas' (MA thesis, University of London, 1954); D. Hamilton, 'Thomas, William, d. 1554', *ODNB*.
[61] Thomas, *Principal Rules*, sig. ai^{v}.
[62] J. Florio, *A world of words* (London, 1598) and J. Florio, *Queen Anna's nevv vvorld of words* (London, 1611).
[63] M. Bellorini, 'La Grammatica de la lingua Italiana di Alessandro Citolini', *English Miscellany*, 16 (1965), pp. 283-85, 288-99.
[64] J. Gallagher, ''Ungrateful Tuscans': Teaching Italian in Early Modern England', *The Italianist* 36/3 (2016), p. 395.
[65] Gallagher, "Ungrateful Tuscans", p. 406.
[66] J. Florio, *Florio his firste fruites* (London, 1578).

universities. As far back as the twelfth century there was a community of English students at the University of Bologna, but in the thirteenth century many foreign students in Italy flocked to the University of Padua instead.[67] There was still a flourishing community of English students studying law at Bologna through the fifteenth century, but Padua was a more popular destination for English students.[68] Enthusiasm for humanist disciplines and the Italian style of 'new learning', discussed later in this chapter, among the English led many to study in Italy during the sixteenth century.[69] Kenneth Bartlett described Padua as 'the graduate school of English humanism'.[70] Many English students at Padua were introduced to the principles of 'new learning' by an Italian professor of philosophy named Niccolò Leonico Tomeo.[71] Jonathon Woolfson established that between 1485 and 1603 there were 379 men from England and Wales in Padua, many with connections to the University there.[72] As soon as the University of Padua was founded in 1222, an English nation was established within the law school.[73] Throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, English students at Padua studied every discipline, including the arts, medicine, law, theology, and languages, and brought their knowledge back to England where it contributed to English thought.[74] Between 1500 and 1600, there were over 100 students who belonged to the English

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[67] J. Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485-1603* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 11.
[68] R. J. Mitchell, 'English Law Students at Bologna in the Fifteenth Century', *The English Historical Review*, 51/202 (1936), pp. 286-7.
[69] K. R. Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen of England: The 'Studio' of Padua and the Education of the English Gentry in the Sixteenth Century', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 6/4 (1982), p. 235.
[70] K. R. Bartlett, *The English in Italy 1525-1558: A Study in Culture and Politics* (Geneva, 1991), p. 34.
[71] Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, p. 103.
[72] In J. Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy, 1485-1603* (Cambridge, 1998), he documented 350 English and Welshmen in Padua between 1485 and 1603, but in the years after he discovered an additional twenty-nine. J. Woolfson, 'Padua and English Students Revisited', *Renaissance Studies*, 27/4 (2013), p. 573.
[73] 1222 is also the year the University was founded. Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen', p. 235.
[74] Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen', p. 235.

Nation at the University of Padua.[75] English law students, like Thomas Starkey and George Acworth, studied civil law at Padua, and the ideas of civic humanism that they learned there informed their work when they came back to England.[76] Three of the most distinguished physicians in early modern England—Thomas Linacre, who was good friends with Erasmus; John Caius, who was a court physician to King Edward VI, Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth I; and William Harvey —received their medical degrees from the University of Padua.[77] Linacre, William Grocyn, George Lily, and other English students who travelled to Padua also spent time in Florence to fortify their studies of Greek and other humanist subjects.[78] In the 1520s, Henry VIII funded his cousin Reginald Pole's study in Padua. Pole's lodgings became the seat of a sort of intellectual circle for Englishmen studying in Padua which produced important humanist texts, like a translation of Galen published in 1524.[79] Numbers of English visitors in Padua increased even during and after the Reformation because, as an intellectual hub, Padua was one of the places in Italy to which it was socially acceptable for the English to travel.[80]

The English encounter with Italian culture and ideas

The presence of Italians in England led to an interest in their history and culture in the mid-sixteenth century, but opinions were mixed. During the period, England's interest in world history was expanding, and Italy was a big part of this. In 1549 the first English book on this subject, *The Historie of Italie* by William Thomas, was published.[81] John Hale argues that Thomas, who had lived in Italy for four years, wrote the book for English audiences as a guide to Italy, but he also used the wars between the different Italian states in the fifteenth and

[75] See the full list of names in Chapter Three of A. Andrich and B. Brugi, *De Natione Anglica et Scota Juristarum Universitatis Patavinae* (Padua, 1892), pp. 19-77.
[76] Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, p. 40.
[77] A. C. Krey, 'Padua in the English Renaissance', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 10/2 (1947), p. 132.
[78] Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy*, pp. 457-61.
[79] Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen', p. 237.
[80] Woolfson, 'Padua and English Students', p. 581.
[81] Thomas, *Historie of Italie*.

sixteenth centuries as cautionary tales relating to the political instability that had raged rampant in England for decades.[82] In this work Thomas not only shared aspects of Italian history and culture with his English audience, but he also made a connection between the political landscapes of Italy and England.[83] The publication of Thomas's *Principal Rules of the Italian Grammar* further suggests that there was an audience in England with an interest in Italian history, culture, and language during the sixteenth century.[84] Even into the beginning of the seventeenth century, Thomas's works on Italy were still actively being consumed and were translated and mentioned in compilations of world histories and cultures in England such as Robert Johnson's *The Travellers Breviat* (1601) and *The Worlde* (first published in 1601 and subsequently in 1603, 1608, 1611, and 1616).[85] During the reign of Elizabeth I, Carlo Bajetta argues, Italian was so commonly known in English and international courts that she often wrote letters to Italian and foreign leaders, including the likes of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian II and Wanli Emperor of China, in Italian discussing matters of politics and diplomacy.[86] At the beginning of the sixteenth century, due to the economic success of the trade of Italian goods in England, English merchants started travelling to Italy

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[82] J. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in Its History and Art* (London, 1954), p. 14. Similarly, Joseph Khoury has explored how Thomas's translations of Machiavelli were adapted to suit the English context. See J. Khoury, 'Writing and Lying: William Thomas and the Politics of Translation', in C. Di Biase (ed.), *Travel and Translation in the Early Modern Period* (Amsterdam, 2006), pp. 91-102.

[83] For a deeper analysis of Thomas's comparisons of Italy and England, see C. Shrank, 'William Thomas and the Riches of the Vulgar Tongue', in C. Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530-1580* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 104-42.

[84] J. Fellheimer, 'An Elizabethan Translator's Use of William Thomas "Historie of Italie"', *Italica* 34/ 3 (1957), p. 142.

[85] Fellheimer, 'Elizabethan Translator', p. 142.

[86] C. Bajetta, *Elizabeth I's Italian Letters* (New York, 2017), p. 253. Some scholars doubt whether she wrote the letters herself, but there is ample evidence that proves her Italian proficiency. See C. Bajetta, "Nella lingua sua naturale': Elizabeth's Italian Letters', *Explorations in Renaissance Culture*, 42/2 (2016), pp. 109-23; Petrina, "Perfit readiness', pp. 93-113. Even if all of the letters were not penned by Elizabeth herself, the fact that she sent letters that were written in Italian to foreign rulers is relevant. Beyond diplomatic correspondence, Elizabeth wrote several Italian prayers throughout her life. See J. Mueller, L. S. Marcus (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (Chicago, 2002), pp. 48, 138-40.

to trade, but little is known of their reactions to Italians other than the fact that trading with them brought them immense wealth.[87]

Not all attitudes reflected an interest or respect for Italian culture, though. Prior to the Reformation, anti-Italian attitudes existed in England because many resented having to pay papal taxes.[88] This resentment—and suspicion—grew after the Reformation. Some Englishmen, like John Cheke, the most famous classical scholar in England, remarked that adultery, murder, and robbery were common in Italy.[89] William Harrison, who wrote the 'Description of Britain' in Holinshed's *Chronicles*, remarked on the corruptive nature of Italy.[90] The Protestant scholar, William Moorecroft, described Italians as particularly provocative and lustful.[91] Roger Ascham, who had actually been to Italy and was a renowned scholar at the courts of Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I, wrote, '[do not] let wise men think Italie a safe place for wholesome doctrine, and godlie manners, and a fit school for young gentlemen of England to be brought up in'.[92] The playwright Thomas Nashe described Italy as 'the academy of manslaughter, the sporting place of murder, the apothecary of poison for all nations.'[93]

While Italy had its opponents in England, it also had its champions. Many people were able to separate Italians and their culture from the wider perceived Catholic threat that Italy posed.[94] There were those who viewed Italy as an aspirational example of manners and etiquette, learning, and government.[95] In the second half of the sixteenth century, 'Italianate Englishmen', men from England who had travelled to Italy and were well versed in Italian language and

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[87] Parks, *English Traveller,* pp. 607-8.
[88] Bartlett, 'Travel and Translation', p. 496.
[89] John Cheke to William Petre, 22 July 1554, TNA, SP 69/4, ff. 178^{r}.
[90] W. Harrison, 'Of Degrees of People in the Commonwealth of England', in R. Holinshed (ed.), *The Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande* (London, 1577), p. 9
[91] William Moorecroft to William Cecil, 1 January 1567, *Calendar of State Papers Foreign*, *Elizabeth*, VIII, no. 897; TNA SP 70/88, fol. 1^{r}.
[92] R. Ascham, *The scholemaster* (London, 1570), sig. bii^{v}.
[93] T. Nashe, *Pierce Penilesse his supplication to the diuell* (London, 1592), sig. Di^{v}.
[94] G. B. Parks, 'The First Italianate Englishmen', *Studies in the Renaissance*, 8 (1961), p. 198.
[95] Parks, 'Italianate Englishmen', p. 198.

culture, emerged.[96] Drawn to the centres of learning where ancient texts had been revived, and to the Italian humanists who had revived them, many Englishmen travelled to Italy for intellectual, professional, personal, and even religious reasons.[97] Some also travelled there to study the *studia humanitatis*, as well as other classical disciplines like natural philosophy, medicine, mathematics, law, and theology.[98] The poet Thomas Wyatt was one such man. Wyatt was well versed in the *studia humanitatis* and he had a deep passion for Italian culture.[99] After years of wanting to visit Italy, he travelled there in 1527 as a soldier among the troops sent by Henry VIII to help Pope Clement VII.[100] In London, he befriended many of the wealthy high-ranking Florentine merchants and nobles who lived or spent significant time there, like Antonio Carsidoni, Nicholo Gondi, and other people who worked for the Cavalcanti and Bardi companies.[101] John North was also a devoted Italophile. North kept a diary of his return home to England in the 1570s after living in Italy for several years. He wrote the diary in Italian and continued to speak and write in Italian as well as maintain Italian customs even when he returned to England.[102] Another Italianate Englishman already discussed, William Thomas, sang Italy's praises in his *Historie of Italie*, which admired the civility, elegance, and charm of Italy and its people.[103] Thomas fled England to escape his gambling debts in 1544, and, after being imprisoned for this offence in Venice for an unknown amount of time, travelled throughout Italy spending time at least in Florence, Bologna, Venice, Rome, Padua, Urbino, Genoa, Milan, and probably Naples.[104] He was especially enamoured with Italian architecture and literature, and fully immersed

[96] J. Gallagher, 'The Italian London of John North: Cultural Contact and Linguistic Encounter in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 70/1 (2017), p. 90.
[97] Overell, *Italian Reform,* p. 17
[98] Overell, *Italian Reform*, p. 17
[99] Brigden, 'Wyatt Among the Florentines', p. 1408.
[100] Brigden, 'Wyatt Among the Florentines', pp. 1408-9.
[101] Brigden, 'Wyatt Among the Florentines', p. 1419.
[102] Gallagher, 'The Italian London of John North', p. 89.
[103] Thomas, *Historie of Italie*.
[104] Laven, 'William Thomas', pp. 24-6, 30, 33.

himself into the language and culture through reading Italian books.[105] He returned to England in 1548 inspired by his exposure to Italian culture and began writing his *Historie*.[106] Though he had not spent time in Italy, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, was also a major Italophile in Elizabethan England. He was reportedly fluent in Italian.[107] He embraced all aspects of Italian culture, which he learned about partially from his friends Roger North and John Florio, but especially through Italian art and fashion.[108] Florio actually dedicated his textbook on the Italian language, *First Fruites* (1578), to Dudley.[109] The elite women discussed in Chapters Three, Four, and Five of this thesis can also be described as Italianate Englishwomen, even though for women encounters with Italian culture were less physical and more intellectual and nuanced.

There were staunch opponents of the Italianate Englishmen who believed that exposure to the cultural diversity in Italy could be dangerous. Referring to the Italianate Englishmen, Moorcroft wrote, 'None shall like Italy unless he be Italizate', and he emphasised the proverb *Anglus Italizatus demon incarnatu*, which is often attribute to Roger Ascham.[110] Ascham believed that frequent travel to Italy was dangerous and immoral.[111] He wrote this proverb in the *Scholemaster*, describing Italianate Englishmen as 'diavolo incarnato'.[112] Despite the concerns of some, the spread of ideas and culture from Italy to England grew in facilitation during and after the reign of Elizabeth.[113] The increase of interest in Italian language, history, and culture in England

[105] Laven, 'William Thomas', p. 33.
[106] Laven, 'William Thomas', p. 34.
[107] Pirillo, 'Voyagers and Translators', p. 32.
[108] Gallagher, 'The Italian London of John North', p. 97.
[109] J. Florio, *Florio his firste fruites* (London, 1578), sig. ai^{r}.
[110] Moorecroft to Cecil, 1 January 1567, fol. 4^{v}.
[111] Parks, 'Italianate Englishmen', p. 201.
[112] 'Devil incarnate' in English. Ascham, *Scholemaster*, sig. aii^{r}. *Scholemaster* was written in 1563 but was not published in print until 1570, after Ascham's death. It is possible that Ascham popularised the proverb while he was alive and that it was then echoed by Moorecroft in his letter to Cecil in 1567.
[113] Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance*, pp. 63-4.

is representative of a larger trend of linguistic and cultural transmission.[114]

Italian books in England

Another way to examine how English people were exposed to Italian culture and ideas is through analysis of books written by Italian authors and owned in early modern England. As printing became more frequent and widespread during the fifteenth century, the production of texts that had become well known in preceding decades grew.[115] Rather than printing a large mass of new works, printers in Italy typically printed multiple versions of works that had already been established as popular or important and circulating in manuscript.[116] This meant that by the sixteenth century, there were many printed editions of classical, humanistic texts in Italy.[117] By 1500, it was quite common for newly published Italian volumes of classical works, such as texts by Aristotle published in Venice, to be sold in London.[118] These texts could have made their journey to England in a number of different ways based on the effort of book sellers and purchasers alike. Records show that it was common for printers to produce substantially more texts than could be sold in the towns in which they were produced so that they could be sold elsewhere.[119] Most book printers and sellers had established book distribution systems to sell their merchandise throughout Europe.[120] They employed book agents,

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[114] For more in-depth scholarship on broader early modern cultural interaction, see, for example, C. H. Parker, *Global Interactions in the Early Modern Age, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 2010) and T. Demtriou and R. Tomlinson (eds.), *The Culture of Translation in Early Modern England and France, 1500-1660* (Basingstoke, 2015).
[115] A. Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven, CT, 2010), pp. 59-60.
[116] E. L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 169.
[117] Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, pp. 169-70.
[118] M. Lowry, *Nicholas Jenson and the Rise of Venetian Publishing in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford, 1991), p. 107.
[119] L. Febvre and H. J. Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800* (New York, 2010), p. 220
[120] Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, pp. 222-3.

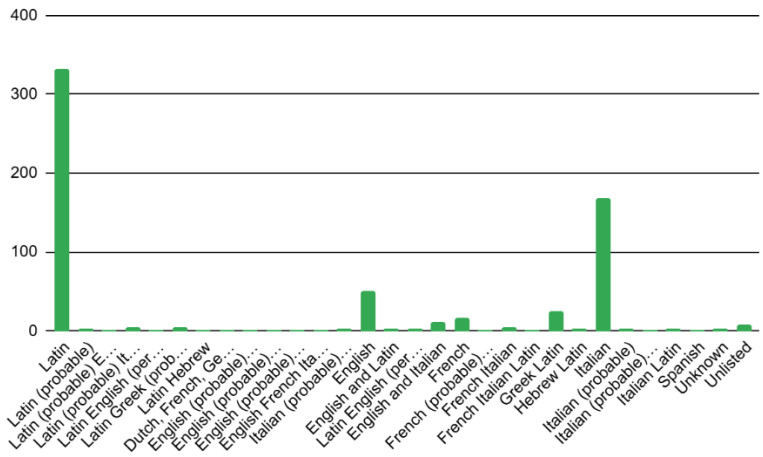
whose job was to ensure that the books made it to their intended cities safely and to handle the promotion and distribution of the books when they arrived.[121] Book agents would set up in cities and promote the books that they were sent to promote, or they would visit popular fairs in various places and sell to the crowds there. In England, books from English and international book agents were sold at the Stourbridge Fair in Cambridge.[122] The desire of book printers to sell their wares on a larger scale led to the creation of international book fairs. The bi-annual international book fairs in Lyon, Frankfurt, Leipzig, and Medina del Campo, which hosted book agents selling books printed all around Europe, welcomed book buyers and book agents working on behalf of their buyers from all around Europe.[123] It is impossible to know precise figures for how many English buyers or agents attended these fairs, but this is undoubtedly one way that books printed in Italy reached England.[124] English printers and publishers relied heavily on connections with book makers in mainland Europe because printing was less expensive there.[125] English book makers and printers in the Latin trade relied on international printers to print Christian and humanistic texts in Latin, especially as the production of religious texts in Latin became more dangerous in England.[126] An overwhelming majority of the works catalogued in the series *The Private Libraries in Renaissance England* (*PLRE*), which is discussed below, have their publishing location simply listed as 'continent' for this exact reason.[127] Many humanistic texts published in Italy were brought to England by English humanists. For example, Thomas Linacre met and started working with the Italian publisher Aldus Manutius, founder of the

[121] Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, pp. 223-5.
[122] Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, p. 226.
[123] Febvre and Martin, *Coming of the Book*, pp. 226-33.
[124] E. Buringh and J. L. Van Zanden, 'Charting the 'Rise of the West': Manuscripts and Printed Books in Europe, a Long-Term Perspective from the Sixth through Eighteenth Centuries', *The Journal of Economic History*, 69/2 (2009), p. 415.
[125] A. B. Farmer, 'Cosmopolitanism and Foreign Books in Early Modern England', *Shakespeare Studies*, 35 (2007), pp. 58-9.
[126] Farmer, 'Cosmopolitanism', p. 58.
[127] R.J. Fehrenbach, E.S. Leedham-Green, and J. L. Black (eds.), *PLRE* vols. I-X (Binghampton, NY; Wiltshire; Tempe, AZ, 1992-2020).

Aldine Press in Venice, in Padua in the late 1490s.[128] When Linacre returned to England in 1498, he helped popularise Manutius's texts and over the next two decades humanistic texts published in Italy by Manutius became an integral part of the English book market.[129]

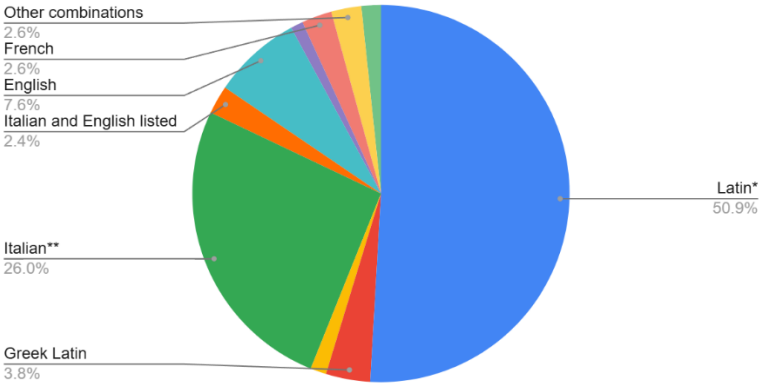
The ten volumes of *PLRE* reveal that hundreds of books written by Italian authors were in private possession during this period. There are thirty language variations listed for the 658 works by Italian authors (see figure 1) and of these thirty variations, Latin, Italian, English, and Greek/Latin are the most common, followed by smaller numbers of different combinations of Latin, Italian, English, and other languages (see figure 2). These figures represent the tip of the iceberg by working from known booklists. Of necessity, this picture is incomplete and understates the true rates of ownership in the period.

Figure 1: Language Variations of Works by Italian Authors Owned in Early Modern England (PLRE)



[128] M. Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Venice* (Oxford, 1979), pp. 259-60.
[129] Lowry, *World of Aldus Manutius*, pp. 262-3.

Figure 2: Languages Listed for Works by Italian Authors Owned in Early Modern England (PLRE)



*Two of these are listed as probable, not confirmed. **Two of these are listed as probable, not confirmed.

The languages of these texts reveal different things about the consumption of the Italian language and ideas in England during this period. If the works owned were published in Italian, this suggests that the owner may have been able to read Italian and had an interest in the ideas of Italian authors. For example, it can be reasoned that Lady Elizabeth Grey (*PLRE* 299), who owned twenty-eight works in Italian; Michael Harvey (*PLRE* 295), who owned thirty-two works in Italian; and Henry Cheyne (*PLRE* 138), who owned fifty-seven works in Italian; were interested in engaging with Italian ideas in the Italian language. If the works owned were published in Latin, this shows that, although the owner may not have been able to read or speak Italian, they still may have been interested in ideas expressed by Italian authors. Most of the 333 works owned in Latin were religious, political, historical, or philosophical. There are over one hundred different Italian authors with works published in Latin in the ten *PLRE* volumes. The authors with the highest total of works throughout the *PLRE* volumes are Gerolamo Cardano, with twenty-nine works which are mainly about medicine, astronomy, and the nature of knowledge, and Paolo Manuzio with seventeen works, mainly his epistles and works on classical law. Beyond Cardano and Manuzio, there were between four and six works published in Latin by Baldassare Castiglione, Baptista Spagnuoli, Bishop Paolo Giovio, Pietro Bairo, Lucius Fenestella, Antonio Musa Bravasola, Niccolò Machiavelli,

Carlo Sigonio, Giovanni Battista della Porta, Giovanni Bertachini, Giovanni Paolo Lancelotto, and Marsilio Ficino. The rest of the Italian authors with works published in Latin, including Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Ariosto, had between one and three works listed in *PLRE*. These Latin texts suggest that elite Englishmen were most interested in at least owning works by Italian authors that discussed religion, medicine, and humanism.

The fifty works by Italian authors published in English show that even people who perhaps could not read Latin or Italian were still interested in consuming Italian ideas. It is difficult to determine exact numbers and rates of literacy because what constitutes being literate is up for debate.[130] It can be said that formal education expanded, and literacy rates were on the rise during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England.[131] The production of printed texts was also on the rise. In 1403, a group of writers, illustrators, book binders, and book sellers established the Mistery of Stationers, but there were still many publishers who existed and thrived outside of the company.[132] In 1476, William Caxton established the first printing press in England in Westminster.[133] Two years later a printing press was established in Oxford, but by 1485 it was defunct.[134] In 1500, Wynkyn de Worde opened the first printing shop in London, and he is credited with starting the book market in England by focusing on producing higher volumes of less expensive books to be mass marketed and establishing Fleet Street as the publishing centre of the city.[135] By 1557, there was a great need for systemic organisation of printed texts, so the Stationers'

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[130] D. Cressy, 'Levels of Illiteracy in England 1530-1730', *The Historical Journal*, 20/1 (1977), p. 1. J. Daybell, 'Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England,' *History of Education*, 34/4 (2005), pp. 695-715. See also the introduction above.
[131] T. Eskelson, 'States, Institutions, and Literacy Rates in Early-Modern Western Europe', *Journal of Education and Learning*, 10/2 (2021), p. 117.
[132] P. W. M. Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501-1557* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 13.
[133] M. Rankin, 'Print Culture and Tudor Literature', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 40/1 (2009), p. 273.
[134] Pettegree, *The Book*, p. 125.
[135] V. Gillespie and S. Powell, *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain, 1476–1558* (Martlesham, 2014), pp. 30-1.

Company, evolved from the previous Mistery, obtained a royal charter which effectively standardised and monopolised printing and publishing in England.[136] In the later sixteenth century, John Wolf was one of the most important printers of Italian works in England, like those of Machiavelli and Pietro Aretino.[137] Increasing literacy combined with advances in printing meant that more than just the elite were able to access and consume written works in a variety of subject matters, and this can certainly be seen in the works of Italian authors that were published in English and owned by English people catalogued in *PLRE*. There were at least six different people who owned an English edition of Castiglione's *The Courtier* translated by Thomas Hoby.[138] Then, there were four religious texts by the theologian and Protestant pastor Agostino Mainardi, three different editions of *De' secreti del reuerendo donno Alessio Piemontese*, one of which was translated by William Warde, by the humanist Girolamo Ruscelli (under the pseudonym Alessio Piemontese), and six copies of the historian and statesman Francesco Guicciardini's *Histories of Italian Wars* translated by Geoffrey Fenton.[139] The subjects of the rest of the texts published in English are religious, historical, tales of classical figures, fiction, and poetry. There is even a manual for how to play chess.[140] *PLRE* is, of course, not an exhaustive list, but the variety of subjects in the texts catalogued within it that were published and

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[136] A. Hill, *Lost Books and Printing in London, 1557-1640: An Analysis of the Stationers' Company Register* (Leiden, 2018), p. 8.
[137] G. Bertoli, 'Nuovi documenti sull'attività di John Wolf a Firenze (1576-1577), con alcune considerazioni sul fenomeno delle stampe popolari', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 153/3 (1995), p. 577.
[138] *PLRE*, vol. IV, 112 John Tatham, p. 273; *PLRE*, vol. IV, 134 John Hornsley, p. 265; *PLRE*, vol. V, 123 Richard Ferne, p. 86; *PLRE*, vol. V, 132 Thomas Bolt, p. 217; *PLRE*, vol. VI, 149 Edward Higgins, p. 211; *PLRE*, vol. IX, 286 Thomas Roe, p. 273; *PLRE*, vol. IX, 277 Lady Anne Clifford, p. 358.
[139] Mainardi: *PLRE* vol. IV, 103 Henry Hutchinson, pp. 139-40; *PLRE* vol. V, 119 William Dawson, p. 60; *PLRE* vol. V, 130 Robert Singleton, p. 192; *PLRE*, vol. VIII, 257 Leonard Harrison, p. 323. Piemontese: *PLRE* vol. VI, 149 Edward Higgins, p. 63; *PLRE* vol. VIII, 261 Armgail Waad, p. 28. *PLRE* vol. X, 293 William Platt, p. 226. Guicciardini: *PLRE* vol. VII, 159 Walter Brown, p. 136; *PLRE*, vol. IX, 274 Thomas Roe, p. 262; *PLRE* vol. IX, 277 Anne Clifford, p. 362; *PLRE* vol. X, 288 John Moseley, p. 114 and p. 115; *PLRE* vol. X, 299 Elizabeth Grey, p. 347.
[140] Damiano de Odemira*, Ludus scacchiae: chesse-play. Containing also therein, a poeme of a whole game played at chesse* (London, 1597), *PLRE* vol. IX, 266 Edward Conway, p. 146.

owned in English shows that even people who perhaps did not belong to elite circles, in which they would have acquired Latin or another language like Italian but were still high enough in society to be literate, sought Italian ideas in a wide variety of subjects. Finally, the works that were published in languages other than Italian, English, and Latin, like French, Spanish, Hebrew, and Greek, show that early modern England was multilingual, at least among the educated and literate, and interested in consuming Italian ideas even if they were not communicated in Italian. It also shows that Italian ideas were part of larger discourses in various fields, like theology, medicine, history, and literature.

There were many texts by particularly Italian humanist authors published in different languages in the *PLRE* volumes. Aside from Gerolamo Cardano and Ambrogio Calepino, humanists Paolo Manuzio, Castiglione, Boccaccio, and Petrarch were Italian authors whose works were owned the most.[141] There are two works by Dante, nine by Petrarch, and thirteen by Boccaccio, the three men known as the fathers of Italian humanism.[142] There are also numerous works from other important Italian humanists like Leonardo Bruni, Flavio Biondo, Bartolomeo Platina, Marsilio Ficino, Aldo Manuzio the Elder, Paolo Manuzio, Aldo Manuzio the Younger, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Pietro Bembo, Machiavelli, Ludovico Ariosto, and Baldassare Castiglione. Their works in English libraries demonstrate that the ideas of late medieval Italian humanists were present and available for English audiences to read. The extent to which these texts directly affected English society is more difficult to show, but it is irrefutable that English audiences had the opportunity to engage with late medieval Italian works, humanistic and otherwise.

Along with religious texts and works by humanist authors, there were many dictionaries and texts for learning Italian in private

[141] There are thirty-one entries for Calepino's *Dictionarium* mostly in Latin and Greek.
[142] Dante: *PLRE* vol. VIII, 245 George Brome, p. 240; *PLRE*, vol. X, 299 Elizabeth Grey, p. 355. The Petrarch and Boccaccio entries range from *PLRE* vols. I-X.

possession. For instance three people owned Italian-English dictionaries by John Florio.[143] Three people owned copies of Scipione Lentulo's *La grammatica* translated by Henry Grantham in English and Italian.[144] Two people owned instructional texts of the Italian language by Giovanni Torriano which are listed as being written in English and Italian.[145] Finally, there were multiple examples of dictionaries or language resources with unidentified authors.[146] This again shows that some English people were interested in learning the Italian language in a structured if not entirely formal manner.

Another insight provided by the *PLRE* is that there were many women with extensive book collections in England, four of whom owned works by Italian authors. Three of these women lived during the seventeenth century, but one woman, Lady Mary Grey, lived her tumultuous life in the sixteenth century. Lady Mary Grey (Keys) (*PLRE* 253) was the grandniece of Henry VIII and cousin to Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I. She was the youngest of the three Grey sisters, and her eldest sister was Lady Jane Grey, who occupied the English throne for those famous nine days in 1553.[147] After her sister's execution in 1554, Mary's life took a turn for the worse, and she was left much poorer than she was accustomed to, with no prospects for marriage. In 1556, though, she managed to marry a gentleman named Thomas Keys in secret. This did not prove to be the saving grace Mary wished it to be, because, after it was discovered, she was separated from her husband and spent much of the rest of her life essentially in house arrest in various English estates around the country, often with no money and in tattered clothes. She relied on the people whose

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[143] *PLRE*, vol. VII, 158.19, John Florio, Probably *Second frutes* (London, 1591), p. 107. *PLRE*, vol. IX, 274.119 and *PLRE*, vol. X, 298.93, John Florio, *A worlde of wordes, or most copious, dictionarie in Italian and English* (London, 1598-1611) p. 257 and p. 314.
[144] *PLRE*, vol. X, 133.111, p. 240, *PLRE*, vol. IX, 266.138, p. 135, and *PLRE*, vol. X, 298.87, p. 313.
[145] *PLRE*, vol. X, 299.104, p. 349 and *PLRE*, vol. X, 299.167, p. 357.
[146] For example: *PLRE*, vol. VII, 156.23, p. 82, *PLRE*, vol. VII, 159.303, p. 174, and *PLRE*, vol. VI, 149.122, p. 218.
[147] On Mary Grey, see *PLRE*, vol. VIII, pp. 265-86. See also, S. Doran 'Keys [née Grey], Lady Mary', *ODNB*; M. Colthorpe, 'The Marriage Dates of Lady Catherine Grey and Lady Mary Grey', *Notes and Queries*, 33/3 (1986), pp. 318-20.

homes she stayed in to survive, who often begrudgingly supported her. When her husband died in 1571, Queen Elizabeth allowed her to live independently, but she had no money and nowhere to go. Eventually she moved in with her stepfather and acquired enough money to buy a home in London where she lived from 1573 until her death in 1575.

Mary's connection to the English nobility meant that she would have been afforded an excellent education for a woman, and the extensive collection of books she left behind proves that.[148] Michelangelo Florio tutored her sister Jane in Italian, so it is conceivable that Mary benefitted from a humanist education as well. She left behind at least thirty books, four of which were in Italian, an impressive amount for most people in the sixteenth century, but especially a woman who lived in the circumstances in which Mary did.[149] Mary was in possession of Natalino Amulio's *Adunazione dei quattro evangelisti* in Italian and Castiglione's *The Courtier* in Italian. These works show that Mary might have been interested in engaging with Italian ideas about religion, philosophy, and politics. She also had an edition of a religious text by the Christian philosopher from ancient Greece, Athenagoras, titled *Della risurrettione de morti*, which was translated to Italian by Girolamo Falletti.[150] This suggests that Mary may have been interested in religious texts and possibly in humanism, since the work in question is a translation of an ancient Greek text. Her ownership of Castiglione's *Courtier* could also indicate an engagement with humanist ideas, although the book's widespread popularity at the time means that its presence in her collection cannot be taken as firm

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[148] She was the youngest sister, and due to her family's decline in status following the execution of her eldest sister, her classical education was not as comprehensive as that of her siblings. For instance, her eldest sister Jane possessed the ability to read Greek and Hebrew. *PLRE*, vol. VIII, p. 269. See also A. Plowden, 'Grey [married name Dudley], Lady Jane', *ODNB*.

[149] Especially considering the fact that it was much rarer for women to own books in comparison to men. See J. L. Black, 'Women's Libraries in the Private Libraries in Renaissance England Project', in L. Knight, M. White, and E. Sauer (eds.), *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2018), p. 216.

[150] Athenagoras, *Della risurrettione de morti* (Venice, 1556). Fehrenbach and J. L. Black, *PLRE*, vol. VIII, p. 274.

proof of this.[151] Some of these books also could have been passed down to Mary from her older sisters Jane and Katherine, but there is no evidence to prove this. Nevertheless, her possession of all three works show that Mary was probably able to read Italian and had exposure to Italian ideas.

In addition to the *PLRE* volumes, Soko Tomita has shed much light on Italian books in England. Where *PLRE* has catalogued private ownership of books over the course of the early modern period, Tomita has catalogued the printing of Italian books in England during the reign of Elizabeth I (1558-1603).[152] Most of the works she catalogues are by Italian authors and were printed in English, though some were printed in Italian or Latin. Tomita's findings, like those of the *PLRE*, suggest that the main categories of Italian works printed in England were religion and theology, law, history and politics, voyages and discovery, manners and morals, learning and methodology, language, literature, and plays.[153] She categorises 451 Italian works printed in Elizabethan England, and *PLRE* catalogued 658 works by Italian authors. Assuming there was some degree of overlap, there were many hundreds of Italian works which people in early modern England could have read. Evidence of Italian books circulating in England is vital to understanding how Italian ideas informed the English texts examined in Chapters Two through Five. Although it is not always possible to prove that an English author directly read or was influenced by a specific Italian work, the claim that Italian thought shaped English discourses on women (as discussed in Chapter Two) gains credibility when is it proven that these ideas were mediated through books that English writers could, and probably did, read.

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[151] I. F. Moulton, *Love in Print in the Sixteenth Century: The Popularization of Romance* (New York, 2014), p. 27.
[152] Tomita's data has been narrowed down from the Italian works catalogued in Mary Augusta Scott's *Elizabethan Translations from the Italian* (Boston, MA, 1916) and examined alongside *STC* and Stationer's Register information. S. Tomita, *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Italian Books Printed in England 1558-1603* (London, 2009), pp. 13, 23.
[153] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 33.

Impact of Italian literature: translations and adaptations

Another approach to examining the English encounter with Italian culture and ideas is to investigate the influence of Italian literature on English literature. It is theorised that the influence of Italian literature in England dates to the Middle Ages beginning with Chaucer (c. 1343-1400), who was the first author to introduce the themes and style of Italian literature in England. David Wallace posits that Chaucer, having visited Florence and Lombardy multiple times in his life and being an avid observer and participant there, was heavily influenced by those political landscapes and the works of Florentine masters Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch.[154] Literary elements echoing the works of Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch can be seen in Chaucer's works which were completed after he visited Italy in 1372, during which time he visited Florence, and 1378.[155] Chaucer named Dante multiple times in *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400): in 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', 'The Friar's Tale', and 'The Monk's Tale'.[156] There are also similarities between Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Chaucer's *The House of Fame* (1379-80), such as the three-part structure, the visions, like the eagle in the desert, and the heavenly journey.[157] The formulaic style of Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* (1382-1394) is modelled after Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*, discussed in Chapter Two.[158] Chaucer's discussion of Queen Zenobia in 'The Monk's Tale' within *The Canterbury Tales* was drawn directly from *On Famous Women*.[159] There are also striking similarities between Boccaccio's *Amorosa*

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[154] D. Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford, CA, 1997), pp. 55.
[155] K. P. Clarke, 'The Italian Tradition', in I. Johnson (ed.), *Geoffrey Chaucer in Context* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 126.
[156] G. Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by J. Mann (London, 2005), pp. 250, 265, 579.
[157] D. Gray, 'Dant, (Dante) Daunte', in D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford, 2005).
[158] P. Boitani, 'Boccaccio', in D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford, 2005).
[159] Boitani, 'Boccaccio'. Queen Zenobia of Palmyra (c. 240-after 274 CE) was a powerful and ambitious ruler who, while acting as regent for her son after the death of her husband, expanded her empire into Egypt and Asia Minor. Known for her intelligence, military leadership, and cultural patronage, she was ultimately defeated by Emperor Aurelian and taken to Rome, where her fate remains uncertain. For more on Zenobia, see N. Andrade, *Zenobia: Shooting Star of Palmyra* (New York, 2018).

visione and Chaucer's *House of Fame* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* and *The Canterbury Tales*.[160] Chaucer also directly named Petrarch twice in *The Canterbury Tales*. First, in 'The Monk's Tale' he referred to Petrarch as his 'master' when telling the story of Queen Zenobia.[161] The clerk in 'The Clerk's Tale' also revealed that he learned the story of Griselda from Petrarch in Padua.[162] It is unknown whether Chaucer and Petrarch ever actually met, but Chaucer was certainly familiar with Petrarch's works and integrated his ideas into his own.[163] In England in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, Petrarch was respected and studied because of his humanist philosophical and epic poems produced in Latin, and by the end of the fifteenth century these works were being studied vigorously at Oxford and Cambridge.[164] It was not until the sixteenth century, with a new major interest in his *Trionfi* (written between 1351 and 1374), that Petrarch became a poetic authority on love in England, and by the end of the century the vigorous study of his *Il Canzoniere* in England made him considered by many English scholars to be one of the greatest poets of all time.[165] Particularly relevant here is the fact that Petrarch's *Trionfi* first appeared in English literature among the circle of Thomas More.[166]

Petrarch was influencing works of English literature more than two centuries after his death. Roger Ascham noted that 'Italianate Englishmen' had more reverence for Petrarch's *Trionfi* than for the

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[160] Boitani, 'Boccaccio'.
[161] Chaucer, *Canterbury*, p. 579. Petrarch mentioned Zenobia in 'The Triumph of Fame' in his *Trionfi*, but Chaucer could have also read about Zenobia in Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*. See D. Gray, 'Petrak, Fraunceys', in D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford, 2005).
[162] Chaucer, *Canterbury*, p. 336. See also, D. Gray, 'Petrak, Fraunceys'.
[163] Petrarch was the archdeacon of Padua and lived there or in nearby Arquà from 1368 to 1374, and this was well known. Oxford clerks, like the character in 'The Clerk's Tale', often studied at Padua, so saying the character met Petrarch is not sufficient evidence to prove Chaucer actually met Petrarch. See D. Gray, 'Padowe, Padua (Padova)', in D. Gray (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Chaucer* (Oxford, 2005).
[164] R. Coogan, 'Petrarch's 'Trionfi' and the English Renaissance', *Studies in Philology*, 67/3 (1970), p. 307.
[165] Coogan, 'Petrarch's 'Trionfi', p. 307.
[166] Coogan, 'Petrarch's 'Trionfi', p. 312.

Book of Genesis.[167] It cannot be ignored that multiple poems about women, love, and relationships produced in sixteenth-century England were translations and adaptations of late medieval Italian works. Many prominent English poets translated, or rather adapted, Italian poetry to comment on their contemporary context. The nineteenth-century German scholar Friedrich Schleiermacher would come to identify this as moving the author towards the reader**,** by which translators aimed to contextualise a text within their own environment rather than prioritising the foreignness of the text or the original author's voice.[168] This, according to Schleiermacher's translation theory, was in opposition to moving the reader towards the author, by which translators emphasised the foreignness of a text and its original author.[169] English poets, like Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516-1547), appreciated the ideas about women and love expressed in Italian poetry and dedicated time and care to translating or adapting them for an English audience. For example, Wyatt's 'Whoso list to hunt', written about Anne Boleyn, was a revision of Petrarch's 'Una candida cerva'.[170] The deeper significance of this adaptation will be discussed later in this chapter. Similarly, Surrey translated sonnets 11, 140, 145, 164, and 310 from Petrarch's *Rime*.[171] It seems that the ideas about women and love conveyed in late medieval Italian poetry, particularly in the works of Petrarch, profoundly influenced some English poets. It is reasonable to

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[167] Ascham, *Scholemaster*, sig. eiii^{r}. Modern scholars, like Robert Coogan, claim that it was Petrarch's references to classical and medieval literature and his intriguing mix of characters, but most importantly his discussions of the futility of human endeavour, especially concerning love, that made his works so captivating in Tudor England. Coogan, 'Petrarch's 'Trionfi', pp. 308-9. Danila Sokolov argues that Petrarch's works often inspired poets to think critically and reflect on contemporary issues pertaining to love and how to quantify, express, and make sense of it. D. Sokolov, 'Love under Law: Rewriting Petrarch's Canzone 360 in Early Modern England', *Philological Quarterly*, 96/4 (2017), p. 446.

[168] F. Schleiermacher, 'On the Different Methods of Translating', in R. Schulte and J. Biguenet (eds.), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida* (Chicago, IL, 1992), p. 42.

[169] Schleiermacher, 'Methods of Translating', p. 42.

[170] J. Glaser, 'Wyatt, Petrarch, and the Uses of Mistranslation', *College Literature*, 11/3 (1984), p. 215.

[171] A. W. Taylor, 'Glass Houses: Surrey, Petrarch, and the Religious Poetics of the 'London' Invective', *The Review of English Studies*, 57/231 (2006), p. 446.

suggest that perceptions of women in sixteenth-century England could have taken cues from those of late medieval Florence.

Many successful poets who could read Italian translated key late medieval Italian poems into English. Numerous translations of Petrarch by English authors reveal his influence in English literature and culture.[172] The first sixteenth-century translator of Petrarch was Wyatt. After Chaucer, Wyatt was the first to translate Petrarch's poetry into English and translated more of his work than anybody else in the period.[173] Wyatt's full body of work contains over two dozen translations from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and translations of other Italian poets who wrote in his style.[174] Queen Katharine (of Aragon) commissioned a translation of Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortunae* from Wyatt in 1526.[175] Reed Dasenbrock, supported by other scholars, argued that it was Wyatt's translations and adaptations of Petrarch that led to the tradition, form, and language of love sonnets created by Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, and Shakespeare.[176] In the 1550s Henry Parker's translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, originally created as a New Year's gift for Henry VIII, went into print and circulation.[177] Certain translations show how Petrarch's style and ideas were adapted to fit into Tudor English dialogue and culture. The poet and literary patron Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke and sister of Philip Sidney, translated the third poem of Petrarch's *Trionfi* titled 'The Triumph of Death'. Interestingly, this particular poem is one of the *Trionfi* in which the main female subject in Petrarch's works, Laura, has a more active role. Sidney's translation of this poem, which she completed in the original Italian *terza rima* format, created a gateway for other English women authors into the genre of romantic poetry. Danielle Clarke argues that Sidney's translation of Petrarch was deeply

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[172] Coogan, 'Petrarch's 'Trionfi' and the English Renaissance', p. 310.
[173] R.W Dasenbrock, 'Wyatt's Transformation of Petrarch', *Comparative Literature*, 40/2 (1988), p. 122.
[174] G. Braden, 'Wyatt & Petrarch: Italian Fashion at the Court of Henry VIII', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 22 (2004), p. 238.
[175] Brigden, 'Wyatt Among the Florentines', p. 1409.
[176] Dasenbrock, 'Wyatt's Transformation of Petrarch', p. 122.
[177] Bartlett, 'Travel and Translation', p. 497.

nuanced and allowed her to comment discreetly on the aging of Queen Elizabeth, which was a popular literary discourse of the time that, due to its political nature, women were often prohibited from writing about directly.[178] At Wilton House in Wiltshire, of which she became mistress through marriage, Sidney created an oasis for successful poets and authors known as the Wilton Circle. An incredibly influential woman for her time, Sidney's decision to translate Petrarch and maintain his original style helps give an idea of how his ideas resonated in England, especially with female authors.

Sometimes works by Italian authors were translated into English from Latin, as was the case with the *Decameron*, parts of which were first translated into English in the 1520s and not credited to Boccaccio.[179] Chaucer's 'Clerk's Tale' in *The Canterbury Tales* was inspired by the final story in the *Decameron*, though he probably read and translated it from Latin.[180] By the second half of the sixteenth century, though, parts of the *Decameron* and other works by Boccaccio had been translated from Italian and noted as such.[181] Chaucer, as well as John Milton in the seventeenth century, translated parts of Dante's *La divina commedia* from its original Italian. Thomas Hoby, who translated Castiglione's *The Courtier*, and William Barker, who translated works by Giovanni Battista Gelli and Lodovico Domenichi, also contributed to widespread translations of Italian works in England.[182]

Along with translations of Italian poems came adaptations of them. Scholars often credit Wyatt for popularising the sonnet in England.[183] His sonnets, inspired by Petrarch, and popular translations

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[178] D. Clarke, "Lover's Songs Shall Turne to Holy Psalmes": Mary Sidney and the Transformation of Petrarch', *The Modern Language Review*, 92/2 (1997), p. 283.
[179] A. Strowe, 'The Auctour, the Translatoure, and the Impressoure: Translating Boccaccio's Authorship in Early Modern England', *Textus*, 24/3 (2011), p. 477.
[180] Strowe, 'The Auctour', p. 481.
[181] Strowe, 'The Auctour', p. 482.
[182] Hoby and Barker were also considered 'Italianate Englishmen' who knew each other very well from travelling in Italy together. Bartlett, 'Travel and Translation', p. 497.
[183] S. Guy-Bray, 'Petrarch, Wyatt, and Surrey: Sonnets, Teleology, and Sexuality', *Textual Practice*, 33/8 (2019), p. 1300.

of Petrarch, Joe Glaser argues, are reflective of Wyatt himself and the realities of the political world of the Tudor court. Glaser argues that Wyatt's adaptation of Petrarch's 'Una candida cerva' into 'Whoso List to Hunt' transformed a whimsical chase of a deer into the cynical pursuit of Anne Boleyn, with whom Wyatt was rumoured to have had an affair before her relationship with Henry VIII.[184] Wyatt's 'Whoso List to Hunt' is another example of how translations of Petrarch were used by Tudor English poets to discuss contemporary, controversial issues and topics in a more discreet, safe manner. Petrarch's works were appreciated in Tudor England not just because of their stylistic and thematic appeal, but also because poets saw this as a way to discuss contemporary society tactfully.

Knowledge of the Italian language was used to analyse the style of late medieval Italian poetry and create the English style. Wyatt's and Surrey's translations of Petrarch's *Trionfi*, created for Henry VIII's court, are considered foundational in establishing the English ten-syllable line and earned Wyatt and Howard recognition as the first reformers of English poetic style and meter.[185] Philip Sidney, who was fluent in Italian and is often revered as one of the best Elizabethan poets, frequently wrote his sonnets in the Petrarchan style.[186] Petrarch's popularisation of the sonnet in the fourteenth century, especially in *Il canzoniere* in which 317 out of 366 poems are written in sonnet form, even influenced Shakespeare's adoption of the sonnet in his own writing style (though most Shakespearean scholars argue that is where the influence ends).[187] Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* was thematically and stylistically modelled after Petrarch, and A.C. Hamilton even goes so far as to label him 'the English Petrarch' because of it.[188] Tomita has included *Songes and Sonets*, otherwise known as *Tottel's Miscellany*, by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey,

[184] Glaser, 'Uses of Mistranslation', p. 215.
[185] Guy-Bray, 'Petrarch, Wyatt, and Surrey', p. 1300.
[186] Pirillo, 'Voyagers and Translators', p. 32.
[187] W. Kennedy, *Petrarchism at Work: Contextual Economies in the Age of Shakespeare* (Ithaca, NY, 2016), p. 221.
[188] A. C. Hamilton, 'Sidney's Astrophel and Stella as a Sonnet Sequence', *English Literary History*, 36/1 (1969), p. 64.

Thomas Wyatt, Nicholas Grimald, and others in her list of Italian works printed in England perhaps because the impact of the Italian style on this work is so great.[189] Being able to demonstrate that Italian ideas and style directly shaped English poetry strengthens the argument that Italian ideas contributed to English discourses on women revealed in the works discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Chapters Three, Four, and Five will also show how Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney were part of this English trend of drawing on ideas and techniques popularised in Italy to create their own works.

Along with influencing English literature, late medieval Italian literature also influenced the political and social landscapes of Tudor England. *The Courtier* by Baldassare Castiglione was embraced in Tudor England and elsewhere as a guide for navigating courtly society. *The Courtier* was first published in vernacular Italian in 1528, and the first English translation was published in England in 1561 by Thomas Hoby, who travelled frequently between England and Italy.[190] There is evidence, as demonstrated by Mary Partridge, that *The Courtier* was circulated and read in England in its original Italian as well as French and Spanish before 1561.[191] By the time it was translated into English, Castiglione was already known in England. *The Courtier* reveals the qualities a courtier should have, like noble heritage, proficiency in arms, horsemanship, speaking and writing skills, and cultural accomplishments, and then how to use them.[192] Interactions with Castiglione's instructions can be seen in numerous contemporary works, according to Douglas Northrop, and in these interactions the importance placed on them in sixteenth-century England can be seen.[193] John M. Headley argues that when acting as a councillor to

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[189] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue,* pp. 35, 38, 40, 45, 58, 61.
[190] Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', pp. 33-4. See B., Castiglione, *The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio … done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London, 1561).
[191] M. Partridge, 'Images of the Courtier in Elizabethan England' (doctoral thesis, University of Birmingham, 2008), p. 770.
[192] D. Northrop, "The ende therfore of a perfect courtier' in Baldassare Castiglione's The Courtier', *Philological Quarterly*, 77/3 (1998), p. 298.
[193] Northrop, "The ende therfore', p. 302.

Henry VIII, Thomas More possessed the capability to relax him and put him at ease with intellect and humour, which Castiglione claimed was an important ability for a courtier to have when counselling his sovereign.[194] Headley also argues, though, that More did not have the political hunger outlined by Castiglione that was necessary to flourish as a courtier, though Thomas Cromwell, another advisor of Henry VIII, did.[195]

Although primarily an instruction manual on navigating courtly society, Castiglione also delineated the roles of women within that society and, as Alice Friedman notes, 'deemphasised the authority of women'.[196] While the roles assigned to gentlewomen in courtly society required submission and highlighted their perceived inferiority to men, *The Courtier* was unique because it gave women a function outside of marriage or the church.[197] The widespread translation and readership of *The Courtier* in England suggests that the ideas about women contained within it were either not objectionable or, at most, widely accepted.

Another Italian author who influenced the political landscape in Tudor England was Niccolò Machiavelli. Machiavelli's works were circulated widely in Tudor England.[198] At the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars doubted the significance of Machiavelli's influence on Tudor political thought.[199] Other scholars, though, have

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[194] J. M. Headley, 'The Problem of Council Revisited: More, Castiglione, and the Resignation of Office in the Sixteenth Century', *Moreana*, 40/153 (2003), p. 108.
[195] Headley, 'Problem of Council', pp. 118-9.
[196] A. Friedman, 'The Influence of Humanism on the Education of Girls and Boys in Tudor England', *History of Education Quarterly*, 25/1 (1985), p. 59.
[197] Northrop, "The ende therfore', p. 302.
[198] A. Petrina, 'Translating Machiavelli's Prince in Early Modern England: New Manuscript Evidence', *Manuscript Studies*, 3/2 (2018), p. 305.
[199] Some twentieth-century scholars argued that Machiavelli had little genuine influence on Tudor political thought. For example, L. Arnold Weissberger argued that, while the over 300 mentions of Machiavelli in Elizabethan literature would suggest he was a major influence, most Elizabethan authors did not understand his political ideas well enough to be influenced by them, and therefore Machiavelli had 'no appreciable influence on the thought or policy of Tudor England'. L. A. Weissberger, 'Machiavelli and Tudor England', *Political Science Quarterly*, 42/4 (1927), p. 605. J. B. Black argued that while Queen Elizabeth I demonstrated Machiavellian traits in matters of foreign policy, there is no reason to believe she was actually following the guidelines set forth by Machiavelli. J. B. Black, *The Reign of Elizabeth, 1558-1603* (Oxford, 1936), p. 333. Sergio Bertelli and Piero Innocenti

recognised how Machiavelli's republican ideas appealed to those who saw England as a monarchical republic.[200] Due to an increased study of early modern works that either imitated or directly referred to Machiavelli, there has been a shift in scholarly thought. Increasingly, scholars are arguing that Machiavelli did have a substantial influence in Tudor England.[201] Machiavelli's works circulated widely in England, both in manuscript and print, influencing political thought. Henry VIII's decision to break from the Catholic Church and establish his own church, with Thomas Cromwell's assistance, has been seen by Waller Newell as a manoeuvre modelled directly upon Machiavelli's strategies.[202] Although *The Prince* (*Il Principe)* was not published in English until 1640, Alessandra Petrina suggests that the work was already being read in Italian, French, and Latin shortly after its release,

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argued that Machiavelli's influence in England can only be traced back as far as the seventeenth century, coinciding with the English Civil War. S. Bertelli and P. Innocenti*, Bibliografia Machiavelliana* (Verona, 1979), pp. lxxvi-lxxvii. These scholars probably struggled to see how Machiavelli's republican ideas of active public life and civic duty, which made sense in political environments like Florence and Venice, would have been appealing or functional in a monarchical England. But ideas do not need to be fully understood to influence a person or society. The emergence of the Machiavel figure in Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, most notably embodied in Iago in *Othello*, suggests that even a distorted understanding of Machiavelli's thought exerted a profound cultural and imaginative influence. For further discussion, see K. Jacobsen, 'Iago's Art of War: The 'Machiavellian Moment' in *Othello'*, *Modern Philology*, 106/3 (2009), pp. 497-529.

[200] For examinations of England as a monarchic republic, see P. Collinson, 'The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 69/2 (1987), pp. 394-424; J. McDiarmid (ed.), *The Monarchical Republic of Early Modern England: Essays in Response to Patrick Collinson* (London, 2007).

[201] Alessandra Petrina argues that although European princes, such as Henry VIII, had been exhibiting the behaviours and traits prescribed by Machiavelli for centuries, his ideas still contributed to the landscape of political thought in Tudor England and perhaps offered justification in maintaining these traits and behaviours for future monarchs, like Elizabeth I. A. Petrina, 'Reginald Pole and the Reception of the *Principe* in Henrician England', in A. Arienzo, A Petrina, and M. Marrapodi (eds.), *Machiavellian Encounters in Tudor and Stuart England: Literary and Political Influences from the Reformation to the Restoration* (Farnham, 2013), pp. 13, 27. J. G. A. Pocock argued that, as classical education became more popular in England, the humanistic principle of civic duty aligning with Machiavellian principles was gradually adopted by the English. Pocock also argued that the politico-religious turbulence of the sixteenth century made Machiavelli's ideas of civic consciousness appealing, and that the expanding politicised consciousness of the court spread through the rest of the country. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ, 1975), pp. 340, 348, 351.

[202] W. Newell, *Tyrants: A History of Power, Injustice, and Terror* (New York, 2016), pp. 103-4.

contributing to English political discourse.[203] Indeed, Cardinal Reginald Pole discussed *The Prince* at length in his *Apologia ad Carolum Quintum* in 1539.[204] References to Machiavelli's political ideas in connection with political strategy of Henry VIII were well documented by his close advisors.[205] In 1539, Henry Parker, Lord Morley, sent to Thomas Cromwell Machiavelli's *History of Florence* (*Istorie Florentine*) and *The Prince*, urging him to read them both.[206] Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy* (*I Discorsi*) also contributed to English political thought.

It was common for English authors to use Machiavelli's works about antiquity to consider their current political environment.[207] For instance, William Thomas, who, as discussed above, wrote *Historie of Italie* (1549), wrote a political guide for Edward VI called *Discourses* modelled directly from Machiavelli's *Discourses*.[208] Gabriel Harvey, along with Philip Sidney and writer Thomas Preston, used Machiavelli's *Discourses* to read and interpret Livy and apply classical ideas of government and diplomacy to Elizabethan politics.[209] Classical, republican ideas about self-governance and civic virtue can be seen in the English political context as early as More's *Utopia* in 1516.[210] In 1560 Machiavelli's *The Art of War* (*L'arte della Guerra*) was translated, printed in London, and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth I.[211] Elizabeth is the Tudor monarch most often associated with

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[203] A. Petrina, 'Translating Machiavelli's Prince', pp. 304-5.
[204] R. Pole, *Epistularium Reginaldi Poli S.R.E. Cardinalis et aliorum ad ipsum* (Brescia, 1745), pp. 136-45.
[205] V. Sullivan, 'Modernity and Tyranny', *Perspectives on Political Science*, 46/4 (2017), p. 229.
[206] Lord Morley to Thomas Cromwell, 13 February 1539, *Calendar of State Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII: General, 1509-1547*, no. 285; TNA SP 1/143, fol. 74^{r-v}.
SP 1 State Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII: General, 1509-1547
[207] D. Pirillo, 'Republicanism and Religious Dissent: Machiavelli and the Italian Protestant Reformers', in Arienzo, Petrina, and Marrapodi (eds.), *Machiavellian Encounters*, p. 132.
[208] Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', p. 34.
[209] Pirillo, 'Republicanism', p. 132.
[210] Q. Skinner, *Visions of Politics: Volume 2, Renaissance Virtues* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 8, 223. To see how this progressed, chapters eleven, twelve, and thirteen of this volume explore the impact of Machiavellian and republican ideas in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
[211] Petrina, 'Translating Machiavelli's Prince', p. 305.

Machiavelli partly because of the references to him in Marlowe and Shakespeare, in which Petrina argues his ideas are misunderstood and misrepresented.[212] Laura Janara argues that Machiavelli's ideas greatly appealed to Elizabeth because she faced more threats to her rule than her father and siblings who ruled before her.[213] Elizabeth's strategy of donning many 'masks' to rule successfully and authoritatively (a mother to England, a virgin, a prince, a *res mixta*), Janara argues, directly followed the advice of Machiavelli.[214] Machiavelli's works were valued for their ideas, but also for being Italian. The *italianità* of Machiavelli made his ideas more intriguing to English audiences, and this can be seen in multiple editions of his works that were published in Italian by John Wolfe in the 1580s, printed in London, but falsely presented as being made in various Italian cities.[215] Wolfe attempted to make his books more appealing by taking advantage of the English audience's apparent desire to consume authentically Italian ideas and works.

The popularity of Italian works can be seen in their ownership, printing, translation, and adaptation in England. The themes and style of Italian poets, like Petrarch, were imitated and adapted to create the early modern English style of poetry. Ideas of leading Italian thinkers, like Castiglione and Machiavelli, were translated and disseminated in England and informed politics and society. Castiglione and Machiavelli were humanists, and the third and final area in which English people encountered Italian culture and ideas explored in this chapter will be the impact of late medieval Italian humanism.

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[212] Petrina, 'Translating Machiavelli's Prince', p. 303.
[213] L. Janara, 'Machiavelli, Elizabeth I, and the Innovative Historical Self: A Politics of Action, Not Identity', *History of Political Thought*, 27/3 (2006), p. 473.
[214] Janara, 'Machiavelli, Elizabeth I', pp. 476-77.
[215] Between 1584 and 1588, Wolfe published Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, *Il Principe*, *Vita di Castruccio Castracani*, *Ritratto di cose di Francia e della Magna*, *Il modo che tenne il duca Valentino per ammazzar Vitellozzo*, *Arte della Guerra*, *Storie Fiorentine*, *La Mandragola*, *Clizia*, *Belfagor*, *I Capitoli*, and *I Decennali* claiming that they were published in Palermo, Rome, and Piacenza, but they were actually published in London. See Pirillo, 'Republicanism', p. 124.

The *studia humanitatis* in England

As an educational paradigm, and as discussed in the introduction, the *studia humanitatis* grew to include grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy, which is how it existed when it first arrived in the intellectual English world at Oxford in 1439.[216] There were many students of the *studia humanitatis* at Oxford, many of whom also studied at Padua, like William Grocyn, Thomas Linacre, and John Colet, who became known as the Oxford Reformers.[217] There were many Italian humanists who came to Oxford to teach the humanities. During the fifteenth century, there was an observable increase in English interest in humanism from when Florentine humanist Poggio Bracciolini visited in 1418 and when Erasmus first visited in 1499.[218] English interest in Italian literature, which has been demonstrated by the data collected in *PLRE* and Tomita's *Catalogue*, led to an increased knowledge of how the Italians appreciated classical learning, which then led to the creation of humanist libraries and grammar schools used by English elites.[219] By the sixteenth century, humanism was a flourishing intellectual movement in England.

The humanist movement in England was slightly different to that of late medieval Florence, and this was mainly due to the impact of Erasmus and Thomas More. Erasmus is the figurehead for the type of humanism that existed in much of Northern Europe during the sixteenth century.[220] In 1499, Erasmus visited England for the first time and connected with the humanist circle there, which included Thomas More, who later became his close colleague and lifelong friend.[221] He lived with More between 1505 and 1506, during which time he worked

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[216] J. McConica, 'Thomas More as Humanist', in G. Logan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 22.
[217] R. J. Schoeck, 'Humanism in England,' in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, Volume 2, Humanism Beyond Italy* (Philadelphia, 1988), p. 7.
[218] C. Carroll, 'Humanism and English Literature in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', in J. Kraye (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 247.
[219] Carroll, 'Humanism and English literature', p. 246.
[220] K. Wrońska, 'Erasmus of Rotterdam as a Teacher of Christian Humanism', *Paedagogia Christiana*, 44/2 (2020), pp. 70-1. McConica, *Erasmus*, pp. 31, 39.
[221] Carroll, 'Humanism and English literature', p. 247.

on translations of ancient texts.[222] Erasmus was close with many English humanists while he was in England, like William Blount, John Colet, and William Grocyn.[223] He noted in 1505 that there were at least five or six English scholars who were as well versed in Latin and Greek as the original Italian humanists they admired so much.[224] Then, Erasmus lived in Italy from 1506 to 1509 before making his way back to England the same year he left Italy.[225]

As humanism spread through England, it profoundly influenced the development of education. In Italy, classical Latin grammar, rhetoric, and the study of ancient texts had been central to education since the thirteenth century, and by the fifteenth century, this focus had become standardised.[226] By the late fifteenth century, Italy's educational curricula increasingly reflected humanist ideals.[227] In England during the sixteenth century, humanistic education for children began to gain prominence. Scholars estimate that between the 1560s and 1630s, tens of thousands of children in England were taught Latin grammar and Latin texts, marking a significant shift in the scale of education.[228] While Latin instruction had long been a tradition in grammar schools, the sheer number of children who received this education was unprecedented, and many of these students would go on to receive further humanist training.[229]

Key humanist educational principles, articulated by Erasmus in *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1515) and *On the Education of Children* (1529), emphasised that learning should be enjoyable, that education, particularly language acquisition, should begin early, and

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[222] S. Baker House, 'Erasmus circle in England', *ODNB*.
[223] E. E. Reynolds, 'Erasmus in England, 1505-6', in E. E. Reynolds, *Thomas More and Erasmus* (London, 1965), p. 52.
[224] Reynolds, 'Erasmus in England', p. 53.
[225] D. Rundle, *The Hutchinson Encyclopedia of the Renaissance* (Abingdon, 2005), p. 241.
[226] R. Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), p. iii.
[227] Black, *Humanism and Education*, p. iii.
[228] I. Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (Abingdon, 2016), p. 65.
[229] Green, *Humanism and Protestantism*, p. 191.

that teachers must foster moral development alongside intellectual growth.[230] Humanism also promoted recognising each student's unique aptitudes and individual potential.[231] These ideas were reflected in More's *Utopia* (1516), a seminal work that critiqued politics, philosophy, and religion.[232] More believed humanist education was essential for cultivating a better and more peaceful future, and he applied these principles in educating his own children, including his three daughters.[233]

Prominent figures of Tudor England, like Mary and Philip Sidney, the Cooke sisters, and even Queen Mary I and Queen Elizabeth I, received humanist educations.[234] Although humanist education in England emphasised religion more strongly than in Italy, as I have discussed in my Introduction, its foundational principles were rooted in the Italian humanist tradition. Scholars like William Grocyn, who studied at Padua and became the first to teach Greek in England, influenced the spread of humanism.[235] Grocyn's pupil, William Lily, was the first master at St Paul's School, which was founded by John Colet and emphasised humanist teachings.[236] Between 1485 and 1603, 379 English and Welsh humanists studied at Padua, many under the tutelage of Italian philosopher Niccolò Leonico Tomeo, and were exposed to the 'new learning' of Petrarch.[237] The English 'nation' at Padua was a direct manifestation of English appreciation of Italian intellectualism.[238] Despite restrictions on travel to Rome, English humanists continued to study classical subjects, especially civil law, in Padua, solidifying the connection between Italian and English humanism.[239]

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[230] Parrish, 'Education', p. 592.
[231] Parrish, 'Education', p. 594.
[232] Parrish, 'Education', pp. 597-600.
[233] M. Balmuth, 'Female Education in 16th & 17th Century England: Influences, Attitudes, and Trends', *Canadian Women's Studies*, 9/3 (1988), p. 18.
[234] Green, *Humanism and Protestantism*, p. 263.
[235] Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen', p. 235.
[236] Bartlett, 'Worshipful Gentlemen', p. 235.
[237] See Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors*, p. 109 and Woolfson, 'Padua and English Students', p. 573.
[238] Woolfson, 'Padua and English Students', p. 584.
[239] Woolfson, 'Padua and English Students', p. 580.

The humanist education movement in England did not extend equally to women. Traditional gender roles and societal expectations limited women's access to the same educational opportunities afforded to men. Woolfson has argued that women were excluded from receiving the full benefits of humanist education due to their perceived secondary status in society.[240] Dowling has adopted a slightly different perspective, highlighting that the intellectual disparity between men and women was too vast to make generalisations about the impact of humanism on women's education.[241] But Retha Warnicke identified around sixty women who received humanist education in England.[242] Kyanston Bowden has noted that some women, including Mary Sidney, Mildred Cook, Anne Cook, and Margaret Roper, studied foreign languages, classical history, philosophy, and politics—subjects central to humanist education.[243] These women, through their engagement with humanist learning, challenged prevailing views of women as intellectually inferior and contributed to shifting perceptions of female intellectual capacity. The impact of humanism on the education of women is a central theme of this thesis, which asserts a connection between Italian educational ideals and the experiences of women in sixteenth-century England.

Establishing how the Italian *studia humanitatis* was transmitted to and adapted within England is fundamental to the analysis of the English works discussed in Chapter Two. If the fact that humanism originated in Italy and was subsequently received and reshaped in England cannot be demonstrated, the claim that English authors drew upon an Italian classical inheritance loses its foundation. The argument that these authors employed the humanistic practice of using women

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[240] Friedman, 'The Influence of Humanism', pp. 59-61.
[241] M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (London, 1986), p. 242.
[242] This number is set in contrast again the 153 boys who entered the humanist school at St. Paul's in one year alone, but it does show that some women were affected by the humanist movement in England. R. M. Warnicke, 'Women and Humanism in England', in A. Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy, Volume 2, Humanism Beyond Italy* (Philadelphia, PA, 1988), p. 39.
[243] C. M. Kynaston Bowden, 'Female Education in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries in England and Wales: A Study of Attitudes and Practice' (doctoral thesis, University of London, 1996), p. 23.

and narratives from antiquity to articulate ideas about contemporary women depends on evidence of this transmission. Similarly, if the existence of a humanistic educational paradigm for girls in England, as part of this Italian inheritance, cannot be substantiated, the claim that Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney's use of humanistic rhetorical strategies and translation contributes to that inheritance holds less water.

Conclusion

The presence of Italians in England was extensive. There was a thriving Italian mercantile scene in England vital to the English economy. Many Italians held prestigious religious and political positions in England and at the English court. Italian business and culture were appreciated in England during the sixteenth century before, during, and after the Reformation, and there were multiple avenues for people of different socio-economic backgrounds to learn the Italian language. Some English people believed Italians to be vulgar and corrupt, while others deeply admired their culture and made it a part of their own lives. There were hundreds of works written by Italian authors that were owned and printed during the sixteenth century in various languages, showing that English people interacted with Italian ideas. English appreciation of Italian ideas can also be seen in the influence of Italian themes and style on literature. Finally, the prominence of the *studia humanitatis*, the key element of the humanist educational paradigm that emerged from Florence in the late Middle Ages, in England further demonstrates that English people encountered and embraced Italian ideas. This chapter has shown that Italian ideas contributed to the intellectual and cultural environments of sixteenth-century England, thereby serving as crucial context for the next four chapters. This cultural inheritance also affected the lives of women. Lady Mary Grey's ownership of Italian humanistic works and the influence of humanism on the education of women has been discussed briefly as an example of this in this chapter. Moving forward, Chapter Two establishes ideas about women in late medieval Florentine and

sixteenth-century English contexts and examines how humanism contributed to the expression of these ideas.

Chapter Two: Humanism and Ideas About Women in Italy and England

In a letter written to her mother in July 1479, Nannina de Medici wrote, 'Whoso wants to do as they wish should not be born a woman.'[1] Nannina was lamenting the fact that her husband, Bernardo, had dismissed their son's tutor and left him with no money and nowhere to go without her approval. She was expressing frustration with her lack of control over her son's education and authority within her household, in which the patriarchal structure of late medieval Florence was exemplified.[2] This letter is evidence that at least some Florentine women understood the limitations imposed upon them. Here, Nannina showed that she understood that men were given more power than women in her society, and she clearly was not very happy about it. In just one sentence, Nannina conveyed how women were perceived in late medieval Florence: inferior to men.

This chapter critically examines the conceptualisation of women and their social roles in late medieval Florence and sixteenth-century England, respectively, focusing on how these notions were articulated. It begins with a discussion of scholarly interpretations of religion and humanism in Italy, which contributed to perceptions of women, alongside the importance of Italian women's literary contributions. The subsequent analysis engages with six Florentine texts written by prominent male authors to uncover prevalent ideas about women and the intellectual forces underpinning them. Similar analysis is then applied to six sixteenth-century texts written by men. The advent of humanism, as introduced earlier in this thesis, prompted Italian and English male authors to delineate women's roles through classical examples.

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[1] Nannina Rucellai to Lucrezia de Medici, 12 July 1479, *MaP* serie 80, filza 69.
[2] R. M. Bell, *How to Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians* (Chicago, IL, 1999), pp. 220-1.

Historiographical review

In late medieval Florence, religious doctrine and humanism shaped the roles and expectations of women. Women were primarily viewed as paragons of virginity and purity, expected to embody the virtues of chastity, modesty, and devotion. Scholarship has demonstrated that from an early age, women were taught to look to the Virgin Mary and female saints as models of virtue.[3] It has shown that women received detailed guidance on how to behave in every phase of life based on religious teachings.[4] They were encouraged to emulate the obedience, modesty, virtue, and devotion of Mary, particularly when they became wives and mothers.[5] Daniel Bornstein argued that, during this period, women were increasingly able to practice domestic piety through marriage and motherhood, further solidifying their religious duties within the household.[6]

The religious framework of the time also defined women's social roles. Joan Kelly-Gadol contended that the Italian Renaissance, far from representing an era of intellectual freedom for women, primarily marked a renewed emphasis on chastity, which limited women's opportunities for intellectual advancement.[7] Since her argument was put forth, Saundra Weddle examined how women's confinement to the private sphere was a means of enabling them to emulate the Virgin Mary, honour God, and prepare for future marriage, and how the ideals of modesty and virginity were crucial for upholding

[3] M. Rogers and P. Tinagli, *Women in Italy, 1350 -1650 Ideals and Realities: A Sourcebook* (Manchester, 2006).
[4] G. Zarri, 'Christian Good Manners: Spiritual and Monastic Rules in the Quattro- and Cinquecento' in Letizia Panizza (ed.), *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*, (London, 2000), pp. 76-91. For more on how religion shaped the lives of women see 'Part II Women and the Church', pp. 76-164 in this work.
[5] Rogers and Tinagli, *Women in Italy*, pp. 43-7. Also see chapters four and five in this work for further explanation of how female religious figures served as behavioural examples for women.
[6] D. Bornstein, 'Women and Religion in Late Medieval Italy: History and Historiography' in D. Bornstein and R. Rusconi (eds.), *Women and Religion in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Chicago, IL, 1996), p. 4.
[7] J. Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, MA, 1977), p. 152.

the broader societal values of Renaissance Florence.[8] Marta Amjar highlighted how, toward the end of the Renaissance, some elite women began to reclaim religious narratives to advocate greater intellectual and social freedom.[9] In this sense, religious teachings and the veneration of female saints not only shaped women's roles but also provided them with models of virtue and a platform for asserting their influence within a highly structured religious and social order.

Humanism emerged as another key force influencing the roles of women. Early humanists in Florence sought to demonstrate that their movement could coexist with and even reinforce religious beliefs while shaping societal norms. W. H. Woodward's early analysis of Leonardo Bruni's treatise on women's education illuminated the ways in which humanism was integrated into women's lives and showed that boys and girls were provided with distinct educational paths, reflecting their respective societal roles.[10] Kelly-Gadol argued that the humanist movement did little to improve the lives of women, as traditional religious notions of chastity and virtue continued to dominate and restrict them.[11] She asserted that women who participated in Renaissance humanism did so within the constraints of a patriarchal society. More recently Virginia Cox has maintained that women's humanistic education was primarily concerned with imparting the virtues necessary for managing a household, with many elite women being unable even to read or write.[12]

Building on Kelly-Gadol's analysis, Stephanie Jed observed that the humanist revival of classical depictions of women from antiquity often emphasised chastity, reflecting the ongoing religious

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[8] S. Weddle, 'Women's Place in the Family and the Convent: A Reconsideration of Public and Private in Renaissance Florence', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55/2 (2001), p. 64.
[9] M. Amjar, 'Exemplary Women in Renaissance Italy: Ambivalent Models of Behaviour?', in L. Panizza (ed.), *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society* (London, 2000), pp. 244-64.
[10] W. H. Woodward, *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators: 1400-1460* (Cambridge, 1912), p. 247.
[11] Kelly-Gadol, *Essays*, p. 36.
[12] V. Cox, *A Short History of the Italian Renaissance* (London, 2016), p. 169.

underpinnings of humanist thought.[13] Benson pointed out the new opportunities humanism presented for certain elite women, and how humanist discourse, particularly in works like Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*, began to offer more nuanced views on women's intellectual capacities.[14] As humanism gained prominence, these discussions encouraged a more diverse understanding of the nature of women, even though they remained constrained by prevailing patriarchal norms. Women from elite circles who gained access to classical education played an essential role in the development of humanism, sometimes challenging patriarchal norms while still operating within them.[15] Gabriella Zarri noted that, during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these women began to receive praise from their humanist contemporaries, marking a shift in their social status.[16] Nonetheless, Jane Stevenson has shown that while humanism contributed to the rise of female intellectuals, it simultaneously reinforced limitations on their roles, and most male humanists supported women's education but did so with the underlying fear that it could lead to immoral behaviour and the erosion of traditional gender norms.[17] Despite the increased educational opportunities provided by humanism, the broader societal expectations of women remained largely influenced by patriarchal ideas about their roles and capacities.

In addition to examining the influence of religion and humanism on ideas about women, scholars, like Lisa Kaborycha, recognise the value of studying women's letters as important

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[13] S. Jed, 'Chastity on the Page: A Feminist Use of Paleography', in M. Migiel and J. Schiesari (eds.), *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY, 1991), pp. 114-17.
[14] P. Joseph Benson, *Invention of the Renaissance Woman: The Challenge of Female Independence in the Literature and Thought of Italy and England* (University Park, PA, 2010).
[15] J. Myers-Mushkin, "The Quality of Women's Intelligence': Female Humanists in Renaissance Italy' (MA Thesis, University of Louisville, 2016).
[16] G. Zarri, *Le sante vive: profezie di corte e devozione femminile tra '400 e '500* (Turin, 1990), pp. 32-9.
[17] J. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2005), p. 142; for a more specific discussion of women who were taught Latin, were praised for the public speaking abilities, and other humanist achievements not usually available to women, see pp. 152-6.

expressions of their individual thoughts and experiences.[18] Megan Moran contends that an analysis of early modern Italian women's correspondence is crucial for understanding women's roles within their families.[19] Meredith Ray has also demonstrated that letters offer insight into how women perceived themselves, their societal roles, and the ways in which they either conformed to or deviated from these expectations.[20] Ann Crabb has shown that letters offer valuable information about domestic life and marriage and provide crucial evidence of the evolution of women's literacy over time.[21]

Theories of men – a selected corpus

Influential thinkers of late medieval Florence had much to say about women as wives and their intellectual capabilities. This section examines the ideas about women expressed in *On Famous Women* by Giovanni Boccaccio (1361-1362), *De studiis et litteris* by Leonardo Bruni (c. 1405), *The Wealth of Wives* by Francesco Barbaro (1415), *Della vita civile* by Matteo Palmieri (1429), *Della famiglia* by Leon Battista Alberti (1430s), and *Dialogi* by Antonio Brucioli (1526). Although not all of these texts were printed, translated, or possessed in England—though it cannot be conclusively proved that they were not—they nonetheless represent widely accepted notions of women in late medieval Florence and are deserving of examination in this chapter. As my discussion will demonstrate, these authors were prominent humanist scholars whose ideas were both formative and indicative of prevailing beliefs about women in Florence and beyond.

Giovanni Boccaccio's *On Famous Women* is the earliest example of Western biography devoted to women after the fall of

[18] L. Kaborycha, *A Corresponding Renaissance: Letters Written by Italian Women, 1375-1650* (Oxford, 2016) is a survey of Italian women's letters.
[19] M. Moran, 'Female Letter Writing and the Preservation of Family Memory in Early Modern Italy', *Early Modern Women*, 6 (2011), p. 198.
[20] M. Ray, *Writing Gender in Women's Letter Collections of the Italian Renaissance* (Toronto, 2009).
[21] A. Crabb, "If I could write': Margherita Datini and Letter Writing, 1385-1410', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60/4 (2007), pp. 1170-1206.

ancient Rome.[22] Written in the 1360s, this work profiles 106 real and fictional women, primarily from antiquity, whom Boccaccio regarded as moral exemplars.[23] His motivation stemmed from a belief that education in major Italian cities lacked moral instruction and intellectual rigor. As a leading humanist of the Italian Renaissance, Boccaccio sought to revive classical ideals, believing that studying the ancients could cultivate a more enlightened present and future. While he acknowledged the importance of women's education, he portrayed them as overcoming an inherently weak and flawed nature. His perspectives shaped discourse on women in late medieval Florence and influenced later writers, such as Thomas Elyot in England.[24]

Francesco Barbaro's *The Wealth of Wives*, an early fifteenth-century comportment manual, was written for Lorenzo de Medici before his wedding to Ginevra Cavalcanti.[25] Barbaro, a Venetian politician, diplomat, and humanist, advised Lorenzo on the duties expected of his wife, despite being unmarried himself at the time.[26] His perspective, like Boccaccio's, was shaped by classical ideals, emphasising women's natural inferiority and their expected roles as obedient, virtuous, and nurturing wives. Notably, he upheld the paradoxical view that while women were weak and incapable, the success of marriage ultimately depended on them. This work was translated and published in multiple languages over the centuries, attesting to its broader European relevance.

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[22] G. Boccaccio, *On Famous Women*, trans. by V. Brown (Cambridge, MA, 2001).
[23] For more on how Boccaccio and other late medieval Italian writers established this idea, see S. Kolsky, *The Ghost of Boccaccio: Writings on Famous Women in Renaissance Italy* (Turnhout, 2005).
[24] For fuller discussion, see C. Jordan, 'Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 36/2 (1983), pp. 181-201.
[25] F. Barbaro, *The Wealth of Wives: A Fifteenth-Century Marriage Manual*, ed. by M. L. King (Toronto, 2015).
[26] For more on Barbaro's life, humanist interests, and connections to the Medici and Florence see M. L. King, 'Introduction', in M. L. King (ed.) *The Wealth of Wives: A Fifteenth-Century Marriage Manual* (Toronto, 2015), pp. 1-64.

Matteo Palmieri's *Della vita civile* reflects the views of humanist historian engaged in Florence's civic life.[27] Though Palmieri did not directly address women's education or their roles as wives, he discussed their function as mothers and the necessity of childhood education. This work was completed in 1429 and circulated in manuscript between 1435 and 1440 before print production began in 1528.[28] The Florentine humanist ideals on education presented in this work appeared later in English discourses. Palmieri also wrote in the Tuscan vernacular, which helped make humanist thought more accessible beyond elite scholarly circles.

Leon Battista Alberti's *Della famiglia*, written in the 1430s, explores the structure of the family through a fictional dialogue set in 1421, during the Alberti family's exile in Padua.[29] Born into a prominent Florentine mercantile family, Alberti received a humanist education in Venice, Padua, and Bologna before returning to Florence in the 1430s and 1440s. His ideas were influenced by the vibrant humanist and religious climate of major Italian cities.[30] The second and third sections of *Della famiglia* examine marriage and women's roles as wives, again drawing on classical models. While Alberti upheld the traditional marital hierarchy, he also emphasised that marriage should be based on peace, mutual benefit, and friendship.[31] His work

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[27] M. Palmieri, *Della vita civile* (Florence, 1528). For more on Palmieri's background see P. Grendler, 'Palmieri, Matteo', in P. Grendler (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance*, vol. 3 (New York, 1999), pp. 376-77.

[28] Grendler, 'Palmieri, Matteo', pp. 376-77. USTC catalogues sixty-nine copies printed in Florence in 1529, twenty-three copies printed in Venice in 1535, and one copy printed in Florence in 1539, showing that this work was popular in the sixteenth century as well.

[29] L. B. Alberti, *The Albertis of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's Della Famiglia*, ed. and trans. by G. A. Guarino (Cranbury, 1971). Like Barbaro, Alberti was not married yet spoke with great authority on the subject. See T. Kuehn, 'Reading between the Patrilines: Leon Battista Alberti's 'Della Famiglia' in Light of His Illegitimacy', *I Tatti*, 1 (1985), pp. 161-87.

[30] For a fuller discussion of Alberti's religious and humanistic backgrounds, see G. Zak, 'Humanism as a Way of Life: Leon Battista Alberti and the Legacy of Petrarch', *I Tatti*, 17/2 (2014), pp. 217-40; T. Kircher, 'Humanism and Holiness: Leon Battista Alberti between Florence and Rome', *Modern Language Notes*, 128/1 (2013), pp. 1-19.

[31] For more on where Alberti drew inspiration for such beliefs see A. McCue Gill, 'Rereading *I libri della famiglia*: Leon Battista Alberti on Marriage, Amicizia and Conjugal Friendship', *California Italian Studies*, 2/2 (2011), pp. 1-23.

exemplifies how discussions of women and marriage were both Florentine and more broadly humanist and Italian.

Antonio Brucioli's *Dialogues* covers a wide range of topics, including politics, philosophy, and marriage.[32] His 'dialogue of marriage' presents a fictional conversation on the necessity and benefits of matrimony. As a key Florentine humanist and political figure, Brucioli played an instrumental role in establishing the Republic of Florence and promoting religious reform based on humanist principles. His writings, firmly rooted in Florentine intellectual traditions, illustrate how classical ideas shaped discussions on marriage and gender roles.[33] Together, these works reflect the evolving humanist discourse on women, marriage, and education in late medieval Italy. While deeply influenced by classical antiquity, these writers contributed to the intellectual landscape of Florence and beyond, contributing to European thought for centuries.

Thoughts on marriage and women across the corpus

These texts revealed the authors' ideas about the purpose of marriage and the roles of husbands and wives. In *The Wealth of Wives* Barbaro argued that the main purpose of marriage, according to the Romans and contemporary Christians, was procreation. He claimed that children born from 'legitimate marriages' were 'more disposed by birth to honesty, more gravely educated, and become better citizens'.[34] He argued that for men the advantages of marriage and having a virtuous wife included having a well-kept home and someone to ease their stress.[35] In *Della Famiglia*, Alberti argued that marriage was divined by nature.[36] He stated that the most important reason to get married

[32] A. Brucioli, *Dialogi* (Venice, 1526).
[33] For more on Brucioli and an analysis of his works and their significance in late medieval, humanist Florence, see M. Fadini, 'Un libro «non approvato né in parole né in sentenze»: Dello Divino Amore Christiano di Antonio Brucioli', *Italique*, 21 (2018), pp. 99-135.
[34] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 68.
[35] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 69.
[36] Alberti, *Della Famiglia*, ed. and trans. by Guarino, p. 117.

was to have children.[37] He placed men at the head of the family, making it their duty to use their authority not to be a despot, but to guide, take care of, and provide for their wife and children.[38] In *Dialogi*, Brucioli argued that marriage was the divine will of God and the source of a joyful life.[39] He argued that men had a duty to God and women to marry because women were viewed as inferior to men and needed the protection and security marriage offered.[40] He explained that the role of wives, which men should consider with great happiness, was to provide delight in youth, comfort in old age, and children through whom men are made immortal.[41]

Widely held ideas about the inherent nature of women, influenced by religion and humanism, can be seen in the works of Boccaccio, Barbaro, Alberti, and Brucioli. All these men believed that women were inherently weaker than and inferior to men. In *On Famous Women*, Boccaccio stated that the first evidence of women's inherent weakness, fickleness, and foolishness can be traced back to Eve.[42] He argued that women were intellectually and physically inferior to men.[43] The women who received the highest praise from Boccaccio were those who surpassed the perceived limitations of their sex and did things beyond those of which most men were capable. One example is Semiramis, Queen of Assyria, who disguised herself as her young son after the death of her husband so that she could rule.[44] Though Boccaccio described her deceit as 'womanly' he also gave her credit because she ruled over her people and commanded the Assyrian army with courage, skill, and intelligence that measured up to that of

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[37] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 125.
[38] Alberti, *Famiglia*, pp. 42-3.
[39] Brucioli, Dialogi, sigs. IIII^{r}-V^{v}.
[40] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig.VII^{r}.
[41] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig.VIII^{r}.
[42] Boccaccio, Famous, p. 17.
[43] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 399.
[44] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 19. Boccaccio posited that Semiramis showed that spirit was more important in governance than gender. There are many points in various works by Boccaccio where he expresses contradictory positive and negative views about the nature of women. For more on this see M. Migiel, 'Boccaccio and Women', in G. Armstrong, R. Daniels, and S. Milner (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 171-84.

the most powerful men.[45] Similarly, he praised Artemisia, who, after the death of her husband King Mausolus of Caria, victoriously defeated the Rhodian and Spartan armies in battle.[46] He praised Claudia for demonstrating courage, strength, and passion beyond her sex; Marcia, whose lifelong celibacy he viewed as masculine because it demonstrated 'purity of mind'; Sempronia, who maintained the honour of her family and strength of will when he claimed even princes would have cowered; and others for their 'masculine' achievements.[47] In praising these women for achievements that he viewed as masculine in nature, he revealed his low opinion of the feminine nature of women. Barbaro also argued that, as the weaker sex, women should be closely regulated and monitored because they were at a greater risk of falling victim to vice.[48]

Women were also believed to be inherently stubborn, greedy, jealous, and lustful. After praising Sempronia for refusing to lie and claim an imposter as her brother's legitimate child, Boccaccio wrote that this was remarkable not only because men are rarely so brave, but also because 'women are instinctively obstinate and unbending in their opinions about everything'.[49] He also claimed that 'stinginess is as habitual, or rather innate, to women as is their lack of boldness'.[50] In his praise of Camilla from Virgil's *Aeneid*, he described women as avaricious, and he used Pocris, an Athenian princess also written about by Ovid and Homer, as an example of the greedy and jealous nature of women.[51] He also believed women to be inherently 'slothful', 'pitiful', and 'lack[ing] self-confidence'.[52] Boccaccio cited Sabina Poppaea, the wife of Nero, who committed adultery and had multiple lovers and husbands as an example of the dangers of 'lasciviousness, that

[45] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 19.
[46] Boccaccio, *Famous*, pp. 239, 241.
[47] Boccaccio, *Famous*, pp. 259, 275, 317.
[48] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 75.
[49] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 319.
[50] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 287.
[51] Boccaccio, *Famous*, pp. 467 and 115.
[52] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 355.

common feminine vice'.[53] He cited Iole, who tricked Hercules into thinking she loved him as revenge for killing her father, and Deianira, Hercules's wife who sent him a poisoned cloak which made him go mad and kill himself after he was unfaithful to her, as examples of women's inherent deceptiveness and jealousy. Finally, he also cited Pocris and Clytemnestra, the legendary wife of Agamemnon, who led the Greek army in the Trojan War, as examples of how women were more prone to lustfulness and adultery. Reinforcing the idea that women were at a greater risk of falling victim to carnal desire, Barbaro instructed that women should not be completely naked while having sex with their husbands, as women only get completely naked when committing adultery.[54]

Brucioli, on the other hand, believed that everyone experienced lustful thoughts, and labelled them as natural rather than sinful.[55] In doing so, he challenged the idea that women were inherently more lustful than men. He further challenged the idea of the negative inherent nature of women when he wrote that bad wives were rare, and when women were bad wives, it was only because they were failed by their husbands. He argued that a good wife could only be corrupted by a bad husband, and a bad wife could only be corrected by a good husband.[56] He cited women from antiquity, like Cornelia, Portia, Martia, Artemisia, and Penelope (who were all praised in *On Famous Women*), whom he argued proved women were not inherently bad.[57] He believed that women were not inherently immoral, but his ideas showed that he still believed wives needed the authority and guidance of their husbands.

In their reflections on marriage and the gender dynamics within it, these influential authors promoted certain desirable traits for elite women to possess. While negative ideas about the inherent nature of

[53] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 405.
[54] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 113.
[55] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig. VII^{v}.
[56] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig. IX^{v}.
[57] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig. IX^{v}.

women existed, marriage was still a requirement for most people in late medieval Florence. Wives in elite circles were generally selected based on three categories over which they had no control: age, noble lineage and familial wealth, and physical appearance. Barbaro, agreeing with the ancients, who, he claimed, possessed authority on this matter due to their 'great learning', believed 'age, manners, descent, beauty, and riches' were some of the most important qualities a wife should possess.[58]

Taking inspiration from Hesiod and Lycurgus, Barbaro argued that the best age for women to be married was somewhere between 14 and 18, and for men it was between 30 and 37. He argued that young virgins, in comparison to older women or widows, made the best wives because their own personal tastes and preferences had not fully formed and they could be moulded to fit their husbands' needs and desires like 'soft wax'.[59] Unlike older women and widows, it was less probable that they would have developed any vices, but if they had, Barbaro argued they could be corrected more quickly.[60] Alberti argued that men should marry around the age of twenty-five.[61] While he did not say an exact age at which women should marry, he did say they should be younger and described them as 'girls'.[62] He argued, like Barbaro, that girls were 'pure, simple through inexperience, modest by nature, and without malice'.[63] Most importantly, he claimed, girls were more willing to conform to their husbands' habits and desires without question.[64] Alberti believed like Barbaro that, as women aged, they would be less blindly obedient to their husbands.

Barbaro believed that women from a noble bloodline made the best wives because he believed that people of the highest moral character came from mothers of noble descent. He revealed a common

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[58] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 71.
[59] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 75.
[60] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 75-6.
[61] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 121.
[62] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.
[63] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.
[64] Alberti, *Famiglia*, pp. 122-3.

medical belief of the time that female children were 'chiefly procreated by women', meaning that the mother's personal circumstances played a larger role in the nature of children than those of the father.[65] He encouraged men to value qualities like virtue and domestic bliss more than financial gain in marriage, but he acknowledged that this was not very realistic. Palmieri also believed that a person's life trajectory began at conception and encouraged men to marry and procreate with women of noble lineage.[66] Likewise, Alberti placed high importance on noble lineage and familial wealth. He argued that ideal brides came from families 'not of vulgar blood, little wealth, or humble profession'.[67] He claimed that this was because 'ill-bred' women were more prone to immorality and dishonesty.[68] He discussed the importance of dowries, and the strife that could come from marrying a woman whose family could not afford one.[69]

Barbaro defined hair, eyes, face, neck, and hands as the most beautiful parts of a woman.[70] He did not offer much about the beauty standards to which brides were held, but he favoured taller women because they were believed to be more modest and chaste.[71] Alberti was more specific, taking inspiration for what he deemed desirable from the ancients. He stated that because the purpose of marriage was to have children, men should choose a bride who appeared 'suited to childbearing'.[72] He specified that women should not be thin, but also not fat because he believed this could prevent conception, tall but not gangly, like Barbaro had written, brunette, and fair skinned.[73] He believed that physical beauty was important because great virtue derived from a beautiful body.[74]

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[65] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 79-80.
[66] M. Palmieri, *Della vita civile* (Florence, 1529), sigs. 12^{r}-13^{v}.
[67] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 123.
[68] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.
[69] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 124.
[70] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 81.
[71] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 81.
[72] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 121.
[73] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.
[74] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.

These authors also promoted behaviours for elite wives to emulate, often based on examples of classical women. Obedience was the most important quality men believed wives should possess. Barbaro argued that to avoid contention and anger within the home women must be obedient to their husbands, and if a husband admonished or disciplined his wife, she should 'silently sustain [his] wrath'.[75] He argued that wives needed the guidance of their husbands and were supposed to trust in their superior knowledge, hence his argument for young, mouldable brides. Barbaro placed the success of marriage on the ability of a wife to be obedient and stay in her place, yet he allocated all the power in the relationship to husbands. Similarly, Alberti argued that a good wife was an obedient wife.[76]

Barbaro argued that a virtuous, obedient, and honest wife was essential to an honest, peaceful, and loving marriage.[77] Barbaro believed that one of the most important duties of a wife was to practice modesty in all areas of life. He believed good wives were those who expressed moderation in their countenance, behaviour, dress, food consumption, company they kept, manner of walking, and disposition of mind. 'Suitably grave' is how Barbaro believed women should present themselves.[78] He advised that to preserve their modesty, women should refrain from consuming meat and alcohol, especially wine, lest they fall down the slippery slope into bacchanalian feasts. Agreeing with Marcus Cato the Elder and Sophocles, Barbaro argued that the public sphere was the place for men, and he assigned to wives a perpetual time and space of silence.[79] Their silence being an extension of their modesty, he argued that women should 'strive to be praised for the dignified brevity of their conversation rather than its splendid prolixity'.[80] He argued that women dressing modestly was for the benefit of the domestic environment, but that it also set an example

[75] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 70-1.
[76] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 126.
[77] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 70-1.
[78] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 104.
[79] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 106-7.
[80] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 106.

for the rest of Florence. He claimed that ornate garments had no place in the home, were grievous to husbands, and were only invented for the sake of lovers. He advised that husbands not allow their wives to dress in fine, ornate garments because, without them, they would be more willing to stay at home, secluded to private life.[81] Here Barbaro revealed that the roles assigned to women were designed to keep them in the private sphere, and that it was important to society that women not reject private life for a more public one. Alberti also argued that wives should be modest and clean.[82]

Boccaccio praised Penelope, Artemisia, Argia, and the wives of the Minyans for their wifely devotion and loyalty.[83] Boccaccio also believed that a strong expression of wifely devotion was not remarrying if widowed. Barbaro placed high importance on wifely devotion, and believed wives should place their husbands at the root of all their happiness so that it could not exist without them, mirroring marriages from antiquity like those of Panthia and Abradatus and Thesta and Polyxenus.[84] Brucioli believed that along with bearing children, it was the duty of a wife to provide delight in youth and

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[81] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 107-9.
[82] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 122.
[83] Penelope was the faithful wife of Odysseus in Greek mythology, known for her cleverness and patience as she awaited his return from the Trojan War for twenty years. Artemisia was a queen of Halicarnassus who, after the death of her husband, became a naval commander and played a key role in the Persian Empire's wars against Greece, most notably during the Battle of Salamis. Argia was the wife of Polynices in Greek mythology, known for her loyalty and grief as she buried her husband after his death in the battle of Thebes. In Greek mythology, the wives of the Minyans, disguised as men, infiltrated the prison where their husbands were held captive and successfully freed them by deceiving the guards. For fuller descriptions of these women see G. Boccaccio, G. Guarino (trans.), *On Famous Women* (New York, 2011), pp. 81, 125, 59, 64, respectively.
[84] In Greek mythology, Panthia was married to Abradatus, a Cimmerian commander, and their union was marked by mutual love and respect until his death in battle. Their relationship was described in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. See Xenophon, H. G. Dakyns, and F. M. Stawell (trans.), *Cyropaedia: The Education of Cyrus* (London, 2011), pp. 68-9. Barbaro remarked on the mutual respect between Thesta, who was the sister of Dionysus, and Polyxenus and on the birth of their children despite the challenges they faced, mainly caused by Polyxenus's involvement in difficult, divisive conflicts. They are not particularly prominent figures in Greek mythology, but for a description of their marriage see Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 101.

comfort in old age.[85] Finally, Alberti argued it was important to choose a wife who would be a pleasant, steadfast, and constant companion.[86]

One of the most important duties of a wife, especially in a prominent Florentine family, was managing the household. Barbaro assigned to women the domestic duties, which included overseeing estates, servants, and the education of children. His reasoning for this was that 'nature gives men vigour of body and soul [….] so also nature makes women weak, so that they may more carefully supervise all that is in the home'.[87] He explained that wives should lead their servants by exhibiting modesty, kindness, and generosity to ensure the order of the household is maintained. Barbaro stressed the importance of maintaining this social order within the home, marriage, and society. Again, by placing so much importance on maintaining the social order, he unintentionally revealed that women, as well as those staff suppressed by the wealthy, posed a threat to the social order if they chose to stray from their roles.[88] Alberti similarly wrote that by nature men were more industrious and suited to work, while women were more nurturing and suited to take care of the home their husband provided.[89] He believed it was vital that wives understood this situation and did their part to ease the burden placed on their husbands.

Since the main reason for marriage was procreation, motherhood was the other most important duty of a wife. Being a good mother started with being from a good family, as previously discussed. It continued with how to behave while pregnant. In *Della vita civile* Palmieri revealed much about how good, expectant mothers were supposed to behave. He wrote that women must eat enough but should be careful that they are not putting their babies at risk when indulging

[85] Brucioli, *Dialogi*, sig. VIII^{r}.
[86] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 121.
[87] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 115.
[88] For more on men's expectations of women's behaviour in late medieval Florence, see N. R. Tomas, *The Medici Women: Gender and Power in Renaissance Florence* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 14-5.
[89] Alberti, *Famiglia*, p. 118.

in their cravings.[90] He revealed an interesting idea that people who grew up to be unintelligent had mothers who ate salty things when they were in the womb.[91] He claimed expectant mothers must be careful not to move too much, as doctors claimed that even sneezing could damage a foetus.[92] Pelvic pain was believed to be good luck in all pregnancies, which came from the well-known doctrine and virtue of Cornelia, mother of the famed Gracchi brothers of ancient Rome.[93] He instructed how things like breech deliveries, correct and incorrect birthing positions, and even caesarean sections, citing examples of figures from antiquity like Scipio Africanus and Caesar Augustus, could shape a child's life.[94] Palmieri also stated that it was the duty of the mother to instil a virtuous nature in her child through breastfeeding. Palmieri placed importance on procreation with noble women and explained that using nurses to breastfeed rather than the mother doing it herself was risky, and that wickedness and corruption could be passed from an immoral nurse into a child through breast milk.[95] Palmieri's ideas about passing character traits through breastfeeding were shared by Barbaro. In infancy, Barbaro believed, it was the mother's job to breastfeed, but if she could not then the use of a nurse who was not a slave, a drunk, a stranger, or unchaste would be acceptable.[96] Like Palmieri, Barbaro believed that negative character traits could be passed through breastmilk if an immoral or corrupt person was breastfeeding the baby. Barbaro's and Palmieri's discussions of motherhood provide valuable insights into contemporary conceptions of women, particularly regarding their roles across different social classes and their identities as mothers in fifteenth-century Florence. These reflections offer a nuanced understanding of how gender and class intersected in shaping the

[90] Palmieri, *Civile*, sig. 15^{v}.
[91] Palmieri, *Civile*, sigs. 14^{r}-15^{v}.
[92] Palmieri, *Civile*, sig. 15^{v}.
[93] Palmieri, *Civile*, sig. 15^{r}.
[94] Palmieri, *Civile*, sig. 15^{r}.
[95] Palmieri, *Civile*, sigs. 12^{r}-13^{v}.
[96] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 121.

societal expectations and lived experiences of women during this period.

Barbaro and Palmieri had differing views on maternal involvement in child-rearing and education. Barbaro emphasised that mothers, beyond their reproductive role, had the crucial duty of educating their children. He believed mothers should instil reverence for God, love for country and family, and respect for others.[97] They were also tasked with teaching children proper behaviour, such as speaking quietly and avoiding anger, greed, and lust, while maintaining discipline. Despite acknowledging that women were more susceptible to vice, Barbaro assigned the responsibility of moral guidance explicitly to mothers. In contrast, Palmieri argued that once children became toddlers, it was the father's responsibility to instil good habits and correct behaviour.[98] He believed fathers should lead by example and ensure children were educated by qualified teachers.[99] Alberti shared Palmieri's views, asserting that the father, as the head of the family, was responsible for teaching virtue, honesty, and civic duty to children.[100]

These texts also provide valuable information about the intellectual capacity that men ascribed to women. As discussed above, in *On Famous Women* Boccaccio highlighted outstanding classical women after whom fourteenth-century women should model their behaviour. The women who received the highest praise from Boccaccio were those who, he believed, surpassed the limitations of their sex. This applied to examples of bravery and loyalty mentioned earlier, but also to matters of intelligence. For example, Boccaccio deemed Andrea Acciauoli, to whom the book was dedicated, worthy of her name which meant 'man' in Greek because her eloquence of words and erudition were atypical for a woman, and he admired Isis for her achievements as ruler of Egypt, but mainly for her 'intellectual powers'

[97] Barbaro, *Wealth*, p. 122.
[98] Palmieri, *Civile*, sig. 16^{v}.
[99] Palmieri, *Civile*, sigs. 16^{r}-17^{v}.
[100] Alberti, *Famiglia*, pp. 42-3.

and her creation of an alphabet for the language spoken by her people.[101] He praised Nicostrata, to whom he claimed everyone owed a great debt because she created the first version of Latin, for her skills in language and writing; Queen Nicaula for being 'wonderfully learned in the natural sciences', which he deemed a masculine trait; and Proba for her extensive knowledge of great literature and the Bible, and her *Cento*, a reworking of Virgil's poems to tell the stories of the Old and New Testaments that Boccaccio argued should be studied and remembered forever.[102] In the dedication and preface, Boccaccio stated that women were intellectually inferior to men, but in his lauding of the poet Cornificia, he stated that 'if women are willing to apply themselves to study, they share with men the ability to do everything that makes men famous'.[103] While Boccaccio praised these women for their intellectual achievements, which he perceived as masculine, he really praised them for rising above the limitations he believed were inherent to their sex. Though he praised these women, he was probably not encouraging fourteenth-century women to seek educational or intellectual equality with men.

De studiis et litteris, a letter written by the humanist Leonardo Bruni to Battista Malatesta, also known as Battista di Montefeltro, around the first year of her marriage in 1405, some 40 years after *On Famous Women*, reveals Bruni's ideas about how women should be educated. It was published for public consumption years after it was written, the earliest surviving copy being from Florence in 1477. The fact that Bruni, who is regarded as one of the most important Italian humanists and the first modern historian, even wrote to a woman discussing education is important.[104] His strong political and religious connections and influence in the city of Florence as chancellor means that his ideas would have been known. This letter contains Bruni's

[101] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 45.
[102] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 183.
[103] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 355.
[104] G. Ianziti, 'Leonardo Bruni: First Modern Historian?', *Parergon*, 14/2 (1997), p. 85.

thoughts on women's education, but also ideas that were probably shared by part of the larger public, but at the very least by other humanists.[105] What little is known about Battista's life is important. She was the daughter of the Count of Urbino, and she married a wealthy, landed Italian *condottiero*.[106] She was well educated, especially in philosophy and languages, and was a well-known poet who conversed with scholars other than Bruni during her life.[107] This letter is evidence of how humanists believed women should be given a classical education, and it is the oldest surviving example of a man and woman discussing women's education.

The letter begins with Bruni's congratulating Battista on her accomplishments and encouraging her to pursue further scholarly and intellectual pursuits by studying antiquity. He equated her with Sappho and Aspasia, two intellectually accomplished women of antiquity, and wrote that she could become even more famous than them because they lived in a time and environment when educated women were more plentiful.[108] This is debatable; but, Bruni's argument revealed the nature of women's education in fifteenth-century Florence. He believed the lack of education of women was a shortcoming of his society and wished to change it by encouraging the study of the classics. Like Boccaccio, he believed Florentine society had fallen to a generally unlearned level because theology was the main focus of study.[109]

He then discussed how the study of the classics should be applied by women. He insisted that knowledge of Latin was essential.[110] He recommended reading a combination of Christian

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[105] For more on Bruni's connections and influence as a Florentine humanist, see chapters 1-3 in D. Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1969).
[106] A. Rabil Jr., 'Malatesta, Battista, da Montefeltro', in P. Hainsworth and D. Robey (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to Italian Literature* (Oxford, 2005).
[107] A. R. Larsen, D. Robin, and C. Levin, *Encyclopedia of Women in the Renaissance: Italy, France, and England* (Santa Barbara, CA, 2007), p. 225.
[108] L. Bruni, '*De Studiis et Litteris'*, in W.H. Woodward (ed.) *Vittorino da Feltre and Other Humanist Educators* (Cambridge, 1912), pp. 119-33.
[109] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 124.
[110] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 124.

writers, such as Lactantius, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose, and Cyprian, and non-Christian poets such as Cicero, Virgil, and Livy. Bruni argued that the study of classical literature was the most useful area of study for women, and that arithmetic, geometry, astrology, and rhetoric were not necessary for women to obtain 'a cultivated mind'.[111] This shows that even though Bruni was encouraging women's education, he was not encouraging an equal education to men based on the typical university curriculum. He was not arguing that by studying the classics women would become as intellectually accomplished as men. Bruni argued, rather, that religion and morals were the areas in which women could become more educated by studying great writers of antiquity. Morals, he argued, should be studied in the works of people like Epicurus, Xenophon, and Aristotle.[112] History, he claimed, was where examples of moral precepts were to be found. He discussed how, in studying the history of antiquity, women were reminded of the importance of staying in their roles.[113] He argued that it was important for women to study the great orators of antiquity because elegant language and vocabulary skills were necessary for engaging in civilised and intelligent conversation, which would certainly have been useful for women like Battista.[114] Finally, Bruni argued that women should be well-versed in the poetry of antiquity and that they could not claim to be well educated without being so.[115] Bruni argued that explanations of the nature of men, women, and the divine were best established in poetry.[116]

In this letter, Bruni argued that women were capable of being, and should be, educated in the classics, but not to the same degree as men. While Battista was an accomplished poet with a scholarly mind, which Bruni acknowledged, he never claimed that women should use their education in the classics to write their own literature or poetry.

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[111] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 126.
[112] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 127.
[113] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 127-8.
[114] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 128.
[115] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 128.
[116] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 128.

According to Bruni, the purpose of studying the classics for women was to expand their knowledge of religion, morals, and virtue, which were the qualities they were meant to represent and uphold in fifteenth-century Florence.[117]

The ideas about the nature and roles of women expressed by Boccaccio, Bruni, Barbaro, Alberti, Palmieri, and Brucioli reaffirmed centuries-old beliefs that women were inferior to men. Stereotypes about wicked, weak women who belonged in the home, ever obedient to their husbands were reaffirmed in the other texts discussed in this chapter, but rather than solely relying on the story of Eve to support these stereotypes, these men used examples of women, marriages, and stories from antiquity to support their ideas. Thus, the humanistic trend of using classical women to inform contemporary, albeit not new, ideas about women began. The obedience, virtue, and modesty and roles of housekeeper and mother exemplified by classical examples and assigned to women in late medieval Florence were not limited to these texts, nor this time and place. This pattern or trend of using classical women to express ideas about women, as a part of the humanistic ideology, spread throughout Europe and landed in England.

Italian influence on the Expression of Ideas About Women

The ideas that English male writers expressed about women in the sixteenth century were not new or unique, but the way that these ideas were expressed continued a trend that started in Florence with the authors discussed above. The main ideas, like women's being inferior and more prone to vice than men, wives' needing husbands to guide them, and division of labour within a family based on gender, had existed for centuries in England, but as the impact of humanism grew, the ways that these ideas were expressed changed. Following the humanistic practice of using the classical era to inform the present like

[117] Bruni, '*De Studiis*', p. 127.

the Italian works above, the works discussed below also used examples of classical women, and sometimes biblical women, to reinforce traditional ideas about women and gender roles. A brief historiographical survey will show where this thesis fits into the scholarship. Then, analysing Italian texts about women that were present in England highlights English authors' exposure to these works. Finally, introducing key English authors and their writings, followed by a thematic analysis, demonstrates how Italian humanism influenced the representation of women in sixteenth-century English literature.

The ways that the introduction of humanism informed the expression of ideas about women in early modern England has not been sufficiently explored beyond assumption or anecdote. Some scholarly attention has been paid to the authors discussed in this chapter, and this context is useful in helping to understand how they may have encountered humanism and how it may have informed their works. The first author discussed in this chapter, Thomas Elyot, has been described as 'perhaps the most outstanding humanist of his generation' by Alistair Fox, and 'probably the most prolific and influential scholar of his generation' by Greg Walker.[118] Robert Sullivan and Arthur Walzer examined four works by Elyot that dealt with humanistic themes of morality and rhetoric in connection with princely counsel.[119] Gabriele Stein has examined Elyot's motivation for completing his Latin-English dictionary, his role as a humanist being one of them.[120] Constance Jordan has explored connections between feminism and humanism in Elyot's work, *Defence of Good Women*, which is analysed in this chapter.[121]

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[118] See A. Fox, 'Sir Thomas Elyot and the Humanist Dilemma', in A. Fox and J. Guy (eds.), *Reassessing the Henrician Age: Humanists, Politics and Reform 1500-1550* (Oxford, 1986), p. 52; G. Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny: English Literature and the Henrician Reformation* (Oxford, 2005), p. 128.
[119] R. Sullivan and A. Walzer, *Thomas Elyot: Critical Editions of Four Works on Counsel* (Amsterdam, 2018).
[120] G. Stein, *Sir Thomas Elyot as Lexicographer* (Oxford, 2014).
[121] C. Jordan, 'Feminism and the Humanists: The Case of Sir Thomas Elyot's Defence of Good Women', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 36/2 (1983), pp. 181-201.

Richard Mulcaster has also received some scholarly attention, but his work analysed in this chapter has never been explored in relation to humanism.[122] Edward Gosynhyll, another author analysed here, has received very little scholarly attention but is mentioned as a footnote in a few works which explore women's lives.[123] Edward More, even though he was the grandson of Thomas More, has received virtually no scholarly attention, and there are two anonymous authors discussed here whose direct connections to humanism are impossible to ascertain because their identities are unknown. This chapter contributes to this thesis by analysing how humanism influenced representations of women. It also offers the first examination of these texts as products of England's intellectual ties to Italy in the early modern period.

Italian works about women in England

As noted in Chapter One, there were hundreds of works by Italian authors privately owned and printed in early modern England. Among the authors discussed above, an English translation of Leon Battista Alberti's *Hecatonphila: The Arte of Love* by Francis Meres was printed in England in 1598.[124] An English translation of Leonardo Bruni's *The Historie of Leonard Aretine*, a description of the Sack of Rome in 410 AD, by Arthur Golding was printed in England in 1563.[125] Andrew

[122] See E. de Barros, '(Ig)noble Lies: Personal Historicism and Richard Mulcaster's *Positions* Concerning the Bringing Up of Children (1581)', *Changing English*, 20/3 (2013), pp. 317-26; H. McCarthy, "M[aster] Monkesters schollars': Richard Mulcaster, Physical Education, and the Early Modern Boy Companies', *Early Theatre*, 24/2 (2021), pp. 31-54; C. Naum Scuro, 'Placing and Playing the Past: History, Politics, and Spatial Ambiguity in Richard Mulcaster's 'The Queen's Majesty's Passage' and Christopher Marlowe's 'Edward II'', *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 48/2 (2015), pp. 71-94.
[123] Gosynhyll is mentioned as part of trends of early modern scholarship, but never thoroughly explored. See P. Scalingi, 'The Scepter or the Distaff: The Question of Female Sovereignty, 1516-1607', *The Historian*, 41/1 (1978), pp. 59-75; M. Ray, 'John Taylor and the Ghost of Long Meg of Westminster: Authorship and Poetic Authority in 'The Womens Sharpe Revenge'', *Studies in Philology*, 113/4 (2016), pp. 919-46.
[124] S. Tomita, *A Bibliographical Catalogue of Italian Books Printed in England 1558-1603* (London, 2009), p. 75.
[125] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 37.

Wallace demonstrated that Bruni's educational ideas were known and implemented in English schools.[126] An English translation of Antonio Brucioli's *A Commentary upon the Canticle of Canticles* by Thomas James was printed in England in 1598.[127] An edition of that same work was owned by cleric and scholar Walter Brown (d. 1613).[128] In the seventeenth century, an Italian version of Brucioli's *Dialogi della morale philosophia* published in 1537 and a 1562 Italian translation of the Bible by Brucioli were owned by Lady Elizabeth (Talbot) Grey (d. 1651).[129]

In addition to Brucioli's works, the circulation of Italian marriage manuals further illustrates the influence of Italian texts. For instance, three editions of Battista Fregoso's *Exemplorum*, translated into English by Edmund Tileny as *A Brief and Pleasant Discourse of Duties in Mariage*, were printed in 1568, and then one edition was printed in 1571, 1573, 1577, and 1587.[130] An edition of *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente (The Necessarie, Fit, and Convenient Education of a Yong Gentlewoman*) originally by Giovanni Michele Bruto and translated into English by William Phiston was printed in 1598.[131] Finally, an English translation of Ercole Tasso and Torquato Tasso's *Dell'ammogliarsi* (*Of Marriage and Wiving*) by Robert Toft was printed in 1599.[132]

An Italian work that discussed women and was popular in sixteenth-century England, and was previously discussed above, is *The Courtier* by Castiglione. *The Courtier* is mainly a guide for courtly princes, but it also speaks about women. It was first translated into

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[126] A. Wallace, 'Virgil and Bacon in the Schoolroom', *English Literary History*, 73/1 (2006), pp. 162-3.
[127] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 75.
[128] R. J. Fehrenbach and J. L. Black (eds.), *PLRE*, vol. VII (Tempe, AZ, 2009), p. 153.
[129] R. J. Fehrenbach and J. L. Black (eds.), *PLRE*, vol. X (Tempe, AZ, 2020), pp. 345-6.
[130] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, pp. 40-1, 43, 44, 48, 60.
[131] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 75.
[132] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, p. 77.

English by Thomas Hoby in 1561 and was widely popular.[133] The third book of *The Courtier* discusses admirable qualities a gentlewoman should have, such as noble lineage, physical beauty, and the ability to manage a house and children.[134] *The Courtier* also promotes that women should be sober and quiet (yet quick-witted enough to not be considered dull), wise, courteous, chaste, and honest, among other things.[135] The wisdom of classical philosophers, like Plato, Socrates, and Cato, are used to support these ideas. In the *PLRE* records, there were eleven copies of *The Courtier* in private possession in multiple languages like Italian, English, French, and Spanish. According to Tomita's research, there were four editions of Hoby's English translation printed in England between 1577 and 1603, which is supported by *EEBO*.[136] *USTC* records twenty-three copies of Hoby's 1561 edition printed by William Seres, seventeen copies of Hoby's 1577 edition printed by Henry Denham, and one copy of Hoby's 1588 edition printed by John Wolfe. WorldCat shows four surviving copies of Seres's edition, twenty-three copies of Denham's edition, and four of Wolfe's edition. While English audiences may not have read this work for its ideas about women, anyone who read it certainly would have been exposed to them.

An Italian author who wrote about women and was popular in sixteenth-century England, and was previously discussed above, is Boccaccio. Many of the Florentine author's works, including *The Decameron*, discuss women, but *On Famous Women* most thoroughly addressed women's nature, roles as wives, and education. *PLRE* indicates there were thirteen of Boccaccio's works owned in private possession, six of which have unidentifiable titles. Tomita's research

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[133] Hoby originally was only going to translate book three of the text, which discusses women, for Elizabeth Parr, marchioness of Northampton, because someone else was already working on a translation of the entire text. It is probable that this person was William Thomas, and that after Thomas was executed in 1554, Hoby decided to translate the entire *Courtier*. M. Partridge, 'Thomas Hoby's English Translation of Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier*', *The Historical Journal*, 50/4 (2007), p. 769.
[134] B. Castiglione, *The courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio…done into English by Thomas Hoby* (London, 1561), sig. Bbiii^{v}.
[135] Castiglione, *The courtyer*, sig. Bbiii^{r}.
[136] Tomita, *Bibliographical Catalogue*, pp. 36, 48, 62, 80.

shows that thirty-one titles by Boccaccio were printed in England, demonstrating that he was a popular author. The first and only sixteenth-century English translation of *On Famous Women* was done by Henry Parker, Lord Morley, around 1542-1544. Morley's translation was titled *Of the ryghte renoumyde ladyes* and it only translated forty-six out of the one hundred biographies of women discussed in Boccaccio's original.[137] Most of the works by Boccaccio printed in England between 1500 and 1600 were tales of the classical era, like *Titus and Gisippus* and *Cymon and Iphigenia* from *The Decameron*, which further demonstrates that English audiences had access to works by Boccaccio that promoted humanist topics. This is important because the six texts analysed below all used examples of classical women to discuss contemporary women, like the Italian texts discussed above.

Summary of the English texts and their authors

This section examines six texts produced by English male authors that address women's nature and conduct. The earliest of these is *The Defence of Good Women*, written by Thomas Elyot (1499-1546) in 1540.[138] The work takes the form of a dialogue between two ancient Roman characters. The dialogic form of Elyot's work demonstrates his engagement with techniques used in some Italian humanist works. Like Alberti's *Della famiglia* or Brucioli's *Dialogi*, Elyot's dialogue functions as a moral exercise in which opposing arguments are tested through reasoned conversation. The structure itself becomes evidence of a shared pedagogical method that prioritised inquiry, persuasion, and the demonstration of moral learning. Out of the six authors discussed in this chapter, Elyot, an influential member of the English landed gentry and humanist scholar, has received the most scholarly

[137] '*De Preclaris Mulieribus*, That is to say in Englyshe, Of The Ryghte Renoumyde Ladyes', in F. G. Waldron (ed.), *The Literary Museum; Or, A Selection of Scarce Old Tracts* (London, 1792), pp. i-8.
[138] T. Elyot, *The defence of good vvomen devised and made by Sir Thomas Elyot knyght* (London, 1540).

study.[139] Born to a family of modest means, Elyot's father, Richard, rose through the ranks of society through strategic marriages, legal success, and favour at court, a trajectory that Lawrence Stone has described as navigating the 'three lotteries'.[140] Through these means, Richard Elyot acquired substantial wealth and land, which ultimately enabled Thomas to pursue a successful career in law and scholarship.[141]

Elyot did not receive formal schooling, but he was privately educated until the age of twelve.[142] Later he studied law at Middle Temple, but he considered his self-directed studies in 'liberal sciences and philosophy' to be the most formative aspect of his education.[143] The period of his upbringing, following the Wars of the Roses and the establishment of the Tudor monarchy, placed great emphasis on civic order, indisputable succession, and constitutionalism—values that influenced both Elyot's intellectual pursuits and his political career.[144] Elyot followed in his father's footsteps, joining the Western Circuit as a legal practitioner, becoming Clerk of Assize at twenty-one, and serving on King Henry VIII's Council under Cardinal Wolsey by 1523.[145] His most significant diplomatic achievement came when he was appointed as an ambassador to the court of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V in 1531-1532.[146]

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[139] For example, see Fox, 'Sir Thomas Elyot and the Humanist Dilemma' and Walker, *Writing Under Tyranny*.
[140] L. Stone, 'Social Mobility in England, 1500-1700', *Past and Present*, 33 (1966), p. 34.
[141] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot: Critical Editions*, p. 7.
[142] T. Elyot, *The dictionary of syr Thomas Eliot knyght*, (London, 1538), sig. Av^{r}. This would seem to indicate that he did not attend a university, but, the registers of Oxford University include four references to a Thomas Eliett, Eyllyett, Elyett, or Elyott, who was admitted in 1516, took his BA degree in 1519, and received a Bachelor of Civil Law degree in 1524. See S. Lehmberg, 'Elyot, Sir Thomas (c. 1490-1546), humanist and diplomat', *ODNB*.
[143] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* p. 8.
[144] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* p. 7.
[145] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* p. 7; Lehmberg, 'Elyot, Sir Thomas', *ODNB*.
[146] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot*, p. 2. For more on Elyot's political goals and his reputation see C. Shrank, 'Sir Thomas Elyot and the Bonds of Community', in M. Pincombe and C. Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature*: *1485-1603* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 154-69.

By the mid-1530s, Elyot shifted his focus to scholarly endeavours, aligning himself with the second generation of English humanists, such as John Colet, William Grocyn, and Thomas More.[147] Similarly to Boccaccio and Petrarch in Florence, Elyot sought to apply humanist ideals to the English political, educational, and legal systems.[148] His works, such as *The Boke of the Governour* (1531) *and Of Knowledge Whiche Maketh a Wise Man* (1533), promote the role of councillors in government, a key humanist ideal.[149] In *The Governour*, he proposed educational reforms that would integrate classical studies with legal education.[150] Similarly, in *Knowledge*, Elyot emphasised how classical rhetoric could enhance the effectiveness of courtly counsel.[151] His translations of Plutarch also explored the application of humanism in child-rearing and education.[152] Elyot's *Dictionary* (1538), the first Latin-English dictionary to focus on classical Latin and discuss classical figures and events, further demonstrated his commitment to humanism.[153] Elyot's humanistic approach to women's nature and conduct is most clearly illustrated in *Good Women*. The text uses classical examples of virtuous women to counter prevailing negative perceptions about women, positioning Elyot's views within

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[147] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* p. 1. In the 1541 edition of *The Castel of Helth*, Elyot revealed that he studied under a renowned physician and Greek scholar who taught him Galen's texts. In the 1960s, Hogrefe identified this scholar as Thomas Linacre, who was part of the same humanist circle as John Colet, William Lily, William Grocyn. This was probably how Elyot became familiar with humanism. For more on this see p. 10 in this text. According to Thomas Stapleton, Elyot was also friends with Thomas More. See T. Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, trans. by P. E. Hallett (Dallas, TX, 2020), p. 26.

[148] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* p. 2. For a foundational work about Elyot and humanism from which many scholars have drawn, see J. M. Major, *Sir Thomas Elyot and Renaissance Humanism* (Lincoln, NE, 1964).

[149] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot*, p. 2. For more on how Elyot applied humanistic ideals to his ideas of government, see I. Bore, 'Writing under Tyranny: Tyranny put to the Test of Language in the Works of Thomas More and Thomas Elyot', *Moreana*, 50/191/192 (2013), pp. 111-30.

[150] T. Elyot, *The boke named the gouernour deuised by [Sir?] Thomas Elyot knight* (London, 1531), sigs. Gvi^{v}- hiiii^{v}.

[151] A. E. Walzer, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel and Thomas Elyot's *Of the Knowledge Which Maketh a Wise Man*', *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 45/1 (2012), pp. 25-6.

[152] Sullivan and Walzer, *Thomas Elyot,* pp. 10-2.

[153] Stein, *Elyot as Lexicographer*, p. 8; For example, Elyot defines the 'Academici' as a 'secte of phylosophers, whyche folowed and taughte the opynyons of Plato'. Elyot, *Dictionary*, sig.II^{r}. There are many other examples. Stein also posits that Elliot's *Dictionary* may have been inspired by Italian lexicographer Ambrogio Calepino's *Dictionarium* (1503). See Stein, *Elyot as Lexicographer*, pp. 8-9.

his broader intellectual framework. Published in the final six years of his life, *Good Women* encapsulates his lifelong humanist studies and his vision of how humanism could contribute to English society.

The second text examined is the anonymously authored *Scholehouse of Women* (1541).[154] Some scholars attribute this work to Edward Gosynhyll, but the original text itself lists no author, and writers engaging with the text nearly twenty years later after its initial production also remarked that the author of *Scholehouse* was anonymous.[155] The text critiques the inherent nature of women, portraying them as evil, manipulative, and selfish. The work also offers a dim view of the value of educating women, suggesting that little can be gained from such education. Although the identity of the author remains uncertain, the use of classical and biblical references indicates that the author possibly possessed a classical education, suggesting they may have come from an elite background. It is not known when in 1541 *Scholehouse* was first published, but in November of that year, the young queen Katherine Howard was stripped of her title and was executed for adultery just three months later, which might have influenced the release of a text reinforcing negative stereotypes about women.[156]

The next text, *The Prayse of All Women* (1542), was written by Edward Gosynhyll as a direct rebuttal to *Scholehouse*.[157] In *Prayse*,

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[154] Anonymous, *Here begynneth the scolehouse of women* (London, 1560).
[155] Gosynhyll's *Prayse of Women* in 1542, Edward More's *Defence of Women* in 1560, and the 1560 edition of *Scholehouse* all state that the author of *Scholehouse* was anonymous.
[156] N. Clark, 'Queen Katherine Howard: Space, and Promiscuity Pre- and Post-Marriage, 1536-1541', *Royal Studies Journal*, 6/2 (2019), p. 89.
[157] E. Gosynhyll, *The Prayse of All Women* (London,1542). Some scholars suggest that Gosynhyll published *Scholehouse* in 1541 and then *Prayse* in 1542 as 'an exercise in rhetorical ingenuity.' N. de Somogyi, 'Gosynhyll, Edwarde', *ODNB*. If both works had the same publisher this might offer some insight, but *Scholehouse* (1541) was published at The Maiden's Head by Thomas Petyt in St Paul's Churchyard and *Prayse* was published at The George by William Middleton in Fleet Street. The Agas Map of Early Modern London (MoEML) shows that the locations of two shops with those names were very close to one another (the location of The George on the Agas Map is also in St Paul's Churchyard, not on Fleet Street, so The George in Fleet Street listed for *Prayse* may not be recorded on the Agas Map), but distinguishes that they were different: https://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/agas.htm. Gosynhyll's date of birth and death are unknown.

Gosynhyll defended women by citing classical and biblical examples of women who demonstrated intelligence, courage, and virtue. Very little is known about Gosynhyll, and what is known is mainly conjecture written in texts from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[158] It is reasonable to suggest that he was born into circumstances of sufficient social status to receive an education which enabled him to write a work that would resonate with contemporary English audiences, as evidenced by its lasting popularity. If Gosynhyll is the author of both *Scholehouse* and *Prayse*, this would give a better insight into his understanding of perceptions of ideas about women and gender roles, and maybe into his standing in English society.

The anonymously authored *The Deceyte of Women* (1557) similarly critiqued the nature of women but incorporates numerous contemporary examples of female deception.[159] Like *Scholehouse*, *Deceyte* used classical and biblical examples to argue that women are inherently weaker and more prone to vice than men. The reliance on vague contemporary examples, many of which appear to be fabricated, suggests that the author was not as well-versed in classical knowledge as Elyot or Gosynhyll. This shift indicates that by the mid-sixteenth century, the humanistic approach to discussing women's nature had spread beyond the elite humanist community to a wider, less-educated audience.[160]

The fifth text analysed in this chapter is *The Defence of Women*, published in 1560 by Edward More (c. 1537-1620), poet and grandson of the renowned humanist Thomas More.[161] Like Gosynhyll's *Prayse*, *Defence* was written as a response to *Scholehouse*, which had first been

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[158] The only relevant scholarship on Gosynhyll is Somogyi, 'Gosynhyll, Edwarde', *ODNB*. Somogyi states that W.C. Hazlitt said in *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*, 4 vols. (1864-6) that Gosynhyll was Scottish, but this is unverifiable.
[159] Anonymous, *The deceyte of women, to the instruction and ensample of all men yonge and olde* (London, 1557).
[160] *Deceyte* was published at The Lamb and *Scholehouse* was published at The Maiden's Head. The Agas map shows these publishers being right next to each other.
[161] E. More, *A lytle and bryefe treatyse, called the defence of women and especially of Englyshe women, made agaynst the Schole howse of women* (London, 1560).

published nearly two decades prior.[162] Although Edward's familial connection to Thomas More is well-documented, little is known about his own life. His father, John More, was an adult when Thomas More was still in favour with Henry VIII, as evidenced in a 1593 portrait of the More family by Rowland Lockley (see Figure 3), which was modelled after the original by Hans Holbein the Younger completed in 1527/8. The second person from the left is Anne, Edward's mother, and the fourth person from the left is John, Edward's father.[163]



Figure 3 Rowland Lockey, *Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants* (1593), © National Portrait Gallery, London.

Thomas More's execution in 1535, following his refusal to recognise Henry VIII's supremacy over the Pope's, led to the seizure of

[162] *Scholehouse* was reprinted in 1560. The fact that *Scholehouse* was still being reprinted and debated nearly two decades after its initial publication shows the impact it had on English society. To avoid confusion going forward, *Defence* will refer to *The Defence of Women* (1560) by Edward More and *Good Women* will refer to *The Defence of Good Women* (1540) by Sir Thomas Elyot.

[163] R. Lockey, *Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants* (1593), © National Portrait Gallery, London. The portrait was commissioned by Thomas More II, one of Sir Thomas More's grandchildren. 'Sir Thomas More, his father, his household and his descendants', National Portrait Gallery, accessed June 5, 2024, https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait/mw01734/Sir-Thomas-More-his-father-his-household-and-his-descendants.

his estates, leaving his family ostracised.[164] Although the specifics of Edward More's early life remain unclear, his family's fall from grace possibly hindered the educational opportunities he might have otherwise had.[165] Nevertheless, the classical references and rhetorical strategies evident in *Defence* suggest that he received some humanist training. The work itself is composed in the fourteener style, a popular poetic form of the time, further indicating that More remained attuned to contemporary literary trends.[166] The text is dedicated to William Page, secretary to Philip Hoby, whom More called his 'singular and especial friend'.[167] This demonstrates that despite his family's diminished status, More maintained connections within the Tudor elite. Notably, *Defence* was published by the same printer as *Scholehouse*, reinforcing the thematic and literary ties between these works.[168]

The final text discussed in this chapter is *Positions Wherein Those Primitive Circumstances Be Examined, Which are Necessary for the Training up of Children* written by schoolmaster and minister Richard Mulcaster (1530-1611) in 1581.[169] *Positions* is an educational treatise that outlines the purposes and methods of educating children. Within this work, Mulcaster's views on the education of women reflect the broader societal notion that a woman's education was directly linked to her role as a wife and mother. Specifically, he argued that girls should receive an education appropriate to their station, one that

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[164] P. Marshall, 'The Last Years', in G. M. Logan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 122; S. Baker House, 'More, Sir Thomas [St Thomas More]', *ODNB*.
[165] P. Ackroyd, *The Life of Thomas More* (London, 1999), pp. 146-7.
[166] The new style of poetry introduced by Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser, which many scholars consider to have been shaped by Thomas Wyatt's and others' translations of Petrarch (see Chapter One), did not really catch on until the last quarter of the sixteenth century, so More writing in this style does not suggest a lack of understanding of current literary trends or connection to literary circles. G. S. Spiegel, 'Perfecting English Meter: Sixteenth-Century Criticism and Practice', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 79/2 (1980), p. 192.
[167] More, *Defence*, sig.Aii^{v}. Nothing is known about William Page, but Hoby was a diplomat and an ambassador of Henry VIII who achieved success in England because he supported Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church. More's grandfather, famously, did not.
[168] Both works were published by John King 'In Paules Churche yearde at the sygne of the Swanne'.
[169] R. Mulcaster, *Positions vvherin those primitiue circumstances be examined, which are necessarie for the training vp of children* (London, 1581).

equipped them to become accomplished ladies, wives, and mothers. In contrast, boys were to be educated to fulfil different societal roles.

Mulcaster, one of the most well-documented authors in this chapter, came from a wealthy background and received an education at Eton and both Cambridge and Oxford, where he earned his MA.[170] His distinguished career as an educator culminated in his appointment as headmaster of St Paul's School in 1596. By the time he wrote *Positions*, Mulcaster had spent decades as an educator, with a particular expertise in classical languages.[171] He served as headmaster of Merchant Taylors' School in London, the largest educational institution in the city.[172] Mulcaster's arguments about women's education were supported by references to classical women and thinkers such as Plutarch. His belief that education should be reserved for the elite, and his view that women should be educated only to fulfil their roles as wives and mothers, align with his general stance on education's elitist nature.[173] Unlike the anonymous authors discussed in this chapter, Mulcaster recognised women's intellectual potential but contended that their education should serve social rather than personal ends.

In sum, the six works analysed below in this chapter, authored by Thomas Elyot, an anonymous writer, Edward Gosynhyll, another anonymous writer, Edward More, and Richard Mulcaster, present a diverse array of English perspectives on the education and roles of women. Each author came from varying social and intellectual backgrounds: Elyot, a humanist and member of the landed gentry; Gosynhyll, a lesser-known figure probably educated in the classical tradition; Edward More, who possibly shared his grandfather's humanistic education; and Richard Mulcaster, an esteemed headmaster

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[170] He may have had to leave Cambridge after being suspected of stealing from his teacher Dr John Caius. See W. Barker, 'Mulcaster, Richard', *ODNB*.
[171] Barker, 'Mulcaster, Richard', *ODNB*.
[172] W. Barker (ed.), *Richard Mulcaster's Positions Concerning the Training up of Children* (Toronto, 1994), p. xiii.
[173] De Barros, '(Ig)noble Lies', p. 320. See also Barker, *Richard Mulcaster's Positions*, p. xiv.

and classical scholar. Despite their differing backgrounds, these authors share a common literary trend of drawing upon classical and biblical examples of women to substantiate their arguments. This practice, rooted in late medieval Florence through figures such as Boccaccio and Petrarch, continued to influence European thought well into the sixteenth century. Although the specific ideas about women expressed in these texts may not differ significantly from earlier centuries, the manner in which they were articulated reflects the enduring classical inheritance of Renaissance humanism and classical antiquity on the intellectual landscape of Tudor England. The texts analysed in this section thus serve as a testament to the continuity of these ideas and the intellectual heritage that contributed to discourses regarding England's views on women's roles and education.

Ideas about marriage and the nature of women

It is crucial to examine how English texts depicted marriage and the inherent nature of women, and how these ideas were influenced by late medieval Italian practices. Elyot's *Defence of Good Women* (1540) is a conversation between two fictional men in ancient Rome. Caninius believes that women are evil, and that marriage is a foolish institution.[174] Candidus believes the opposite. In this fictional dialogue, Elyot demonstrates two discourses happening in England about women and marriage.

In the following year, *The Scholehouse of Women* (1541) offered scathing opinions about marriage. The anonymous author of *Scholehouse* declared marriage to be a fate worse than death and likened marriage to a ghastly disease.[175] *Scholehouse* also revealed a common fear of husbands' becoming cuckolds at the hands of their

[174] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Biii^{r}.
[175] Anonymous, *Here begynneth a lytle boke named the Schole house of women wherin euery man may rede a goodly prayse of the condicyons of women* (London, 1541), sigs. Bii^{r-v}.

wives.[176] The author claimed it was common for husbands to be deceived into raising children that were not biologically theirs, which also fed into the author's ideas about the lustful nature of women.[177] According to the author, there was nothing worse than being made a cuckold.[178] One year later, Edward Gosynhyll's *Prayse of Women* (1542) presented very different ideas about marriage. He painted marriage as a natural, godly state which brought happiness to husbands and wives alike. He argued that women were made by God to complement men.[179] As wives, their purpose was to bring happiness, success, and tranquillity to their husband's life.[180]

The English texts also had many things to say about the inherent nature of women. In all the texts, classical examples were given to support the authors' arguments, be they positive or negative. The English adoption of this humanistic practice highlights an indirect cultural and intellectual link between Italy and England. Elyot's *Defence* revealed the most about the nature of women. From the beginning of the work, the practice of using the ideas of classical thinkers and examples of classical women to inform and discuss the nature of contemporary women was employed. Caninius and Candidus discussed how various ancient authors wrote about women. Candidus argues that the idea that women are inconstant, inferior, and wicked by nature is false, and that as a lover he has known women to be honest, wise, and gentle.[181] He argues that many classical poets wrote negatively about women only when rebuked or spurned by them.[182] He claims that, contrary to what is typically thought, classical authors did not believe that all women were inherently evil or inferior, and that

[176] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiii^{r}.
[177] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Bii^{r}.
[178] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Biii^{r}.
[179] E. Gosynhyll, *The prayse of all women* (London, 1542), sig. Biii^{r}.
[180] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sigs. Aiii^{r}, Biv^{v}.
[181] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Bvi^{r}.
[182] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Bvi^{v}.

when they wrote about the faults of specific women they also praised them.[183]

In their discussion of how ancient thinkers discussed women, they get hung up on Aristotle. Aristotle, Caninius points out, did not have a high opinion of women and wrote that women are more built for 'keeping' and circumspection as opposed to more powerful traits like physical strength and courage.[184] Aristotle also wrote that women are imperfect, and that they delight in rebuking, always complaining, and never being content.[185] Following this logic, Caninius argues that perfection is ever constant and never changing, and that if women are imperfect by nature, then this means they can never be stable or constant.[186] Candidus then points out that even though Aristotle is an example of a Greek philosopher who wrote against the positive nature of women, he still married Hermia's ward Pythias 'to whom he dyd solemne sacrifice, sange deuoute hymnes, and often tymes kneled'.[187] Candidus argues that, ironically, Aristotle was the one who was dissolute and inconstant, and that he is not the most reliable authority on this subject.[188] When Candidus recalls that Aristotle 'did solemn sacrifice' to Pythias, Elyot undermines the philosopher's authority through the image of reverent kneeling. Alberti used similar gestures of domestic piety in *Della famiglia*, in which he insisted that a husband must 'guide, take care of, and provide' for his wife in love rather than tyranny.[189] Elyot's irony, that the supposed master kneels, echoes Alberti's moral vision of harmony achieved through hierarchy disguised as affection. Elyot's treatment of women as moral examples continues the Italian humanist tendency to use education and classical

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[183] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Bvi^{r}-Bvii^{v}.
[184] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Diiii^{r}, Ciii^{v}.
[185] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Ciii^{v}. Caninius could have been referring to ideas about women expressed in works like Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* or *Politics*. For two modern critical editions, see Aristotle, A. Falcon, and D. Lefebvre (eds.), *Aristotle's Generation of Animals: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2017) and E. Garver, *Aristotle's Politics: Living Well and Living Together* (Chicago, IL, 2012).
[186] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Cii^{r}-Ciii^{v}.
[187] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Cv^{r}-Cvi^{v}.
[188] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Cv^{r}-Cvi^{v}.
[189] Alberti, *Famiglia*, pp. 42-3.

reference as vehicles for ethical instruction. His argument that virtuous women contribute to domestic stability echoed Alberti's belief that moral discipline within the household sustains the broader social order. This continuity suggests that humanism in England, as in Florence, functioned primarily as a moral philosophy rather than as an instrument of gender reform.

Candidus humours Caninius and allows him to present his argument on the inferior nature of women based on his understanding of reason taught by Aristotle. Caninius claims that men are superior to women because of their capacity for reason. Part of reason is discretion, which allows people to discern good from evil. Another part is election or judgement, which is the choice then to choose good or evil. The exercise of this is called prudence or circumspection. This definition of reason is agreed upon by Candidus, and thus is established as the accepted definition of reason from Elyot's perspective.[190] Candidus then points out that, by Caninius's logic based on Aristotle's teachings, women, being more circumspect than physically capable by nature, would actually be more prone to reason and 'more perfect' than men.[191] In this discussion between Caninius and Candidus, Elyot showed that he understood both sides of the argument about the nature of women and how people applied the ideas of classical figures to it.

Through Caninius's explanation of why women are inherently inferior to men, Elyot established the traditional ideas about the inherent differences between men and women in English society, despite Candidus's arguments regarding reason. First, Caninius admits that women have some, albeit limited, capacity for reason because the word 'woman' contains the word 'man'.[192] Caninius discussed the physical inferiority of women at length. He stated that women are weaker than men in body and soul.[193] Along with being physically

[190] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Dii^{r}.
[191] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Diiii^{r}.
[192] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Diii^{v}.
[193] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Diii^{v}.

weaker, their flesh is softer, they have less hair on their faces and bones in their bodies, and their voices are sharper.[194] When Caninius calls women's bodies 'soft' and their voices 'sharp,' Elyot's text, perhaps involuntarily, mirrored Barbaro's logic that softness marks feminine imperfection. However, Candidus's response to Caninius transforms that softness into prudence and moral discretion. Barbaro had likened a young wife to 'soft wax' ready to receive her husband's imprint, but Elyot's dialogue recasts pliancy as inner moral intelligence. Caninius argued women have lower pain tolerances, unless they are being constrained or are stirred by wilfulness.[195] Concerning the soul, they lack 'hardynes', and when facing conflict or peril they are 'tunerouse' and more delicate than men.[196] He claimed women 'never flourish but in ungraciousness or in trimming themselves with party devices, or excusing their faults with unstudied answers or in praty mocks or scornful dalliance, or to invent mischief to satiate their malice'.[197] He also argued that women's biggest imperfection is their inconsistency.[198]

Like Caninius in Elyot's *Defence*, the author of *Scholehouse* revealed much about the idea that women are not only inferior to men but also inherently wicked. The author explicitly described women as evil, lustful, selfish, greedy, self-serving, headstrong, stubborn, vain, prideful, lazy, lewd, fickle, inconstant, deceitful, malicious, dishonest, loud, gossips, unintelligent, and impossible to please.[199] In listing women's vices as 'malicious,' 'fickle,' and 'light of condition,' the anonymous author mirrored Boccaccio's use of amplification in which he characterised women as 'foolish,' 'pitiful,' and 'lack[ing] self-confidence.'[200] In both cases, excess becomes a rhetorical device that equates verbal abundance with moral instability. The piling up of defects blurs moral judgement into caricature, revealing anxiety

[194] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvi^{r}.
[195] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvi^{r}.
[196] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvi^{r}.
[197] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Cvi^{r}, Cvii^{v}.
[198] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvii^{v}.
[199] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs. Diii^{r}-Dvi^{v}.
[200] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 355.

beneath the surface of certainty. The English author thus inherited not only Boccaccio's ideas but also his rhythm of moral exaggeration. The author, like many others, blamed Eve for the wicked nature of women and for man's plight on Earth. He argued that even though women are 'weak and feeble of body', they are still 'cumbrous' and 'malicious', and blamed Eve not only for her own eating of the forbidden fruit, but for Adam's as well.[201] He reasoned that God made women from men, but the devil gave them their wicked nature.[202] The anonymous author of *Deceyte* (1557) echoed the ideas about women and Eve from the *Scholehouse*. He asserted that because of Eve women are inherently weaker, less intelligent, and more prone to vice than men.[203] In *Prayse* (1542) Gosynhyll acknowledged that women were often vilified by men and argued that women had incorrectly been labelled evil by nature and that all women cannot be characterised as inferior to men, incapable of intelligence, and sinful just because of the actions of Eve.[204] He argued that, just as not all men are the same, all women are not the same.[205] In *Defence* (1560), More defended Eve. He argued that, although the serpent sought her out instead of Adam because of her lack of strength, she did not trick Adam into partaking in the forbidden fruit.[206] Adam made that decision on his own and, according to More, as the man Adam should have had a stronger resolve than Eve, and so Eve should not bear all of the blame for their expulsion from Eden.[207] This demonstrates the varying conceptions of women's nature in sixteenth-century England, as influenced by the story of Eve.

More's defence of Eve is part of a larger pattern that can be seen in these types of texts. Sometimes, when trying to praise women, some male authors simply reaffirmed the idea that wives should be, for their own benefit, obedient and subordinate to their husbands. More

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[201] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs. Cvi^{v}, Cvi^{v}-Di^{r}.
[202] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs. Biv^{v}, Cii^{r}.
[203] Anonymous, *Deceyte*, sigs. Aii^{r}, Jiv^{r}.
[204] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiii^{v}.
[205] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Biii^{v}.
[206] More, *Defence*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[207] More, *Defence*, sigs. Bi^{r}-Bi^{v}.

was trying to defend Eve and argue that humanity's being cast from Eden to the Earth was Adam's fault too, but he still claimed that Eve was sought out by the devil because women are weaker willed than men. More did not believe all women were inherently wicked, lustful, and deceitful, but he did believe that they were mentally weaker than men.

Gosynhyll's *Prayse* argued that women should be regarded with more respect. He also pointed out that men would not exist without women in the first place.[208] He believed men would not survive without women, and accordingly men should be more respectful of them.[209] He contended that women are the ones who care for men in times of illness or injury, asserting that without their compassion, preparedness, and skill, men would not survive.[210] He expressed frustration at both society's lack of acknowledgement that women give many things to men which they cannot give to themselves and the idea that women are not wise and produce nothing of impact.[211] He cited Saul from the Bible, who was counselled by a woman when he was battling the Philistine army, as proof that this is untrue.[212]

Gosynhyll also argued that women should be more respected in society because there are many examples from the Bible which show God himself bestowing his favour upon women rather than men.[213] Gosynhyll described Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, whose seven husbands were killed by Asmodeus and who was avenged by Tobias, as an example of womanly virtue and the maliciousness of men.[214] He pointed out that Jesus chose Mary Magdalen, not a man, to tell his

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[208] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiv^{v}.
[209] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Biv^{v}.
[210] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sigs. Aiv^{r}-Aiv^{v}.
[211] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiv^{r}.
[212] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiv^{v}.
[213] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sigs. Biv^{v}-Ciii^{v}.
[214] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Cii^{r}. This story comes from the Book of Tobit, which is commonly accepted in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, but not Protestant ones. See *Tobit* 3:8 (Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition).

apostles he had risen.[215] Gosynhyll's declaration that God chose Mary Magdalen to announce the Resurrection parallels Boccaccio's decision to open *On Famous Women* with Eve, the archetype of both weakness and possibility. Where Boccaccio reclaimed female agency through examples like Artemisia and Cornificia, Gosynhyll reconfigures biblical heroines as vessels of divine truth.[216] Both writers employ exemplarity as a moral pedagogy, transforming individual women into collective arguments for virtue. Gosynhyll's humanist impulse mirrors Boccaccio's: to moralise through biography and elevate the gendered exception into a universal lesson. Gosynhyll also explained that some of Jesus's miracles were performed at the behest of women, such as his turning water into wine because Mary pointed out there was no wine at the wedding in Cana and his raising Lazarus to benefit his sister Martha.[217] He also pointed out that God gave women opportunities to be heroic when he could have chosen men. For instance, Judith beheaded Holofernes to save Bethulia.[218] Other authors describe Judith as deceptive and evil, but Gosynhyll told her story as an example of God's demonstrating that women can be courageous and heroic.[219] He also discussed the woman from Thebes, who dropped a millstone from a wall in order to kill Abimelech and stop him from conquering Thebes.[220] Gosynhyll's point was that if God saw value in women and marriage, then everyone else should. Along with other authors in this chapter, he drew on classical and biblical examples to support his views, demonstrating how English conceptions of women were informed by classical traditions and Renaissance ideals. The representation of marriage as a divinely ordered and socially stabilising institution in *Prayse* and *Defence* parallels the civic humanism of Alberti and Barbaro. In both traditions, the domestic sphere is treated as a microcosm of the state. By aligning marital order with political

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[215] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Div^{r}.
[216] Boccaccio, *Famous*, pp. 125, 355.
[217] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Ei^{r}.
[218] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Civ^{v}.
[219] See *Judith* 12-13 (RSVCE).
[220] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig.Civ^{r}. See *Judges* 9:53-54 (RSVCE).

virtue, English authors reproduced a humanist moral logic that linked private obedience to public harmony.

Similarly to Gosynhyll in *Prayse*, in *Defence* More was responding to the misogynistic ideas promoted in *Scholehouse*. He argued that men unjustly blamed women for their own misfortunes and refused to take accountability and responsibility for their actions.[221] More strongly condemned not only the ideas, but the anonymous author's character, questioning how anyone born from a woman could so harshly scorn them.[222] More insisted that not all women are evil and manipulative by nature and wrote his work in defence of the 'simplicity, innocence, and unguiltyness of women'.[223] More argued that men are just as guilty (if not more) of being lustful and sexually lewd as women. To support his claim, he told the story of Lucretia and Tarquin. The cruel, lustful Tarquin raped Lucretia, and she was so traumatised that she killed herself.[224] More described Lucretia's response to being raped as noble and righteous, and as proof that men were more sexually devious than women. In describing Lucretia's suicide as a righteous death, More echoes Boccaccio's veneration of chastity as the supreme proof of virtue. Both writers frame purity as a moral spectacle in which suffering confirms honour. Boccaccio's language of elevation when discussing women who 'rise above the weakness of their sex' is echoed in More's portrayal of female constancy that transcends male vice. More's defence of Eve above and his retelling of the story of Lucretia mirror Boccaccio's treatment of both figures. Like Boccaccio, More portrays women's virtue and vice as instructive for men as well as for women. His emphasis on the shared moral responsibility of both sexes extends Boccaccio's argument that women's stories serve as universal moral examples.

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[221] More, *Defence*, sig. Bi^{r}.
[222] More, *Defence*, sig. Aii^{v}.
[223] More, *Defence*, sig. Aii^{r}.
[224] The story of Tarquin and Lucretia comes from Livy's *History of Rome*, book 1 chapter 57. See Livy, B. O. Foster (trans*.), Livy in Thirteen Volumes: With an English Translation* (Cambridge, MA, 1919), pp. 197-201.

More also sought to refute the claim that women are the manipulative sex. He argued that it was more common to hear of lustful men tricking women into having sex with them, and even losing their virginity to them, by flattering them and making promises of love and commitment they had no intention to keep.[225] More told Virgil's story of Dido and Aeneas from the *Aeneid* to support this claim. The hero Aeneas manipulated Dido, Queen of Carthage, into falling in love with him, and he then took advantage of her generosity and kindness and eventually abandoned her.[226] Along with the story of Dido and Aeneas, More described an incident which reportedly had happened in Scotland in his own time. Three English prisoners were being held in a Scottish prison, and they devised a plan to manipulate the gaoler's young, pretty daughter into falling in love with one of them so that she would set them free. The plan worked and the men escaped leaving the gaoler's daughter broken-hearted and the gaoler in trouble for letting his prisoners escape.[227] According to More, it was men who tend to manipulate women with sexual motivations, not the other way around. More's rhetorical strategy of defending women by appealing to moral reasoning rather than emotion reflects the masculine tone of humanist writing. His reliance on logical argument, citation of classical examples, and appeal to moderation align him with the intellectual ethos of Italian civic humanism. In both contexts, moral authority is framed as the prerogative of the educated male speaker, even when the ostensible purpose is to vindicate women.

In addition to the belief that women were inherently wicked, deceitful, and lustful by nature, these works also discussed the notion that women were intellectually inferior to men. This is significant because the notion that women were intellectually inferior to men served as the foundation for arguments promoting their subservience

[225] More, *Defence*, sigs. Biv^{r}-Biv^{v}.
[226] More, *Defence*, sigs. Biv^{r}-Ci^{v}. The story of Dido and Aeneas comes from book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*. See L. M. Fratantuono and R. A. Smith, *Virgil, Aeneid 4: Text, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden, 2022).
[227] More, *Defence*, sigs.Ci^{v}-Cii^{r}.

and obedience as wives, a topic explored below. The claim that women's natural roles were confined to wife and mother due to their inherent inferiority and mental weakness was explicitly connected to discourses regarding their intelligence and education. Discussions of women's education and women as wives were often one and the same. To demonstrate that women were even capable of intelligence and intellectual excellence, the authors often gave examples of intelligent, accomplished women from antiquity. For instance, in Elyot's *Defence of Good Women*, Caninius asserts that 'the wyttes of women were apte onely to trifils and shrewdenes, and not to wisedome and ciuile policie'.[228] Candidus challenges Caninius's argument by saying there are hundreds of examples of women from antiquity who disproved this idea.[229] He mentioned Carmenta, who created the Latin alphabet, the liberal arts, and poetry of the muses, and Minerva (Athena), after whom Athens was named and who was skilled in war and the sciences.[230] He mentioned Diotima (based on Aspasia), who was so knowledgeable about philosophy that Socrates applauded her and attended her lessons.[231] Another example is Sibylla Cumana, called also Amalthea, whose advice and wisdom was sought by the Romans in times of peril.[232] Candidus argued that these examples illustrated the Roman belief in women's capacity for intellect and wisdom, asserting that such recognition should also be adopted in contemporary England. Candidus also argued that women have discretion, election, and prudence, which grant them the wisdom to have a mind for governance.[233] A classical example is Queen Zenobia, whose learning and wisdom allowed her to assess threats, create good laws, and govern her own household and Palmyra wisely, justly, and successfully after the death of her husband.[234]

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[228] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvii^{v}.
[229] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cviii^{r}.
[230] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Cvii^{r}-Cviii^{v}.
[231] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cviii^{v}.
[232] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cviii^{r}.
[233] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Cvii^{r}.
[234] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Dv^{r}-Dvii^{r}.

In *Prayse*, Gosynhyll also used examples of classical women to show that women could be intelligent and accomplished. He stated that Ceres was made a goddess because of her wisdom.[235] Like Elyot he also pointed out that Carmenta invented the Latin alphabet.[236] Also like Elyot he stated that Pallas (Athena) was renowned for her intelligence and that Athens was named after her.[237] Much importance was placed on the wisdom of the Greeks, so the fact that they named Athens after a woman was significant. He explained that Sappho invented the harp, a major accomplishment which has brought comfort to many men.[238] He also discussed the wise prophecies of the Sybils.[239] Demonstrating a more Northern European tendency, Gosynhyll also included some examples of biblical women who proved that women can be intelligent. For instance, he stated that God gave Deborah wisdom.[240] He also discussed the wisdom of Queen Esther, who convinced her husband King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) not to kill the Jews in his empire.[241]

In *Positions*, Richard Mulcaster argued that women were born with a natural capability to be intellectually accomplished and that society must allow them to be, and that this notion was well supported by ancient philosophy.[242] He also argued that men were obligated by God to see that women were 'trained up' because they were given the natural ability to be by Him.[243] Mulcaster argued that women had proved they could excel at reading, writing, singing, playing, learning languages, and being well-spoken, and could even be compared to the Greeks and Romans and notable German, French, and Italian writers.[244] Mulcaster explained that there were fewer intellectually accomplished women than intellectually accomplished men not

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[235] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiv^{r}.
[236] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Aiv^{r}.
[237] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[238] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[239] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[240] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Civ^{v}.
[241] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Di^{v}. For the story of Esther, see *Esther* 5-9 (RSVCE)
[242] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Qiv^{r}.
[243] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Qv^{v}.
[244] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sigs. Qiii^{r}.-Qiv^{v}.

because women were less capable, but because they had fewer opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities.[245] He reasoned that because Plutarch praised the achievements of women, no one could argue against them, again demonstrating that sixteenth-century English male authors called on classical thinkers to inform their beliefs about women.[246]

When women's capacity for intelligence was recognised, it was often argued that they should be educated to be able to fulfil their roles as good wives. In *Good Women*, Elyot argued that before she ruled Palmyra, Queen Zenobia's education helped her be an obedient, good wife to her husband.[247] Elyot's praise of Zenobia reflects a paradox also found in Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*. Elyot celebrated her strength, intellect, and virtue precisely because they appeared to transcend the limitations of her sex. In doing so, he reinforced the notion that moral excellence in women must take a masculine form. This rhetorical structure mirrors the Florentine pattern of elevating women by measuring them against male ideals, as seen in Boccaccio. Mulcaster discussed women's education in a similar way, and he believed that women should be educated in a way that was befitting of their station and circumstances.[248] He explained that education for men was broader because their employment opportunities were greater, and that since this was not the case for women, their education should be tailored to the kind of life they would have: some trained for marriage, some for a trade, some to have qualities necessary for an elevated situation of birth.[249] Mulcaster argued that women should be educated in the knowledge of God and civil and domestic duties, as well as taught to read and write.[250] He believed there was no reason why

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[245] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Qv^{r}.
[246] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Qv^{v}.
[247] Elyot, *Defence of Good Women*, sig. Dv^{v}.
[248] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sigs. Rii^{r}-Riii^{v}. Mulcaster never explicitly stated that he read *On Famous Women*, but he mentioned that Boccaccio ('Iohn Boccace') owned an Italian dictionary showing that he was familiar with Boccaccio and his literary pursuits. See Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Xv^{r}.
[249] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Ri^{v}. (There are two Ri's before Rii).
[250] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Qiv^{r}.

women should learn geometry, its sister sciences, or maths (though music was fine), law, or medicine (though the skill of herbalism could be useful), or have pulpits to preach in. Women knowing how to draw could enhance their needlework and beautify their works, which Mulcaster claimed could be seen in examples of women from antiquity.[251] He argued that reading religious texts to understand their duties better was important, but that reading of other things, like 'histories' or conduct manuals, should be encouraged only if it did not distract them from their housework.[252] Mulcaster's proposal that women read moral histories matches Bruni's curriculum for Battista Malatesta, which prescribed Livy and Cicero for moral instruction. Both limit women's access to knowledge by defining learning through ethics rather than inquiry. The restriction is concealed by the rhetoric of cultivation, as both authors present limited education as an act of refinement. Their choice of texts shows how the humanist canon was gendered through pedagogical exclusion. Finally, Mulcaster claimed that women could be educated after becoming housewives and mothers if it would help them raise and educate their own children, as Eurydice did.[253] Mulcaster's conviction that education should serve practical ends reflects a pragmatic adaptation of the civic humanism found in fifteenth-century Florence. Just as Palmieri regarded education as preparation for responsible citizenship, Mulcaster reinterpreted that principle within the domestic sphere. His vision of educated women as efficient wives and mothers demonstrates the English transformation of humanist ideals into a programme of social utility. Mulcaster's ideas about women's education were based on the practicality of the social limitations placed upon them, not their ability to become intellectually accomplished, but whether he disagreed with the primary roles of wife and mother for women is unclear. Although mediated over time and place, the impact of Italian, humanistic practices was evident in More's and Mulcaster's views on women's education for domestic roles. Their

[251] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sigs. Riii^{r}-Riii^{v}.
[252] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Rii^{v}.
[253] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Riii^{r}.

argument that education should train women for domestic and maternal roles aligns closely with the humanist educational theories of Bruni and Palmieri. Both viewed learning as a means of moral refinement rather than social advancement. This selective application of humanist ideals underscores how intellectual training was used to sustain, rather than disrupt, established hierarchies of gender and class.

Desirable traits and behaviour in women

Like the Italian works discussed above, the English authors placed importance on obedience, chastity, modesty, virtue, and wifely devotion, and they emphasised that the main roles for wives were housekeeping and motherhood. Elyot's *Good Women*, *Scholehouse*, Gosynhyll's *Prayse*, *Deceyte*, and Mulcaster's *Positions* did not place as much importance on age, socio-economic background, and physical attributes that made a woman desirable as a wife as the Italian sources. Elyot was the only author to discuss the age by which most women should be married, and he was not as explicit as some of the Italian authors. In *Good Women*, Caninius was shocked and felt sorry for Queen Zenobia because she did not get married until she was twenty. She responded by saying that she spent ages sixteen through twenty studying moral philosophy, and that if she had married younger she would not have had the wisdom to be a good wife.[254] Elyot was recognising that it was typical for noble and aristocratic women, like Queen Zenobia, to get married around age sixteen, and that twenty was too old for them to be unwed. He could have also been sharing his belief that women would make better wives if they had more life experience and knowledge. The topic of marriageable age was briefly alluded to but not discussed as explicitly as it was in the Italian texts.

As well as age, socio-economic background was not discussed in the English texts as thoroughly as it was in the Italian texts. The

[254] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Div[r].

author of *Scholehouse* briefly commented on the idea that a more privileged upbringing might make women more desirable as wives. He claimed that it did not matter how learned or unlearned a woman was, meaning it did not matter if she came from a privileged background, because there was still little to praise about women.[255] Similarly, he did not dedicate any time to discussing what physical traits made women most desirable, but he argued that women's beauty correlated with a meaner temperament, and that men were more vulnerable to manipulation from beautiful women.[256] The anonymous author of *Deceyte* also did not identify the most desirable age or physical characteristics women should have, but the deceitful, manipulative women he described were all young, pretty, and what he described as 'gentlewomen'. This suggests that he did not necessarily believe that a woman's elite or wealthy background reduced her likelihood of being manipulative, unfaithful, or lustful.

Mulcaster had many ideas about connections between education, socio-economic background, and the duties of wives. He said nothing about the desirable age a woman should get married or what physical traits would make her most attractive, but he did touch on how the importance of being educated according to one's station would make women more appealing as a wife, housekeeper, and mother.[257] This only applied to elite women. Mulcaster was adamant that women should not be educated above their stations, meaning that if they were not going to be rearing children who would need a formal education to be successful adults, then there was no reason for them to receive one.[258] He believed that ladies and gentlewomen benefitted the most from education, and if his main reasoning for women's education was so they could perform their wifely duties exceptionally, then it makes sense that he believed women born into elite circumstances

[255] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Div^{v}.
[256] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Cii^{v}.
[257] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sigs. Rii^{r}-Riii^{v}.
[258] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Rii^{r}.

should be educated if they were to be good wives.[259] Mulcaster's statement that girls were educated until thirteen or fourteen implies that by this age, they had acquired the skills deemed necessary for becoming good wives.[260]

The authors had much to say about behaviour. As in the Italian texts, obedience was the most important trait. Discussions of obedience in the English works took two main forms depending on whether the work projected predominately positive or negative views on women. If the text was kind to women, the argument was that women should be obedient to their husbands for their own happiness, and that because of their inherently weak nature, they would benefit from their husband's guidance and wisdom. For example, in Elyot's *Good Women*, Queen Zenobia, rather than Caninius or Candidus, was the one advocating the obedience of wives. She said, 'I found also, that Justice teacheth us women, to honour our husbands next after god: which honour resteth in due obedience, whereby mutual love betwixt them is in a more fervency.'[261] She was explaining that great pleasure could be derived from being obedient to one's husband, which is also a way to honour God. She also said, 'undoubtedly no woman him loveth, whose hate or displeasure she nothing feareth.'[262] This means that a wife does not truly love her husband, or God, if she does not fear upsetting him, and being obedient is a way to be sure not to do that.

In the texts with more negative views on women and marriage, the promotion of 'good' traits for women to possess, like obedience and chastity, can be observed. For example, when the anonymous author of *Scholehouse* wrote that 'bad' wives actively seek to disobey their husbands, he inadvertently revealed that 'good' wives obey their husbands.[263] When he complained that women are headstrong, do not listen to their husbands, and do whatever they want, he revealed that in

[259] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Riv^{v}.
[260] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Riii^{r}.
[261] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Div^{v}.
[262] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Div^{v}.
[263] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Bi^{v}.

order to be considered a 'good' wife, women must behave the opposite way.[264] Finally, when the author stated that because of the 'evil' and 'malice' in their hearts, women are always argumentative, and that it is rare for men to have a conversation with women in which they are not being unpleasant and argumentative, the author showed that 'good' wives should not argue with their husbands.[265] The author's discussions of the negative tendencies of women revealed the positive attributes they believed women should have.

In these more negative texts, the argument for obedience was still that, because women are inherently inferior to men, wives must be obedient to their husbands, as it was in the works that contained more positive ideas about women, but obedience in the negative texts was often discussed as a punishment rather than a means for personal happiness, fulfilment, and the success of a home. For instance, the author of *Scholehouse* argued that with such frail dispositions and being so crooked, crabbed, ill, lewd, shrewd, and light of condition, women cannot be allowed to act upon their own 'self-will' and 'mind', and must be obedient to their husbands.[266] The author's claim that women are 'light of condition' parallels Boccaccio's remark that 'lightness of spirit' is innate to the feminine nature. Boccaccio mitigated the insult by admiring figures such as Semiramis, whose deceit becomes a means of rule.[267] But the English writer erases that nuance, turning lightness into moral condemnation. The author of *Deceyte* argued that, because of Eve, women must endure painful childbirth and directed that a wife 'shall be under the power of [her] husband and he shall be [her] master and have lordship over [her]'.[268] In the texts that degrade women, obedience was a requirement based on the inferiority of women and their wicked nature, not something

[264] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs .Ciii^{r}-Ciii^{v}.
[265] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiii^{v}.
[266] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Ciii^{r}.
[267] Boccaccio, *Famous*, p. 19.
[268] Anonymous, *Deceyte*, sigs. Aiii^{r}-Aiv^{v}.

that wives should practise because it will naturally bring them happiness to do so.

Chastity was another essential trait for 'good' wives. A common belief about women was that they were lustful and, because they were mentally weaker than men, unable to resist sexual temptation. To express that chastity was a desirable and possible quality in wives, authors like Elyot and More discussed examples of women from antiquity. In *Good Women*, Queen Zenobia spoke about the importance of chastity in women. She said that women have the strength for 'virtous constancy' and to resist 'affections and wanton persuasion'.[269] She also said that when women are attracted to men, they have the ability to be patient and act rationally.[270] In *Prayse*, Gosynhyll discussed the rape of Dinah by Shechem and how she was avenged by her brothers, Simeon and Levi, in the Book of Genesis as an example of God's punishing men who violated feminine virtue and chastity.[271] Gosynhyll also used Susanna from the Book of Daniel as an example of the ability of women to have strong moral character and resist sexual temptation. In the Book of Daniel, Susanna was accosted by two prominent men in her town who wanted to have sex with her. They told her if she did not submit, they would publicly accuse her of adultery, which would lead to her death. She refused them, remaining loyal to her husband even though she knew, since it was her word against that of the two elders, she would probably be sentenced to death. Daniel intervened and prevented her death, but Gosynhyll used her as an example of the chastity of good wives.[272] In *Defence*, More also argued that it was men, not women, who had issues with lust and chastity. He stated that Englishwomen are very chaste, even more than Roman women.[273] His discussions of Tarquin and Lucretia and Dido and Aeneas, mentioned above, also proved that women were not the

[269] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Div^{r}-Div^{v}.
[270] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Div^{r}-Div^{v}.
[271] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Ciii^{v}. For the story of Dinah, see *Genesis* 34 (RSVCE).
[272] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sigs. Eiii^{r}-Eiii^{v}. For the story of Susanna, see *Daniel* 13:1-63 (RSVCE).
[273] More, *Defence*, sig. Bii^{v}.

sex more prone to lustful urges. The ideals of chastity and modesty that dominate the English texts have their antecedent in *On Famous Women*. Boccaccio repeatedly presented chastity as the defining proof of female virtue, and this moral measure reappeared in Elyot's Zenobia, Gosynhyll's Susanna, and More's Lucretia and Dido. The persistence of these traits across two centuries demonstrates the longevity of Boccaccio's moral framework and its adaptability within the English context.

Similarly to his discussion of obedience, or rather lack thereof, in women, the author of *Scholehouse* had ideas about the lustful nature of women revealing that 'good' wives should practise chastity. For instance, the author argued that it takes very little for a woman to be won over by a man, and that women are always ready to jump to a new one.[274] He explained that sometimes women allow themselves to be so overcome with lust that they foolishly end up marrying men with no land or title.[275] The author also continuously described women as 'lewd' and sexually aggressive.[276] The stories that revealed a social fear of cuckolding in *Scholehouse*, mentioned earlier in this chapter, show that 'good' wives did not give into the sexual temptation that all women, according to the author, intensely and frequently experienced. The author discussed the intense sex drive of women, and asserted that if husbands did not want their wives to turn to another man they must regularly have intercourse with them.[277] By labelling 'bad' wives as 'lustful', the author labelled 'good' wives as chaste.[278] Following the same pattern, the wicked women in *Deceyte* were condemned for their sexual dalliances, showing that 'bad' women were sexual, lustful, and forward, and 'good' women were chaste, modest, and faithful to their husbands.

[274] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiv^{v}.
[275] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Bi^{r}.
[276] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Cii^{r}.
[277] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiii^{r}.
[278] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Ai^{r}.

These views on sex and the nature of women were entirely typical of the period, but the more direct link to Italian, humanistic ideas lies in the expression of these ideas being supported by examples from antiquity. Both Elyot and More used examples of classical women to establish that good wives should be modest. In *Good Women*, Queen Zenobia explained that good women know when to speak and when to be silent, when to be occupied and when to be merry, and that modesty should be practised at the will of their husband.[279] As with the discussion of obedience, since it was coming from Queen Zenobia this shows that modesty was discussed as something that benefitted women rather than punished them.

The moral vocabulary of moderation that appears throughout the English texts reveals their philosophical connection to Italian humanist ethics. Barbaro's emphasis on measured conduct and Elyot's Zenobia advising restraint in speech both derive from the Aristotelian ideal of the mean. In each instance, female virtue is defined through balance and restraint, translating classical moral theory into a language of domestic discipline. Boccaccio and the English authors define female virtue through the language of moderation. Boccaccio's moral commentary on figures such as Artemisia and Claudia reflects the Aristotelian idea that virtue resides in measured conduct, an idea echoed by Elyot and Mulcaster in their prescriptions for wifely behaviour and education. This shared moral vocabulary illustrates how Aristotelian ethics, mediated through Boccaccio, continued to shape English humanist conceptions of feminine virtue.

In his negative descriptions of women, the author of *Scholehouse* revealed that modesty was a trait exhibited by 'good' women. For example, he described women as loud and shrill. He discussed their propensity to 'babble' and talk constantly. Similar to Queen Zenobia's assertion in *Good Women* that virtuous women knew when to remain silent, the author of *Scholehouse* criticised women for

[279] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Div[r].

being excessively vocal, reinforcing the belief that modesty required them to be seen rather than heard. The Scholehouse author's connection between silence, subservience, and chastity echoes Barbaro's instructions that that women should 'silently sustain [their husband's] wrath' and be 'suitably grave'.[280] The repetition of silence as virtue reveals similarities between Italian and English prescriptions of modest comportment for women. Both writers treat quietness not as absence but as active obedience, a performance of harmony that upholds male authority. He further characterised women as gossips, claiming that while their husbands laboured—a burden he attributed to Eve's transgression—wives idly engaged in gossip.[281]

More's discussion of modesty in relation to dress and appearance in *Defence* is particularly of note because it mirrored how obedience was discussed in texts which claimed to praise or defend women. More acknowledged a commonly held belief that women's immodesty could be seen in their choosing to wear the current fashions, wear cosmetics, and style their hair in certain ways which some people deemed scandalous. While women were criticised for dressing to please men, More contended that men should be held accountable, as they financed and derived pleasure from it, ultimately enabling its occurrence.[282] He reasoned that foreign styles, fabrics, and trends which women were often condemned for wearing could only have been introduced to them by their husbands because some men travelled abroad and women never did.[283] He even went so far as to say that women were only following the example of men, who took care to style their beards, hair, and general appearance, and that women should not be held responsible for their perceived immodesty.[284] More's discussion of women's modesty and dress in *Defence* is another example of a male author trying to defend women but belittling and

[280] Barbaro, *Wealth*, pp. 70-1, 104.
[281] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs. Aiv^{r}, Ci^{v}.
[282] More, *Defence*, sig. Ciii^{v}.
[283] More, *Defence*, sigs. Ciii^{r}-Civ^{r}.
[284] More, *Defence*, sig. Ciii^{r}.

undermining them instead. More portrayed women as incapable of making independent decisions or acting for their own benefit, asserting that they would be unaware of current fashion trends without men. To defend women, More had to paint them as mindless figures with no conception of authority or desire to obtain it, which is not totally different from the anonymous authors of *Scholehouse* and *Deceyte* who argued that women had no control over their inherently wicked nature.

Virtue, meaning the possession of good, feminine morals, was another important quality according to the English texts. As shown in his discussions of obedience, chastity, and modesty, the author of *Scholehouse* believed women were forward, lewd, and lacked virtue.[285] He argued that wives were manipulative, dishonest, fickle, and inconstant.[286] Finally, he claimed that women only cared about themselves and were greedy and selfish.[287] By listing all these negative, immoral traits, the author demonstrated that 'good' wives were the opposite of all these things.

To discuss good, virtuous women and wives, Gosynhyll gave many examples of ancient women from the Bible. For example, even though Abraham's wife Sarah was typically discussed as a symbol of doubt and wavering faith, Gosynhyll described her as a virtuous wife.[288] He described Sarah, the daughter of Raguel and wife of Tobias, as an example of wifely virtue and of God's protection of this.[289] Asmodeus, consumed by love for Sarah, killed her seven successive husbands on their wedding nights. Tobias was told how to defeat Asmodeus by the angel Raphael and ended up marrying Sarah. Gosynhyll described Tamar, the daughter of King David, as righteous and virtuous.[290] Tamar was raped by her half-brother Amnon, and

[285] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aii^{r}.
[286] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sigs. Biii^{v}-Biv^{r}.
[287] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Dii^{r}.
[288] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Ci^{r}.
[289] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Cii^{r}. For the story of Sarah and Asmodeus, see *Tobit* 3:8 (RSVCE).
[290] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Cii^{r}.

afterward she begged him to marry her to preserve what was left of her virtue.[291] He refused, and she later was avenged by her other brother Absalom. According to Gosynhyll, Tamar was not only an example of virtue, but she also helped prove that men were more prone to sexual deviance than women. He also discussed the widow at Zarephath, whom God rewarded for her kindness and generosity towards Elijah.[292] Finally, Gosynhyll discussed Dorcas (also called Tabitha), whom Saint Peter resurrected because she had lived her life so virtuously, charitably, and generously.[293] Gosynhyll discussed all of these ancient women and more to support the idea that women in sixteenth-century England were capable of virtue, despite the beliefs of some, and that to be considered a 'good' wife, a woman must also be considered virtuous. Gosynhyll's method of listing virtuous and heroic women reflects the structure of Boccaccio's *On Famous Women*. Both authors compile a catalogue of exemplary figures to assert that women can embody moral strength and civic virtue. Yet, while Boccaccio's tone remains didactic, Gosynhyll employed the same structure to mount a more rhetorical defence of women.

Along with obedience, chastity, modesty, and virtue, wifely devotion was one of the most important traits discussed in these texts. In *Good Women*, Zenobia explained that wives were meant to be of assistance and comfort to their husbands through fidelity.[294] Then, Candidus gave many examples of classical women and wives who demonstrated wifely devotion. For example, Candidus mentioned the *Odyssey* in which Ulysses's wife Queen Penelope, who remained faithful to her husband and refused many suitors, resisted all carnal affections and remained chaste, constant, and virtuous for twenty years.[295] He also discussed the devotion shown by Oenone, the woman Paris betrayed in his pursuit of Helen. Even when Paris forsook

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[291] For the story of Tamar, see *2 Samuel* 13:1-22 (RSVCE).
[292] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Di^{r}. For the story of Zarephath, see *1 Kings* 17:8-24 (RSVCE).
[293] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Div^{r}. For the story of Dorcas, see *Acts* 9:36-42 (RSVCE).
[294] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Div^{v}.
[295] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Biv^{v}.

Oenone for Helen, she still loved him and remained constant. When he was killed by Achilles, she kissed his wounds and died because she was heartbroken.[296] When Panthea's husband, Prince Abradatas, was killed in battle, she prepared his body lovingly for burial and then stabbed herself in the heart so that she could be buried beside him.[297] Similarly, when Porcia heard that her husband Brutus had died, she swallowed burning coals and killed herself.[298] When Paulina's husband Seneca was sentenced to die by Emperor Nero, she attempted suicide because she was heartbroken.[299] Finally, Elyot told the story of the wife of Ligaryus. During the Second Triumvirate when Lepidus, Octavian, and Mark Antony were in power in Ancient Rome, a man named Ligaryus was kept hidden from the authorities by his wife and a servant. When he was discovered and executed, his wife begged to be put to death as well. When her request was denied, she starved herself to death out of love for her husband.[300] Surely Elyot was not suggesting that all wives should be so dramatically devoted, but he was showing that not all are disloyal while at the same time promoting wifely devotion. The English authors' repeated invocation of classical heroines shows a direct inheritance of the Italian humanist strategy of using classical examples to express contemporary moral ideals. These figures served as rhetorical tools through which male writers demonstrated both erudition and virtue. In this sense, the praising of women in English humanist literature continues the Italian model in

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[296] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Biv^{r}-Biv^{v}. Oenone's death is not mentioned in the Odyssey, but Ovid described it in his *Heroides*. See Ovid, P. Murgatroyd, B. Reeves, and S. Parker (eds.), *Ovid's Heroides: A New Translation and Critical Essays* (Abingdon, 2017), pp. 56-65.

[297] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Biv^{r}-Bv^{v}. The story of Panthea is told throughout Books Five through Seven in Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. See Xenophon, Stawell, and Dakyns (eds.), *Cyropaedia*, pp. 148-254.

[298] Elyot, *Good Women*, sig. Bv^{v}. Portia's suicide is described in Plutarch's *Lives*. See Plutarch, B. Perrin (trans.), *Plutarch's Lives*, vol. VI (Cambridge, MA; London, 1918), pp. 84-131.

[299] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Bv^{r}-Bv^{v}. Paulina's grief is described in Tacitus' *Annals*. See Tacitus, J. Jackson (trans.), *Tacitus Annals: Books 13-16* (Cambridge, MA, 1937), pp. 316-9.

[300] Elyot, *Good Women*, sigs. Bv^{r}-Bvi^{v}. The story of the wife of Ligaryus is told in Appian's *Civil Wars*. See Appian, H. White (trans.), *Appian's Roman History*, Volume III: The Civil Wars (Cambridge, MA, 1913), p. 179.

which the moral worth of women is articulated through classical precedent rather than lived reality.

To prove his argument about the inherent, unfaithful nature of women, the author of *Scholehouse* discussed the common fear among men of being made into cuckolds and forced to raised children who were not their biological offspring. The author argued that it was common for women to manipulate young, naïve men into having sex with them, and then force them into marriage because they might be pregnant.[301] If a wife did have an affair and fell pregnant, the author claimed that she would insist the child is her husband's and that he would have to raise it without knowing the truth.[302] In the author's discussion of the common practice of wives to be unfaithful to their husbands, he revealed that 'good' wives are those that are devoted and loyal to their husbands.

Finally, motherhood was an essential part of being a good wife. In *Prayse*, Gosynhyll extolled good mothers. He explained that bearing and raising children was incredibly hard work that all fell to the mother. She is the one who gave birth. It is her responsibility to wake up in the night to feed the baby while her husband sleeps and to take care of the baby when it gets sick while the father has no responsibility to help. She is the one who must constantly hold, feed, and take care of the child forsaking her own rest and comfort. He believed that if this job fell to men, they would not be strong enough to do it. Men would be disdainful and impatient and strike the child out of frustration. He argued that men must recognise how much women do not just for them, but for the entire human race, and must be kind to them. He questioned if there is nothing better for men to do then be cruel about women.[303] Gosynhyll also argued that motherhood (as a defining trait of womanhood exemplified by women like Elizabeth, mother of John

[301] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiii^{r}.
[302] Anonymous, *Scholehouse*, sig. Aiii^{r}. The author said that wives commonly do this to husbands throughout the text. See sig. Bii^{r}.
[303] All of Gosynhyll's comments about motherhood can be found on Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sigs. Bii^{r}-Bii^{v}.

the Baptist; Saint Anne, mother of Mary; and the Virgin Mary) made it impossible for women to be wicked by nature and inferior to men.[304] In *Defence*, More also remarked multiple times that because of the remarkable feat of pregnancy and childbirth, women should be treated with more respect.[305]

Conclusion

The works considered here provide significant insight into the perceived nature, behaviour, and roles of women, illustrating how the authors used examples of classical women and historical narratives to substantiate their arguments. Some inherent contradictions in the reasoning of these authors remain. Works such as *Scholehouse* and *Deceyte* portray women as intellectually inferior to men yet simultaneously suggest that they possess the capacity to deceive their husbands on a recurring basis. These texts notably express considerable concern over the perceived infidelity of women. The depictions of unfaithful women who betrayed their husbands reveal the era's heightened emphasis on wifely devotion and loyalty, reflecting the social and moral expectations that prevailed during the period in which these works were created. In *Deceyte*, there are eleven classical and biblical stories about women deceiving their powerful husbands or other men, and eleven contemporary stories that all have the same ending: a young, lustful wife is unfaithful to her husband, causing the husband to become a cuckold without his knowledge. Like *Scholehouse*, *Deceyte* revealed that the idea of being made a cuckold by one's wife was a fear commonly held among Englishmen. In these stories, the wives often went to great lengths to deceive their husbands, and the fact that they managed to outsmart them made the stories even more severe, according to the author. For example, there is a story of a 'simple' husband in Valencia, whose wife began an affair with a

[304] Gosynhyll, *Prayse*, sig. Biv^{r}.
[305] More, *Defence*, sigs. Aiii^{r}-Bi^{r}.

wealthier man.[306] The husband caught his wife and the wealthier man in the act, and even recognised her body, but the wife was able to run home undetected and convince her husband that she was a good, honest wife and was not the woman he saw at the home of the wealthier man. There is another story of a wealthy, older man who took a young wife. The wife began an affair with her husband's clerk and schemed with him to convince her husband that the clerk should be the one to attend to her when her husband was away. The clerk convinced him, and they carried on an affair with access easily and unknowingly granted by her husband.[307] The author presents another story of a virtuous knight whose wife, engaging in an affair during his absence, embodies the deceitful, lustful nature of women, suggesting that without male supervision, wives are prone to moral corruption.[308] There are many more examples with the same ending, and the anonymous author asserted that these types of incidents were common. Such stories of adulterous wives who expertly manipulate their husbands mirror Boccaccio's portrayal of women like Deianira, whose act of devotion towards Hercules masked her deceit. Both narratives turn feminine wit into immorality.

The examples of deceitful classical and biblical women include Deianira and Iole, the scorned wives of Hercules; Judith, who decapitated Holofernes to save Bethulia from his control; and Jezebel, who secured the vineyard of Naboth for her husband King Ahab. The main moral of the stories of the manipulative famed women in *Decetye* is that sometimes women have the power to destroy men, even where powerful armies and enemies failed. There is also an emphasis on the fact that even the wisest of men, like Virgil and Samson, can fall victim to the deception of women. *Deceyte*, like the others, is stupefying in the major contradiction it presents: if wives must be subjugated by their husbands because they are inherently weaker, both mentally and physically, how do they still manage to deceive their husbands so often

[306] Anonymous, *Deceyte*, sig. Aiv[r].
[307] Anonymous, *Deceyte*, sig. Biii[r].
[308] Anonymous, *Deceyte*, sigs. Cii[v]-Civ[v].

and severely? The propensity of authors to proclaim that women are inferior and weak in one line and then exemplify the power they exert over their husbands by means of mental manipulation in the next reveals the mechanism by which patriarchal sixteenth-century English society subjugated women. It was accepted that women were simultaneously weak and in need of guidance from their husbands, yet conniving and intelligent enough, according to the author of *Deceyte*, to manipulate them. In both cases, women needed the supervision and authority of men, or rather this was the idea set forth so that the patriarchal social structure of the time could survive.

This section has examined six different texts that discuss women in various ways written by English male authors during the sixteenth century. The ideas expressed by these authors, whether they be positive or negative, were supported by using examples of women and stories from antiquity as evidence to reinforce traditional beliefs. Even though the ideas about the inherent nature of women and how women should behave as wives cannot necessarily be proven to have been directly influenced by late medieval Italian ideas and practices, the method by which these ideas were communicated to audiences can. Using classical ideas and examples to inform and shape contemporary society was spearheaded by Florentine thinkers during the late Middle Ages, and these English authors continued the intellectual trend during the sixteenth century to discuss women. Whether these authors viewed their ideas and works as a direct result of Italian influence is unclear. Mulcaster explicitly stated that he was familiar with Boccaccio's and Ludovico Ariosto's views on women, particularly how their views compared to those of the ancients, but he was the only author of the six to make such a statement.[309] Even if they did not view their ideas as Italianate, this does not negate the fact that an indirect correlation between Italian, humanistic practice and the expression of ideas about women in sixteenth-century England can be observed. USTC, *PLRE*, and Tomita's research prove that Italian texts were accessible to

[309] Mulcaster, *Positions*, sig. Yiii^{v}.

English audiences. This paired with the fact that the texts analysed in this chapter, along with the discussion of English engagement with Italians and their ideas in Chapter One, strengthens the argument that Italian culture significantly contributed to discourses about English practices in the sixteenth century, particularly the expression of ideas regarding women. The following three chapters examine the lives of Margaret Roper (c. 1505-1544), Anne Bacon (1528-1610), and Mary Sidney (1561-1621) to show the extent to which this influence affected not only ideas about women, but the lives of women themselves.

Chapter Three: Margaret More: A Daughter for All Seasons

Introduction

In 1524, Erasmus published *Antronius, Magdalia*, which is a fictional dialogue between an ignorant abbot and educated woman debating the benefits of women's education. Within the text, Magdalia, who is believed to be modelled after Thomas More's daughter, Margaret Roper (1505-1544), proclaims, 'in Italy there are not a few women of the highest rank who can rival any man. In England there are the More daughters'.[1] Through the voice of a woman meant to be Margaret, Erasmus made the comparison between the impact that classical education had on women in Italy and England. Here Erasmus inserted Margaret directly into the experiences of women as a result of cultural transference between Italy and England in the sixteenth century. Five years later in 1529, Erasmus wrote to Margaret crowning her '*Britanniae tuae decus*', the glory of your Britain.[2] Margaret, among the most erudite women of sixteenth-century England, exemplifies how elite women's lives were affected by the widespread practice of applying classical ideas to contemporary society. This practice spread from late medieval Florence to the rest of Europe and took root in England, as discussed in Chapter One. This chapter examines the life of Margaret Roper, who was the eldest daughter of Thomas More and the aunt of Edward More, the author of *The Defence of Women* from Chapter Two, in the context of how women engaged with the rise of this ideological and cultural change in England. Margaret's education, personal life, and works will be examined to assess how the existence of late medieval Italian ideas as they permeated into English society affected her life. As a preliminary the political context and educational

[1] D. Erasmus, '*Abbatis et Eruditae*', in C. Thompson (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies* (Toronto, 1997), p. 504; C. Thomson (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Colloquies* (Toronto, 1997), p. 499. For further analysis, see J. Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets: Language, Gender, and Authority from Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2008), p. 256.
[2] D. Erasmus, 'Letter 2212 to Margaret Roper', in P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen (eds.), *Opus epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami, vol. 8* (Oxford, 1934), p. 274.

opportunities for elite women in the first half of the sixteenth century will be discussed. This will offer better understanding of how Margaret's life was anomalous yet traditional in light of the influence of Italian ideas in her environment.

Historiographical review

Margaret has been a focal point for historians of this period, primarily due to her relationship with her father and her scholarly achievements. Even in her own time, Thomas Stapleton's biography of More examined her role as his messenger during his imprisonment, questioning whether this function reflected her personal power.[3] Modern scholars, like John Guy, have sought to restore Margaret's status not merely as More's favoured daughter but as a crucial intermediary during his confinement.[4] Jaime Goodrich contends that Margaret accrued political influence by serving as a symbol of her father's ideas and legacy.[5] Elizabeth McCutcheon has expanded on this, analysing Margaret's actions in 1534 and 1535 to assess the privileges afforded to learned, well-connected women.[6] Similarly, Patricia Brace has explored the broader social and political ramifications of Margaret's example for educated women in sixteenth-century England.[7]

Some scholars have also examined Margaret's intellectual achievements, focusing on her lost works and letters.[8] Most studies analyse her surviving translation of Erasmus's *Precatio Dominica in*

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[3] See T. Stapleton, *The Life and Illustrious Martyrdom of Sir Thomas More*, K. Stearns and E. Curtis (eds.), (Dallas, TX, 2020), pp. 60, 82.
[4] See J. Guy, *A Daughter's Love: Thomas and Margaret More* (London, 2008).
[5] See J. Goodrich, 'Thomas More and Margaret More Roper: A Case for Rethinking Women's Participation in the Early Modern Public Sphere', *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 39 (2008), pp. 1021-40.
[6] See E. McCutcheon, 'Margaret More Roper The Learned Woman in Tudor England', *Moreana*, 52/201/202 (2015), pp. 280-4; E. McCutcheon, 'Decoding the Alice Alington-Margaret More Roper Letters', *Moreana*, 57/2 (2020), pp. 144-70.
[7] See P. Brace, 'Speaking Pictures: Margaret Roper and the Representation of Lady Rhetoric', *Moreana*, 50/193/194 (2013), pp. 93-130.
[8] See R. I. Lakowski, 'Two Neglected Poems of Thomas More and a Poem of Margaret Roper's', *Moreana*, 50/191/192 (2013), pp. 285-90; McCutcheon, 'Decoding', pp. 144-70; E. M. Olivares Merino, 'Margaret More Roper: A Survey of her Writings', *Miscelánea*, 68 (2023), p. 154.

septem portiones distributa, which she titled *A Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster*. Some scholars have contextualised this work within broader translation practices and intellectual networks, while others, Like Eugenio Olivares Merino, have analysed Margaret's scholarly relationship—and what he classifies as a friendship—with Juan Luis Vives.[9] More recently, McCutcheon and William Gentrup have reassessed Margaret's life in relation to her letters and works, demonstrating the validity of further scholarly exploration.[10] This chapter examines Margaret's letters and actions during her father's imprisonment as evidence of the confidence and authority instilled in her, at least in part, by her classical education. It also situates Margaret as both a devoted daughter and a learned woman, emphasising her role in the acceptance of Italian ideas in England. By framing her within this transnational context, it becomes possible to explore how Italian culture affected and inspired the celebrated learned women of sixteenth-century England—an aspect that, until this thesis, has received little scholarly attention.

Political context and education

Margaret was born in 1505, four years before the beginning of Henry VIII's reign. From the moment he was crowned, Henry projected an image of chivalry and power. He filled key political offices, expanded the Order of the Garter, and orchestrated a lavish coronation intended to reinforce his wealth, authority, and dynastic ambition.[11] Margaret's father described the beginning of Henry's reign as 'the end of our slavery, the fount of our liberty; the end of sadness, the beginning of

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[9] See J. Archer Gee, 'Margaret Roper's English Version of Erasmus' Precatio Dominica and the Apprenticeship Behind Early Tudor Translation' in E. V. Beilin (ed.), *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England*, *1550-1700: Volume 1: Early Tudor Women Writers* (London, 2009), pp. 3-18; P. Demers, 'Margaret Roper and Erasmus: The Relationship of Translator and Source', *WWR Magazine*, 1/1 (2005), pp. 3-8; E. M. Olivares-Merino, 'A Month with the Mores: The Meeting of Juan Luis Vives and Margaret More Roper', *English Studies*, 88/4 (2007), pp. 388-400.

[10] See E. McCutcheon and W. Gentrup (eds.), *A Companion to Margaret More Roper Studies: Life Records, Essential Texts, and Critical Essays* (Washington, D. C., 2022).

[11] M. Graves, *Henry VIII: A Study in Kingship* (Harlow, 2003), pp. 12-3.

joy'.[12] Reports from Venetian ambassadors further praised his appearance, multilingual abilities, musical talent, athletic strength, and intellectual accomplishments, presenting him as a gifted ruler admired across Europe.[13] Although he often delegated governance to advisors, namely Thomas Wolsey, and was prone to arrogance, his physical prowess and enthusiasm for martial display made him an symbol of England's vitality.[14] His marriage to Catherine of Aragon strengthened key diplomatic ties with Spain, though it strained relations with the Holy Roman Empire.[15]

As Margaret came of age, Henry's character and circumstances changed dramatically. Once celebrated for his strength and health, he became increasingly afflicted by chronic ailments that contributed to volatility and erratic decision making.[16] By the late 1520s he had grown more impulsive and severe.[17] His costly military ventures placed pressure on royal finances, and his awareness of the fragility of Tudor legitimacy heightened his anxiety over the absence of a male heir.[18] This insecurity prompted drastic measures. Henry rejected papal authority when Pope Clement VII refused to annul his marriage to Catherine, a decision that damaged relations with imperial powers and

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[12] T. More, '1509 Coronation Ode of King Henry VIII', in C. H. Miller, L. Bradner, C. A. Lynch, and R. P. Oliver (eds.), *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More, Volume 3.2 Latin Poems* (New Haven, CT, 1984), p. 100.
[13] See, for example, S. Giustinian, 'Letter from 30 April 1515', in R. Brown (trans.), *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII: Selection of Despatches written by the Venetian Ambassador Sebastian Giustinian and Addressed to the Signory of Venice, January 12th, 1515, to July 26th, 1519* (London, 1854), pp. 86-7; A. Badoer, S. Giustinian, and P. Pasqualigo, 'Letter from 3 May 1515', in R. Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, Relating to English Affairs, Existing in the Archives and Collections of Venice, and in Other Libraries of Northern Italy, vol. 2* (London, 1867), p. 242.
[14] M. Keynes, 'The Personality and Health of King Henry VIII (1491-1547)', *Journal of Medical Biography*, 13/3 (2005), p. 175.
[15] D. Starkey, *Henry: Virtuous Prince* (New York, 2009), p. 50.
[16] Keynes, 'Personality and Health', pp. 177-8.
[17] Keynes, 'Personality and Health', p. 175. Henry's erratic behaviour could have been later exacerbated by an injury to his frontal lobe during a jousting accident in 1536. See M. Q. Ikram, F. H. Sajjad, and A. Salardini, 'The Head that Wears the Crown: Henry VIII and Traumatic Brain Injury', *Journal of Clinical Neuroscience*, 28 (2016), pp. 16-9.
[18] S. Gunn, *The English People at War in the Age of Henry VIII* (Oxford, 2018), p. 73. For more on anxieties surrounding the lack of an heir, see Starkey, *Henry*, p. 10; Graves, *Henry VIII*, pp. 8-9.

initiated the English Reformation.[19] With the break from Rome, resistance to the King's authority, rather than dissent from Catholic doctrine, became the greatest danger.[20] This transformation directly affected Margaret's life. Her father, a committed Catholic, was executed for refusing to acknowledge Henry's supremacy over the Pope.[21] Margaret experienced the upheavals of the Reformation not only as a national crisis, but as a personal tragedy that altered her family's status and future.

She also experienced changes in educational standards throughout the early sixteenth century. In the 1520s and 1530s, leading humanists such as Vives, Erasmus, and Thomas More encouraged the idea that women could receive a limited classical education.[22] More drew on the humanist principles he developed with Erasmus when educating his children, and the programme he created for Margaret became a model for later women, including Lady Jane Grey, the Cooke sisters, and Queen Elizabeth.[23] These women became fluent in several languages and familiar with classical grammar, yet their existence does not indicate that Henrician England widely accepted the intellectual equality of women.[24] Most humanists adhered to classical assumptions about female inferiority.[25] Vives, often presented as an advocate for women's learning, still claimed that education could fuel the supposed

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[19] G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church* (New Haven, CT, 2005), p. 31. For an extensive explanation of Henry VIII and the Reformation refer to this text. The extent of the conflict, and how Margaret's father fit into it, is described in depth in E. M. Olivares Merino, 'Thomas More and Charles V Part III/III: Such a worthy councellour', *Moreana*, 52/199/200 (2015), pp. 190-235.
[20] M. Dowling, 'The Gospel and The Court: Reformation Under Henry VIII', in P. Lake and M. Dowling (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth Century England* (New York, 1987), p. 51.
[21] P. Marshall, 'The Last Years', in G. M. Logan (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Thomas More* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 116-38.
[22] L. Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage* (London, 1977), p. 142.
[23] E. E. Reynolds, 'Erasmus in England, 1505-6', in E. E. Reynolds, *Thomas More and Erasmus* (London, 1965), p. 55.
[24] Stone, *Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 142. See also J. Daybell, 'Interpreting Letters and Reading Script: Evidence for Female Education and Literacy in Tudor England', *Journal of the History of Education Society*, 34/6 (2005), p. 696.
[25] M. R. Sommerville, *Sex and Subjection: Attitudes to Women in Early-Modern Society* (London, 1995), pp. 10-11.

faults of women's nature.[26] Although many elite women were educated informally, their learning usually supported traditionally domestic expectations, while men were prepared for public life.[27]

The classical learning acquired by a small number of elite women calls for close attention to its content and to contemporary beliefs about women's intellectual capacity. This thesis argues, contrary to Kelley-Gadol, that some women did experience a renaissance through access to humanist education.[28] Figures such as Margaret Roper were viewed as capable of benefiting from classical learning, even if not destined for the roles held by men.[29] On men and women, her father wrote, 'both, I say, are equally suited for the knowledge of learning'.[30] By the sixteenth century, humanism in England had developed into an educational framework that valued grammar, rhetoric, history, and ethics as tools for social and moral advancement.[31] Since women were excluded from public life, their classical training took forms distinct from that of men, yet this difference does not nullify the intellectual opportunities they received.[32] Examples include Mary I, who studied Latin and classical historians under Vives, and Elizabeth I, who learned multiple languages and read classical literature widely.[33] Lady Jane Grey also mastered several languages and read Greek philosophical texts.[34] Although few women studied Latin for professional purposes, those

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[26] J. L. Vives, *Instruction of a Christen Woman*, trans. R. Hyrde, (London, 1529), sig. Diii^{r}.
[27] Daybell, 'Interpreting letters', p. 697.
[28] J. Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women Have a Renaissance?', in R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz (eds.), *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, MA, 1977), pp. 137-64.
[29] At least for a moment in time and by a few humanist scholars in Tudor England.
[30] T. More, '1518 Letter to William Gonell' in E. F. Rogers (ed.), *St. Thomas More: Selected Letters* (New Haven, CT, 1961), p. 105.
[31] Friedman, 'Influence of Humanism', p. 58.
[32] E. McCutcheon, 'The Education of Thomas More's Daughters: Concepts and Praxis', *Moreana*, 52/201/202 (2015), p. 250.
[33] See J. Edwards, *Mary I* (New Haven, CT, 2011), p. 10; P. Collinson, 'Elizabeth I', *ODNB*; J. Goodrich, 'Translation as Remediation: Erasmus, Tudor Noblewomen, and the Humanist Reception of Classical Literature', *Philological Quarterly*, 102/2 (2023), p. 149.
[34] A. Plowden, 'Grey [married name Dudley], Lady Jane', *ODNB*.

who translated classical texts demonstrate that humanism shaped their learning.

Marriage, family expectations, and inherited social norms shaped the education of elite women under Henry VIII. Margaret's intellectual formation developed within these constraints and reflected the English adoption of ideas that had originated in late medieval Italy. Margaret's mother Jane died when Margaret was six, and her father married Alice Middleton, a wealthy widow whose intelligence and assertiveness made her a significant influence on Margaret's upbringing.[35] This marriage expanded the household's wealth and allowed More to provide extensive tutoring for his children. By the age of ten Margaret was receiving what was remarkable instruction even for boys, guided by More's humanist convictions.[36] The Italianate curriculum that More endorsed, rooted in the *studia humanitatis* shaped by Petrarch, included grammar, rhetoric, poetry, logic, mathematics, philosophy, astronomy, theology, and medicine.[37] In early Tudor England this programme also involved a rigorous engagement with Christian texts alongside classical authors.[38]

Margaret grew up in what is known as the 'More School', which refers to the rigorous humanistic, educational environment within More's household made up of all of his children, including his

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[35] R. M. Warnicke, *Wicked Women of Tudor England: Queens, Aristocrats, Commoners* (New York, 2012), p. 165. While facts about Alice's background seem to be verified, sixteenth-century sources discussing her character must be considered carefully. More's biographer Nicholas Harpsfield and William Roper, Alice's son-in-law, both wrote disparagingly about Alice because she did not obediently support her husband's refusal to accept Henry VIII's authority over the papal authority, so their descriptions of her character must be considered in this light. From Roper and Harpsfield, historians only continued to vilify her. Retha Warnicke analysed historical characterisations of Alice and presented a more realistic, evidence-based description of her life in Chapter Seven of Warnicke, *Wicked Women*, pp. 155-80.
[36] Bowker, 'Roper [née More], Margaret', *ODNB*. This thesis is not the appropriate arena to debate More's true views on women, but these texts do so well: R. Marius, *Thomas More: A Biography* (New York, 1984), pp. 8-9, 223; J. P. Jones and S. Sellers Seibel, 'Thomas More's Feminism: To Reform or Re-Form,' in M. J. Moore (ed.), *Quincentennial Essays on St. Thomas More* (Boone, NC, 1978) pp. 67-77; R. M. Warnicke, *Women of the English Renaissance and Reformation* (Westport, CT, 1983), pp. 23-4.
[37] T. More, '1518 Letter to the University of Oxford', in Rogers, *Selected Letters*, p. 99.
[38] M. Dowling, *Humanism in the Age of Henry VIII* (Beckenham, 1986), p. 1.

stepdaughter, foster children, wards, and family friends.[39] She studied Latin and Greek, practiced translation, read classical philosophers, and received instruction from figures like William Gonell and Richard Hyrde.[40] She was also taught astronomy, philosophy, theology, geometry, and mathematics, which was rare for girls.[41] She was particularly fond of classical philosophy. When she was just thirteen, she managed to uncover that a letter humanist scholars had thought was written by St Cyprian in the third century was actually written by his rival Novatian, for which Erasmus praised her greatly.[42] When she was seventeen, she was writing with her father on complex topics, like the Last Four Things, which are Death, The Final Judgement, Heaven, and Hell.[43] She performed before Henry VIII with her sisters, wrote sophisticated Latin letters, and demonstrated skill in rhetoric and disputation.[44] The emphasis on her classical learning is reflected in a surviving drawing by Hans Holbein the Younger, in which Margaret, the second figure from the right, is depicted wearing fine clothes befitting an elite woman with a book, later identified as Seneca's *Oedipus*, in her lap, demonstrating her father's intention for her to be seen as well-versed in classical literature (see Figure 4).[45]

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[39] McCutcheon, 'Learned Woman', p. 273 For more on the 'More School', see P. Hogrefe, 'Education in General' and 'Education of Women: Love, Marriage', in P. Hogrefe, *The Sir Thomas More Circle: A Program of Ideas and Their Impact on Secular Drama* (Urbana, IL, 1959), pp. 140-200, 201-50.

[40] There are many sources that discuss Margaret's education and proficiency in Greek and Latin, but they are described at length in the preface to her translation of Erasmus. M. Roper, *A Devoute Treatise Upon the Pater Noster* (London, 1526), sig. biii^{r}. For more on her classical education, see McCutcheon, 'Learned Woman', pp. 274-5; E. M. Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus: Life Records and Writings of Margaret More Roper', in E. McCutcheon and W. Gentrup (eds.), *A Companion to Margaret More Roper Studies: Life Records, Essential Texts, and Critical Essays* (Washington, D. C., 2022), p. 5. Gonell's tutelage of Margaret and her siblings can be seen in More's letter to him from 1518. See More, '1518 Letter to William Gonell', p. 105. Hyrde reveals that he knew and taught Margaret as a child while praising her Latin and Greek proficiency in the preface of her translation. See Roper, *Devoute Treatise*, sigs. biii^{v}-biii^{r}.

[41] More, '1521 Letter to Margaret Roper', pp. 148-9.

[42] See N. Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More, Knight*, K. Stearns, and A. Taylor (eds.), (Dallas, TX, 2020), p. 26; J. Palsgrave, 'Letter to Thomas More', in E. F. Rogers (ed.), *The Correspondence of Sir Thomas More* (Princeton, NJ, 1947), p. 405.

[43] Levin, Riehl Bertolet, and Eldridge Carney, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, p. 312.

[44] Harpsfield, *The Life and Death of Sir Thomas More,* p. 26.

[45] The image has been reproduced and discussed in J.B. Trapp and H. Schulte Herbrüggen, *'The King's Good Servant': Sir Thomas More: Exhibition Catalogue*



Figure 4 Study for a portrait of Thomas More's family, c. 1527, by Hans Holbein the Younger (Kunstmuseum Basel)

Margaret's education put to use

Margaret's extensive humanist education and her high position in society gave her other privileges and opportunities that most of her contemporary elite women did not have. For instance, her erudition allowed her to become the mouthpiece for her father's defence when he was imprisoned in 1534 and 1535. More kept Margaret appraised and involved from the very moment he sensed danger. In February 1534, Margaret and her father wrote to each other when More's name was removed from the Bill of Attainder presented to parliament by Thomas Cromwell.[46] The first Act of Succession was passed on 26 March, and soon after, sensing what was to come, More gave the southeast portion of the family estate to Margaret and her husband,

(London, 1977) pp. 84-6. A painted miniature was made from this drawing by Rowland Lockey, who also painted the portrait of More and his descendants discussed in Chapter Two, in 1593-1594, but it does not include the second book placed on the floor in front of Margaret. The miniature is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum: https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O8821/sir-thomas-more-his-household-portrait-miniature-lockey-rowland/. In 1717, Reverend John Lewis saw the portrait which was created from the drawing and identified the book Margaret was reading as *Oedipus*. See T. E. Bridgett, *Life and Writings of Sir Thomas More: Lord Chancellor of England and Martyr Under Henry VIII* (London, 1981), p. 146.

[46] Margaret's husband William explained this in his biography of More, which was written during the reign of Queen Mary I but not printed until 1626. See W. Roper, *The Mirrour of Vertue in Worldly Greatnes Or The life of Syr Thomas More Knight* (Paris, 1626), sigs. e12^{r}-f1^{v}.

making it so that legally it could not be taken from them if More's lands were confiscated.[47] On 30 March, Margaret's husband took the Oath of Supremacy, which he was asked to do because he was a Member of Parliament, and then on 13 April, More was brought to Lambeth Palace to also take the oath, the only layman asked to do so.[48] From that day until his execution in July 1535, More remained in prison for refusing to take the oath. Margaret was the first person he wrote to after he was moved from Lambeth to the Tower of London.[49] Margaret was assisted by her stepmother in fighting for her father's release. In 1534, Alice wrote to both Henry VIII and Cromwell explaining the financial hardship put on their family by More's imprisonment and begging them to release him and let the family live out their days quietly, though, of course, this did not happen.[50] Rather than his wife, or even his son, More declared Margaret, who was nearly thirty with four children, his representative to the outside world.[51] More had also put Margaret in charge of running the almshouse he established, which shows how capable and responsible he thought her.[52] He had other visitors and even servants while imprisoned, but Margaret was the first person granted licence by the king to visit and correspond with him.[53]

A lot can be learned from the letters between Margaret and More from 1534-35, especially concerning the motivations behind the letters because Margaret intended to publish them. William Rastell, More's nephew who edited and published the letters in a collection of his wider texts during the reign of Queen Mary I, argued that Margaret knew her letter in which she begged her father to take the Oath of Supremacy and avoid execution would be seen by Cromwell and the

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[47] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', p. 21.
[48] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', p. 21.
[49] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', p. 21.
[50] See Alice's letters to Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell in A. More, '1534 Letter to Henry VIII' and '1535 Letter to Thomas Cromwell' in Rogers, *Correspondence*, pp. 147-8, 153-4.
[51] T. More, '1534 Letter to More's Friends, from the Tower of London', in Rogers, *Selected Letters*, p. 227.
[52] Guy, *A Daughter's Love*, pp. 152, 303.
[53] McCutcheon, 'Learned Woman', p. 278.

King, and hoped that her sentiments in the letter would allow them to grant her permission to see her father.[54] During the reign of Elizabeth I, Thomas Stapleton published a biography of More in which he was less sure of any deeper meaning to Margaret's motives.[55] More's letters to Margaret were not meant to comfort but to convey the gravity of his interrogations, suggesting he believed her capable of understanding and preserving these accounts. He detailed the danger of being under the king's suspicion, the pressure he faced to sign the Oath, exacerbated by how many others had already signed it, and the psychological tactics used to break his resolve.[56] He also described the executions of those who defied the king, exposing Margaret to the full extent of his ordeal.[57] Though such knowledge must have caused her great pain, More trusted in her resilience, ensuring that his experiences would not be lost to history.

Margaret's potential power to aid her father can also be seen by the fact that the government was suspicious of her motives for writing. On 14 June 1535, More was interrogated about his daughter's letters, and afterwards he wrote to her stating that he told his interrogators that she had implored him many times to take the oath and obey the King.[58] She clearly was seen more as a potential and formidable threat than a loving, scared daughter. Margaret was also permitted to be with her father in the Tower to witness the execution of five priests in May 1535. E. E. Reynolds has argued that Henry VIII or Cromwell allowed this so that Margaret, whose delicate sensibilities presumably would have been severely shaken by the execution, might persuade her father to take the Oath.[59] If true, this further supports the idea that Margaret was viewed as somebody who had the potential to shape the decisions of her father.

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[54] W. Rastell, *The Workes of Sir Thomas More Knyght* (London, 1557), p. 1432.
[55] Stapleton, *Life and Illustrious Martyrdom*, pp. 60, 82.
[56] T. More, 'April 1534 Letter to Margaret', in Rogers, *Selected Letters*, p. 218; '3 June 1535 Letter to Margaret', in Rogers, *Selected Letters*, pp. 250-2.
[57] More, '3 June 1535 Letter to Margaret', pp. 251-2.
[58] T. More, 'May 1534 Letter to Margaret', in Rogers, *Selected Letters*, pp. 224-5.
[59] E.E. Reynolds, *Margaret Roper, Eldest Daughter of St. Thomas More* (New York, 1960), pp. 101-2.

Finally, there was a letter written from the perspective of Margaret detailing her father's beliefs and feelings during his imprisonment in August 1534. Although the letter was signed by Margaret, some scholars think it was actually written by More.[60] Jaime Goodrich posits that Margaret and her father wrote the letter together.[61] If true, this leads to many interesting questions, but ultimately this means that, for whatever reason, More believed that writing the letter from Margaret's perspective with the intention of it being read by others would be more impactful than if it were written from his own perspective. This again speaks to the power Margaret had in the defence and legacy of her father. General scholarly consensus is that More chose to document his imprisonment and ideas in letters to Margaret because he believed that she, over multiple other people he could have chosen, would preserve them and circulate them after his death.[62] Margaret's letters to her father and the fact that he chose her to be his representative are a direct result of her intelligence and understanding of classical rhetoric, history, and philosophy. Margaret's actions during her father's imprisonment reflect the impact of England's adoption of the classical, humanistic educational model from late medieval Italy, highlighting how this paradigm influenced political events and affected her life.

In the end Margaret could not save her father, but her humanistic upbringing put her in an advantageous position to try. Her education also offered her the opportunity to be known and praised in humanist circles. In 1524 when Margaret was nineteen, she moved with her husband and family to Chelsea, where her father built a compound that, along with living quarters, included a chapel, library, gallery, and open gardens. Important intellectuals and politicians of the day, like Vives and even sometimes Henry VIII, attended parties there hosted by More and attended by Margaret.[63] Margaret was an active

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[60] See the letter and discussion in A. de Silva, *The Last Letters of Thomas More* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2000), pp. 72-89.
[61] Levin, Riehl Bertolet, and Eldridge Carney, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, p. 312.
[62] McCutcheon, 'Learned Woman', p. 281.
[63] Bowker, 'Roper [née More], Margaret', *ODNB*.

participant in the humanist discussions at their home in Chelsea.[64] Margaret knew Vives, who was friends with her father, well. She first met him when she was eighteen and he came to stay with her family in Bracklesbury, before the move to Chelsea, in autumn 1523.[65] During his stay with the More family in 1526, he described the More sisters as 'most prolific' and reaffirmed their intellectual distinction, calling Margaret and her sisters 'very learned' in his *Institutione Foeminae Christianae*.[66] Olivares-Merino noted that, while Margaret's mastery of Latin, Greek, and classical subjects would have impressed Vives, their shared passion for medicine particularly strengthened their connection.[67] Vives's admiration highlights Margaret's exceptional intellect and the role of education in shaping her scholarly reputation.

Through her father, Margaret had known another important humanist all her life: Erasmus.[68] When Margaret gave birth to her first child in 1523, Erasmus dedicated his commentary on Ovid's *Nux* to her brother John, requesting that it be shared with Margaret and her sisters.[69] In the dedication, he remarked on her impressive Latin, rhetoric, and letter writing skills.[70] In 1524, the same year Margaret translated his *Precatio Dominica*, he dedicated his commentary on two hymns of Prudentius to her.[71] Also in 1524, Erasmus's *Antronius, Magdalia* inserted Margaret into the discourse of women's education, and connected educated women in England to the state of education in Italy.[72] In his biography of More, Stapleton claimed that this proved that Margaret was seen by Erasmus, perhaps the most prominent

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[64] Olivares-Merino, 'Month', p. 397.
[65] Olivares-Merino, 'Month', p. 392.
[66] Juan Luis Vives to Craneveldt von Franz, 13 April 1526, in J. L. Vives, J. Jiménez Delgado (ed.), *Epistolario* (Madrid, 1978), p. 431. J. L. Vives, *De institutione feminae Christianae, vol. 1*, C. Fantazzi and C. Matheeussen (eds.), (Leiden, 1996), pp. 38-9.
[67] Olivares-Merino, 'Month', p. 394.
[68] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', p. 4.
[69] D. Erasmus, 'In Nucem Ovidii commentarius', in E. Fantham (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings*, volume 7 (Toronto, 1989), p. 127.
[70] Erasmus, 'Nucem Ovidii', p. 127.
[71] Erasmus, 'Commentarius in duos hymnos Prudentii', in E. Fantham (ed.), *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings*, volume 7 (Toronto, 1989), p. 173.
[72] Stevenson, *Women Latin Poets*, p. 256. Erasmus, '*Abbatis et Eruditae*', p. 504.

humanist in sixteenth-century Europe, as an 'eminent scholar'.[73] In a letter from 1529, Erasmus wrote that he recognised no one's writing more easily than Margaret's and told her, 'it seems to me that I see shining through the very beautiful exterior a more beautiful soul'.[74] Margaret replied to the letter and wrote that when she showed his letters to her friends, her reputation, which was already very famous, continued to improve.[75]

Not only was Margaret well-known and praised in humanist circles, but she was able to publish within them as well, a privilege afforded to very few women in Henrician England made possible by her extensive humanist education and her father's connections. Brenda Hosington argues that Margaret's motivations for publishing were to promote the classical education of women and Erasmian piety in England.[76] Unfortunately, many of Margaret's written works have been lost. The Stapleton biography reveals that there were two works written by Margaret in Latin. One of these was written by Margaret in English and then translated into Latin, and the other was her treatise on the Last Four Things, neither of which survive.[77] More Latin letters written by Margaret existed at one point according to More's and Erasmus's correspondence, but these no longer survive.[78] She also wrote Latin poems, none of which survive.[79] Moreover, there is some speculation that Margaret began or partially completed translations of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* from Greek, which her daughter Mary finished in the late 1560s or early 1570s.[80]

Margaret's only surviving published work was her aforementioned translation of Erasmus's *Precatio Dominica* titled *A*

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[73] Stapleton, *Life and Illustrious Martyrdom*, p. 59.
[74] Erasmus, 'Letter 2212', p. 274.
[75] B. Hosington, 'Translation in the Service of Politics and Religion: A Family Tradition for Thomas More, Margaret Roper and Mary Clarke Basset', in J. De Landtsheer and H. Nellen (eds.), *Between Scylla and Charybdis: Learned Letter Writers Navigating the Reefs of Religious and Political Controversy in Early Modern Europe* (Leiden, 2010), p. 99.
[76] Hosington, 'Translation', p. 100.
[77] Stapleton, *Life and Illustrious Martyrdom*, p. 59.
[78] Olivares Merino, 'Survey', p. 154.
[79] Olivares Merino, 'Survey', p. 155.
[80] Olivares Merino, 'Survey', p. 156.

Devout Treatise upon the Pater Noster. Margaret's *Devout Treatise* is the ultimate example of the blend of humanist learning, shown by her expert translation of Erasmus's Latin, and piety that More wanted Margaret to exude. The earliest surviving published edition of this work is from 1526, but Richard Hyrde wrote the prologue for it in 1524 leading some scholars to believe it was first published in that year.[81] In any event, in 1526 Thomas Berthelet published her work, but it had to be pulled from sale because it was a translation of Erasmus, who was very unpopular in England at the time, and Berthelet had not received the permission required to print it.[82] This thesis interprets Margaret's *Devout Treatise* as indirect evidence that English appreciation of late medieval Italian ideas—exemplified by her humanist education—affected her life. Firstly, she knew and shared mutual respect with Erasmus because of her father's leading role in the humanist movement in England. Her classical education also enabled her to translate Latin and engage intellectually with figures like Erasmus throughout her life. The text's preface further reflects contemporary humanist ideals concerning women's education.

While *Precatio Dominica* and Margaret's translation of it are religious texts, the preface in Margaret's translation written by Richard Hyrde stressed the importance of women receiving classical education.[83] Hyrde used Helen of Troy, King Menelaus, Paris, Isocrates, Plato, and Diogenes to support the argument for learned women.[84] Set in contrast to Paris, who was 'ravished of all his wyttes' at the mere sight of her, Helen of Troy was used as an example of the inner strength and morality traditionally believed to be lacking in women. The use of Helen as an example countered the arguments that women should not be educated because they are more prone to vice than men and would weaponise their intelligence against men. Hyrde

[81] McCutcheon, 'Learned Woman', p. 286. Guy, *A Daughter's Love*, p. 303.
[82] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', pp. 14-6. See also Olivares Merino, 'Survey', p. 148.
[83] R. Hyrde, 'Preface', in M. Roper, *A Devoute Treatise Upon the Pater Noster* (London, 1526), sigs. aii^{r}-biv^{v}.
[84] See Hyrde, 'Preface', sigs. aiii^{v}, aiii^{r}, bi^{r}, bii^{v}.

also used a quote from Isocrates to argue that women are often able to remain composed and dignified in comparison to their easily offended, tantrum-prone male counterparts in the face of uncomfortable or upsetting situations. Hyrde argued that the wise, ancient philosophers and church leaders alike believed education was beneficial for both men and women. He argued that Plato believed education was a great deterrence from vice, for both men and women. Finally, Hyrde wrote that Diogenes wrote how the mastery of different languages could lead to virtuous character. The practice of using classical ideas and examples to support contemporary ideas about the nature and roles of women spread from late medieval Florence and informed writings about women in sixteenth-century England, as seen in Chapter Two. Margaret's inclusion of this in her work inserts her into the acceptance and promotion of Italian ideas and practices in England.

Margaret's classical, humanistic roots can be seen within the preface, intertwined within the religious subject matter of the overall text. Clearly, it was important to Margaret that ideas about women's education, supported by humanistic doctrine, be linked to her translation of Erasmus's religious treatise, even if she did not write the preface herself. The preface could have easily used examples of biblical women to support the argument for women's education, but the author made a conscious decision to use classical women instead. Margaret chose to implement the practice of using classical ideas to inform her contemporary thoughts. The preface's use of classical examples to argue for women's learning situates Margaret within the rhetorical strategies of Italian female humanists like Cassandra Fedele and Isotta Nogarola.[85] Along with the fact that Margaret was only able to translate this work from Latin because of her classical education, the translation of this text was more than a simple act of engagement with other English humanists; it was an act of active participation in an Italian classical inheritance.

[85] For more on rhetorical strategies of Italian female humanists, see M. L. King and A. Rabil (eds.), *Her Immaculate Hand: Selected Works by and About the Women Humanists of Quattrocento Italy* (New York, 1983).

Beyond Margaret's mastery of Latin, the rhetorical skills she gained from her classical education allowed her to translate Erasmus's original text in a way that was engaging for an English audience. She did simple things, like explaining passages more thoroughly to ensure their meaning was easy to understand. For example, Erasmus wrote, '*Abba pater*', which Margaret translated and explained as, 'Abba pater / Whiche in Englysshe is as moche to saye / as O father father'.[86] Her glossing here exemplifies *paraphrasis*, which means clarifying a phrase by restating it, a technique central to Quintilian's pedagogy and Erasmus's humanist manuals.[87]

On other occasions, she employed more complex humanistic rhetorical strategies to alter the meaning of a passage slightly, translating in a way that Schleiermacher would identify in the nineteenth century as moving the author towards the reader: Margaret deliberately made her translations more relevant and engaging for her English audience.[88] For example, Erasmus wrote:

> *Da pater omni potens, ut quos tua pietas ſemel á peccati tyră[n]nide liberatos tuoq; regno affcriptos eſſe uoluit, eiuſdem tuæ pietatis beneficio perſistant in libertate ſua, neq; quiſquam abs te filióq; tuo deficiens, reuoluatur in diaboli tyrannidem*.[89]

> This translates to:
> Grant, Almighty Father, that those whom your compassion has once freed from the tyranny of sin and enrolled in your kingdom, may by the same grace of your compassion continue in their freedom, lest any of your children, failing from you, fall back into the tyranny of the devil.[90]

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[86] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica in septem portiones* (1523), sig. aiii^{v}. M. Roper, *A devoute treatise upon the Pater noster* (London, 1526), sig. Biv^{v}.
[87] Quintilian, D. A . Russell (ed. and trans.), *Institutio Oratoria*, Volume I, (Cambridge, MA, 2002), p. 211. Erasmus, D. B. King and H. D. Rix (trans.), *On Copia of Words and Ideas* (Milwaukee, WI, 1963), pp. 27 and 38.
[88] Schleiermacher, 'Methods of Translating', p. 42.
[89] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. avii^{v}.
[90] Translation is mine.

Margaret wrote:

> Graunt father of all myght / that they / whom thy goodnesse ones hath delyuered frō[m] the tyrā[n]ny of synne / and assygned to dwell in thy royalme / maye by the benifitte of the same benygne goodnesse contynue / and stedfastly abyde in theyr liberte and fredome: and that none leauynge and fayling from the and thy sonne / retourne agayne in the tyrannous seruice of the deuyl.[91]

The modifications in Margaret translation from the words of Erasmus reveal rhetorical her training shaped by her classical education. She demonstrated *copia* and *synonymia*, expanding Erasmus's 'continue in their freedom' into 'contynue / and stedfastly abyde in theyr liberte and fredome'.[92] Her rendering of Erasmus's 'tyranny of the devil' as the 'tyrannous seruice of the deuyl' demonstrates *enargeia*, converting abstract tyranny into the vivid idiom of service, while her antithesis between 'liberty and freedom' and 'tyrannous service' heightens moral contrast.[93] Even subtle lexical shifts—like 'ascribed' becoming 'assigned to dwell,'—change Erasmus's imagery into a more comprehensible civic register, reflecting the emphasis in Italian civic humanism on rhetoric as ethical belonging.[94] These choices show how her rhetorical education enabled her to naturalise Italianate humanism within English devotional prose,

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[91] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Di^{v}.

[92] In ancient rhetoric, *copia*, literally meaning 'abundance', was strategy characterised by the possession of extensive linguistic and conceptual resources, permitting the expression of one idea in numerous different ways. See Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume I, pp. 151, 389, 517; Cicero, E. W. Hutton (trans.), *De Oratore* (Cambridge, MA, 1942), pp. 55, 95; Erasmus, *On Copia*, p. 11. *Synonymia* is the use of multiple synonyms in succession to amplify an explanation, creating a form of repetition that enhances both emotional impact and intellectual clarity. See Aristotle, J. H. Freese (trans.), G. Striker (ed.), *Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge, MA, 2020), p. 357; Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume I, pp. 255-7; Erasmus, *On Copia*, p. 19.

[93] *Enargeia* is a rhetorical term for vivid, powerful description that brings a subject to life before the audience's eyes, appealing to the senses and emotions to create an illusion of presence and enhance persuasive impact. See Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume I, p. 375.

[94] See Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Volume 1: The Renaissance* (Cambridge, 1978).

thus participating in the transmission of the classical inheritance into early modern England.

Another example of Margaret's humanistic rhetorical skill can be found in this passage on martyrs. Erasmus wrote:

> *Sic regnas ac triunphas i sanctis martyribus tuis in castis uirginib tuis, inicorruptis confessoribus tuis. Nec enim illi suis uiribus aut praesidiis uincerunt tyrannorum saeuitian, aut carnis lasciuian, aut huiusmundi ma liciă[n]*[95]

This translates to:

> Thus you reign and triumph with your holy martyrs in your chaste virgins, your incorruptible confessors. For they did not overcome the cruelty of tyrants, or the lasciviousness of the flesh, or the malice of this world, by their own strength or protection[96]

Margaret wrote:

> Thus also thou tryū[m]phest and reignest in thy holy martyrs / in thy chast uirgins and pure confessours / whiche yet neyther by theyr owne strē[n]gth nor power / dyde ouercome the fiersenesse and displeasure of tyrantes / ne the raging or the wantōnesse of the flesshe / ne the maliciousnesse of this worlde[97]

Margaret changed Erasmus' to 'Thus also thou tryumphest and reignest,' an example of *amplificatio* that reinforces simultaneity and enhances rhythm.[98] Her substitution of 'pure confessours' is a strategic deployment of *decorum*. 'Pure' is more immediate and affective in English than the more abstract 'incorrupt', a change more suited for the

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[95] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sigs. avii^{v}-viii^{r}.
[96] Translation is mine.
[97] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Dii^{r}.
[98] As a rhetorical strategy, *amplificatio* increased importance, intensity, or persuasive effect, often by adding detail, emphasis, or repetition. See Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume III, pp. 398-99; Erasmus, *On Copia*, p. 35.

vernacular. Most strikingly, Margaret heightened Erasmus's catalogue of adversaries through rhetorical enrichment. The Latin '*tyrannorum saeuitiam*' becomes 'the fiersenesse and displeasure of tyrantes', where the pairing of near-synonyms exemplifies *synonymia* and creates a more variegated emotional register. Likewise, '*carnis lasciuiam*' is expanded into 'the raging or the wantonnesse of the flesshe,' the doubling (raging / wantonnesse) introducing both a violent and a sensual dimension. This layering of meaning reflects her humanist training in *copia*. Finally, '*maliciam*' becomes 'the maliciousnesse of this worlde,' where the explicit genitive construction underscores universality and dramatizes the contest. These shifts show Margaret's conscious intensification of the persuasive force of Erasmus's Latin by adopting classical techniques of *amplificatio* and *enargeia*. In doing so, she not only mediated Erasmus for an English audience but also enacted the Italian humanist ideal of eloquence as ethical and affective persuasion, thereby transmitting continental rhetorical culture into England.

Another example of Margaret's skill can be seen here. Erasmus wrote:

Optamus ut in nobis quoq; ſemper effloreſcatregnum tuŭ[m][99]

This translates to:
We desire that in us also your kingdom may always flourish.[100]

Margaret wrote:
And we father / hertely desire the / that thy realme may florisshe also in us.[101]

The addition of direct address ('we father') and intensifier ('hertely') demonstrates *amplificatio*, transforming a neutral wish into

[99] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii[r].
[100] Translation is mine.
[101] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Dii[r].

a fervent appeal. Her choice of 'realme' for regnum deployed decorum, grounding divine sovereignty in a term resonant with English political and social life. The rhythmic ordering ('may florisshe also in us') demonstrates *copia*, ensuring clarity and cadence. Thus, Margaret infused Erasmus's compact Latin with warmth, immediacy, and relatability, embedding humanist rhetorical technique within vernacular devotion.

Erasmus also wrote:

Etſi non aedimus miracula, quoniam tempus aut res nŏ[n] exigit, ſi non includimur, excruciamur ſecamur, urimur ſuffigimur in crucem, demergimur in mare, aut decolamur tamen illustrabitur & in nobis uis acſplĕ[n]dor tui regni, ſi mundus conſpexerit nos tui ſpiritus præſidiis inuictos aduerſus omnes inſultus ſatane, ad uerſus carnem adea quæ ſunt inimica ſpiritui ſolicită[n]tĕ[n], aduersus mundŭ[n] omni machinarum genere proua cantem, ut deficiamus a fiducia, quam ſemelin te fiximus.[102]

This translates to:

Even if we do not perform miracles, because time or circumstances do not require it, if we are not imprisoned, tortured, cut, burned, crucified, drowned in the sea, or beheaded, yet the power and splendor of your kingdom will be illuminated in us, if the world sees us, with the protection of your spirit, invincible against all the attacks of Satan, against the flesh, against the things that are hostile to the spirit, against the world, with every kind of device, so that we may fail from the trust which we once placed in you.[103]

[102] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii^{r}.
[103] Translation is mine.

Margaret wrote:

> whiche all though we do no myracles / for asmoche as neyther tyme nor mater requireth: albe it we be nat imprysoned nor turmented: though we be nat woūded nor brent / althogh we be nat crucified nor drowned: thoughe we be nat beheeded: yet natwithstandyng / the strength and clerenesse of thy realme: may shine and be noble in us / if the worlde perceyue / that we by the helpe of thy spirite / stande stedfast & sure agaynst all assautes of the deuyll / and agaynst the flesshe whiche alwaye stereth and prouoketh us to those thynges / that be contrary to the spirite / & agaȳst the worlde / whiche by all the wayes it can / moueth us to forsake and leaue the trust that we haue ones put in the[e].[104]

Margaret's treatment of Erasmus's extended conditional prayer reveals her capacity to transform compact Latin into rhetorically elaborate English. Erasmus listed sufferings in a compressed catalogue before concluding with steadfastness in faith. Margaret expanded this into a patterned, almost liturgical series: 'albe it we be nat imprysoned nor turmented: though we be nat wounded nor brent, althogh we be nat crucified nor drowned, thoughe we be nat beheeded', exemplifying anaphora, a rhetorical device which heightens cadence and reinforces endurance. She also altered Erasmus's 'uis ac splendor tui regni' to 'the strength and clerenesse of thy realme may shine and be noble in us,' an example of *copia* that adds moral and aesthetic dimensions. Likewise, her phrase 'stande stedfast & sure' introduced a doubled rhythm that reinforces ethical firmness. Finally, Margaret rendered abstract temptations more tangible. For instance, 'the flesh which alwaye stereth and prouoketh us' embodies conflict through verbs of motion, a striking example of *enargeia*. These choices intensify the prayer's oratorical force, transforming Erasmus's Latin into a persuasive

[104] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sigs. Dii^{r-v}.

vernacular homily and embedding Italian humanist rhetorical culture within English devotional prose.

Another example is where Erasmus wrote:

Quoties amore tui, ſpreto huius mundi regno, ſe quimur promiſſa regni cæleſtis, quoties reiecto mammona unicum illud margaritum Euangelicum ampletimur, quoties repudiatis omnibus, quæ iuxta carně[n] ad tempus dulcia uidě[n]tur[105]

This translates to:

> How often, for love of you, we long for the kingdom of this world, if we are promised the kingdom of heaven, how often, having rejected mammon, we embrace that unique pearl of the Gospel, how often we reject all things that seem sweet to the flesh for the time being.[106]

Margaret wrote:

> As often so euer as for thy loue we despice and sette nought by the realme of this worlde / and with full trust hange upon the heuē[n]ly kyngdome / that thou hast promysed us: as often also / as we forsake and leaue honourynge of erthely richesse / and onely worshyp and enbrace ye precious and gostly lernyng of the gospell / as often as we refuse those thȳ[n]ges / that for the season seme swete and pleasaunt to the flesshely & carnal appetite[107]

Where Erasmus compressed complex spiritual action into a single sentence, Margaret expanded the syntax with repeated concessive structures, creating rhythmic anaphora that emphasises devotion and moral discipline. She simplified abstract Latin terms through decorum, linking spiritual truths to English idiom. Her

[105] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii^{r}.
[106] Translation is mine.
[107] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Dii^{v}.

elaboration of sensual temptation exemplified *enargeia*, giving vivid, corporeal force to moral teaching. Through amplification, rhythm, and rhetorical vivacity, Margaret transformed Erasmus's Latin into a persuasive vernacular meditation, transmitting Italianate humanist eloquence to her English translation.

Her skills can be seen further where Erasmus wrote:

Sic uiſum eſt pater tuæ ſapiĕntiæ, ut hac graui perpetuaq collu e[s]tatione uirtutem tuorum & exerceres & confirmares.[108]

This translates to:

Thus it seems to the Father of your wisdom that by this constant and heavy burden you would both exercise and confirm your virtue.[109]

Margaret wrote:

Thus it hath pleased and lyked thy wysdome father / by continuall and greuous batayle / to exercise / confyrme / and make stedfaste the uertue and strengthe of thy people.[110]

Margaret's translation of Erasmus's *Sic uisum est* demonstrates rhetorical enrichment through amplification and rhythm. She expanded 'by this constant and heavy burden' into 'by continuall and greuous batayle', intensifying the sense of trial and endurance. Her addition of 'and make stedfaste the uertue and strengthe of thy people' exemplifies *copia*, extending Erasmus's abstract Latin into vivid, morally instructive English. Her translation creates rhythmic parallelism, reinforcing ethical emphasis. Margaret's transformation of Erasmus's concise Latin statement reflects her humanist training.

Margaret's demonstration of rhetorical mastery continues where Erasmus wrote:

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[108] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii^{r}.
[109] Translation is mine.
[110] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Diii^{r}.

Auge uires filiis tuis, ut ſemper è prœlio diſcedant firmiores, ac paulatim imminutis aduerſario rŭ[n] opibus, tu indies magis ac magis regnes in nobis.[111]

This translates to:
Increase the strength of your sons, so that they may always depart from battle stronger, and as the enemy's resources gradually diminish, you may reign more and more among us every day.[112]

Margaret wrote:
Encrease suche strengthe in thy childrē[n] / that they maye euer retourne stronger from their batayle and that whan by lytell and lytell / their enemies and aduersaries myght is minysshed and broken thou mayest euery day more and more raygne in us.[113]

Margaret's rendering of Erasmus's *Auge uires filiis tuis* demonstrates her rhetorical skill in amplifying Latin for clarity, rhythm, and persuasive force. She expanded 'so that they may always depart from battle stronger' into 'that they maye euer retourne stronger from their batayle,' emphasising continuity and resilience. The phrase 'whan by lytell and lytell / their enemies and aduersaries myght is minysshed and broken' exemplifies *amplificatio* and *synonymia*, giving vivid, gradual force to the diminution of opposition. Her repetition of 'every day more and more' mirrors Erasmus's '*indies magis ac magis*,' but with English cadence that reinforces both moral and martial progression. Through the rhetorical strategies of parallelism, vivid expansion, and rhythmic doubling, Margaret transformed Erasmus's Latin into an English text that is rhetorically vigorous, ethically instructive, and imbued with the Italianate humanist tradition.

[111] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii^{r}.
[112] Translation is mine.
[113] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sigs. Dii^{v}-iii^{r}.

Another example can be seen where Erasmus wrote:

Sed nondum tuo iugo pater optime totus mundus ceruicem ſubmisit. Multas nationes adhuc occupat tyrannus ille ſatanas.[114]

This translates to:

But the whole world has not yet bowed its neck to your yoke, my good father. That tyrant Satan still occupies many nations.[115]

Margaret wrote:

But the tyme is nat yet come good father / in whiche all the worlde haue subdued them selfe to thy yoke: For as yet / that tyrannous fende hath a do with many and diuers naciō[n]s.[116]

Her translation, 'But the tyme is nat yet come…,' introduces temporal framing that emphasises anticipation and moral progression. Her rendering of '*tyrannus ille satanas*' as 'that tyrannous fende' made the abstract adversary vivid and corporeal for an English audience. The addition of 'and diuers naciō[n]s' exemplifies *amplificatio*, stressing the scope of Satan's influence. Through these expansions and clarifications, Margaret transformed Erasmus's concise Latin into persuasive, rhythmically structured vernacular prose, enacting Italian humanist rhetorical principles while rendering theological and ethical concepts accessible to her English audience.

A final example can her seen where Erasmus wrote:

Clamă[n]t è terris filii tui ad te cælos inhabitantem, & abomnirerum conditarum mutabilitate procul ſemotŭ[m]; optă[n]tes quidem uenire in conſortiŭ[m] regni tui cæleſtis, quod nullo malorum admixtu uitiatŭ[m] erit.[117]

[114] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. aviii^{r}.
[115] Translation is mine.
[116] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Diii^{r}.
[117] Erasmus, *Precatio dominica*, sig. bi^{v}.

This translates to:

> Your children cry out from the earth to You, who dwell in heaven, and are far removed from the change of created abominations; wishing indeed to come into the fellowship of Your heavenly kingdom, which will not be tainted by any admixture of evils.[118]

Margaret wrote:

> Thy children here in erthe call and crye to ye dwellyng in heuen / a place farre out of all chaū[n]geable mutabilite of thynges created / desyryng in dede / to come to thy heuenly and celestiall cō[m]pany / whiche is defouled with no maner spotte of yuell.[119]

Her translation, 'Thy children here in erthe call and crye' adds immediacy and rhythm. Her phrase 'a place farre out of all chaū[n]geable mutabilite of thynges created' exemplifies *enargeia*, vividly situating the divine realm as removed from worldly flux. Margaret also enriched Erasmus's 'fellowship of Your heavenly kingdom' into 'thy heuenly and celestiall cō[m]pany', demonstrating *copia* by adding moral and aesthetic resonance through lexical amplification. Finally, she intensified moral clarity by translating 'not tainted by any admixture of evils' as 'defouled with no maner spotte of yuell', giving the abstract Latin a concrete, accessible quality. Through amplification, rhythm, and vividness, Margaret conveyed Italian humanist rhetorical principles in persuasive vernacular prose, embedding theological and ethical ideals for her English audience.

One final detail of the work that cemented Margaret's virtuous authority is a woodcut of a young woman at a reading desk surrounded by books (see figure 5). The woodcut appeared in four other works that

[118] Translation is mine.
[119] Roper, *Devoute treatise*, sig. Div^{r}.

discussed the power of women's rhetoric and were printed between 1504 and 1512, but the first four versions included the woman at the desk having an audience.[120] In Margaret's translation, the audience was missing.[121] Patricia Demers and Jaime Goodrich have suggested that the woodcut was meant to convey the message that Margaret's erudition was linked to her virtue. Demers points out that the young woman, who was meant to represent Margaret, is encased by the bordering of the woodcut, shrouded by clothing, and surrounded by books, almost as if she were in a cloister.[122] Goodrich explains that the woman appears to be in studious solitude, indicating that her work is private and therefore feminine.[123] Margaret is presented as virtuous because of her extensive learning and classical education, which is precisely the way More wanted his daughter to be perceived. Margaret's virtue, according to the image she wanted presented of herself and her reputation among leading religious and humanist figures, was intrinsically tied to her intelligence and humanistic education. When considering Margaret's life, it is essential to note that she was affected by international cultural movements which women were typically barred from initiating in a predominant way. She is known as one of the most learned women in sixteenth-century England because of her intellectual accomplishments, which happened because of an educational style which spread to England from Italy.

[120] The preceding texts which include the woodcut in its original form are S. Hawes, *The Example of Vertu* (London, 1504), S. Hawes, *Pastyme of Pleasure* (London, 1509 and 1517), Anonymous, *The Knyght of the Swanne* (London, 1512), and Anonymous, *The Gospelles of Dystaves* (London, 1510). For more information on this woodcut, see E. Hodnett, *English Woodcuts 1480-1535* (Oxford, 1973), p. 308.
[121] Brace, 'Speaking Pictures', p. 93.
[122] Demers, 'Margaret Roper and Erasmus', p. 3.
[123] Goodrich, 'Thomas More and Margaret More Roper', p. 1031.

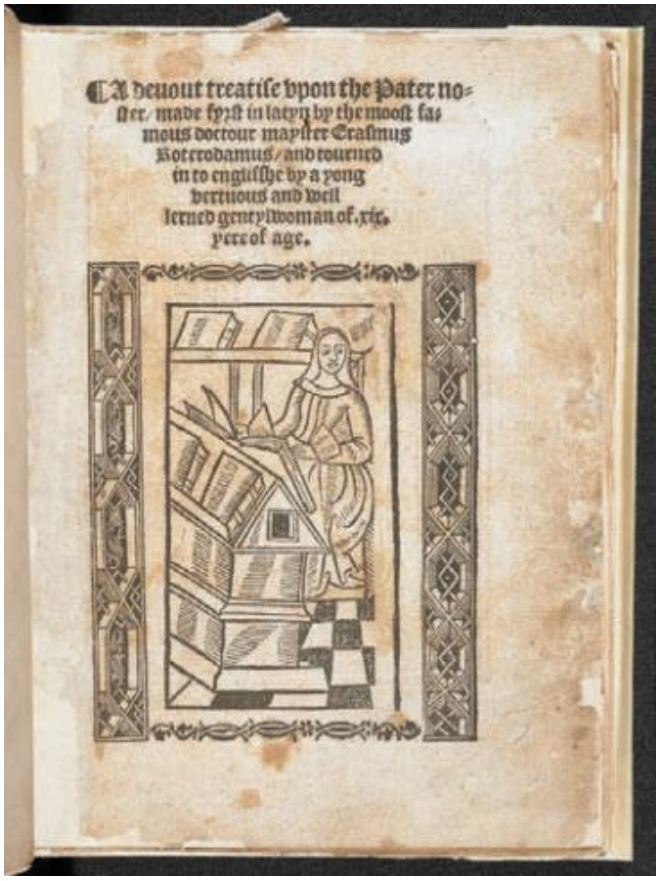

A deuout treatise vpon the Pater no-
ster, made fyrst in latyn by the mooste fa-
mous doctour maister Erasmus
Rotterodamus, and tourned
in to englisshe by a yong
vertuous and well
lerned gentylwoman of .xix.
yere of age.

Figure 5 Title page from *Devout Treatise* (1526)[124]

Conclusion

Margaret's life after her father was executed in 1535 is unclear. Her final statement of authority, spirit, and devotion was probably when she bribed the executioner and recovered her martyred father's head before it could be thrown into the Thames, which she kept as a devotional relic and symbol of her Catholic faith.[125] She retained the part of the Chelsea estate which More left to her, and lived out her days running an informal school there according to her father's teachings.[126] Her husband William, along with her brother and brothers-in-law, was arrested in 1543 for suspicion of involvement in the Prebendaries' Plot against Thomas Cranmer, but he was released after paying a fine.[127] She passed away the following year during Christmas celebrations in

[124] Replicated in Brace, 'Speaking Pictures', p. 97.
[125] Stapleton, *Life and Illustrious Martyrdom*, p. 106.
[126] Levin, Riehl Bertolet, and Eldridge Carney, *Biographical Encyclopedia*, p. 312.
[127] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', pp. 36-7.

1544, a decade after her father's initial imprisonment.[128] In her life, Margaret experienced England under the strong, chivalric King Henry VIII and at the beginning of the Reformation, which brought about the execution of her father. Like other elite women, she married the son of a wealthy, well-connected family with whom her father was friendly when she was sixteen. Further adhering to traditional norms for women of her station, she gave birth to five children. She used her humanistic education, which was mainly intended to teach her to be a virtuous, moral woman according to the traditional standards of her time, for political purposes. She was a skilled writer and translator highly respected in intellectual, humanist circles. She also used her erudition to help her father leave his ideas and legacy to the world. Not all women received a classical education in Henrician England, but those who did were benefiting from a classical inheritance mediated by Italian ideas and cultural practices. Accordingly, the education and life of Margaret Roper, can be examined as one way that this cultural movement affected elite early modern women. The education that Margaret received became a blueprint upon which the education of many other elite women, like Anne Bacon and Mary Sidney, was based.

[128] Olivares Merino, 'Britanniae Decus', p. 38.

Chapter Four: Anne Bacon: Italianate Reformer

Introduction

Of his visit to the Cooke household at Gidea Hall, the humanist and Protestant reformer Walter Haddon wrote, 'I seem to be living among the Tusculans, except that the studies of women were flourishing in this Tuscany'.[1] The women Haddon compared to the learned thinkers of the ancient Italian city of Tusculum were the Cooke sisters, famed for their extensive education and intellectual accomplishments. One of these women was Anne Cooke, later Lady Anne Bacon (1528-1610). In his observation, Haddon connected the Cooke sisters to the exalted learning of the ancients in Italy. To Haddon, studying and building upon the ideas and practices of the ancient world, and Tuscany in particular, was what the Cooke sisters were doing, and they were admired for it. Drawing on her classical education, Anne Bacon became one of the most learned women of her time and an important weapon in the intellectual arsenal of the Protestant Reformation. A highly educated noblewoman consigned to a private life, Anne used the opportunities afforded to her by her position and extensive classical education to operate in the shadows and influence English politics and the success of the Protestant Reformation.[2] Anne is an example of how elite women began to take control of their own intellectual and political paths as classical education continued to become the norm in the sixteenth century, having been sparked by the education of Margaret Roper. To demonstrate how Anne's classical education shaped her life and writings, the politico-religious context of the time in which she lived must be explained. This chapter examines Anne's upbringing and education, followed by an analysis of her two key translations: a sermon by the Italian Protestant Bernardino Ochino and a widely read Church of England text. It demonstrates how England's

[1] W. Haddon, *G. Haddoni Legum Doctoris…Lucubrationes* (London, 1567), sig. Rii^{r}. English translation from G. Allen, 'Introduction', in Allen (ed.), *The Letters of Lady Anne Bacon*, p. 4.

[2] For an analysis of English humanists using literature to promote ideas about morality and religion, see K. C. Little, *Humanism and Good Books in Sixteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2023).

adoption of classical education affected her life and highlights the broader impact of Italian ideas and practices in England.

Historiographical review

Though not as extensive as Margaret Roper, some scholarly attention has been paid to Anne's life and works. Most scholarship tends to focus on her letters or her published works. Her letters are incredibly revealing about the lives of elite sixteenth-century English mothers and women in charge of running a household. Gemma Allen has examined Anne's surviving letters to learn about her childhood, her role as a wife and mother, and the authority she had as a politically informed and connected woman deeply respected for her religious virtue.[3] The extant correspondence of Anne and all four of her sisters has also helped scholars understand the connections between their education and religious and political power more fully.[4] Katherine Alice Mair has examined how Anne's letters to her sons showed how she fit into wider patterns of sixteenth-century epistolary culture.[5] Lynne Magnusson examined the authority Anne possessed in her letters to her sons and her brother-in-law, William Cecil, paying special attention to how much of an impact her advice had on men with objectively more power than she had.[6]

Some scholars focus on her published works which sought to justify and empower the newly formed Church of England. Patricia Demers, who has extensively contributed to scholarship on Anne, has analysed how Anne's use of colloquial language in her translation of Jewel's *Apologia* helped make it more accessible to a wider audience.[7]

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[3] Allen, 'Introduction', pp. 1-46.
[4] G. Allen, *The Cooke Sisters: Education, Piety and Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester, 2013), p. 5.
[5] K. Mair, 'Anne, Lady Bacon: A Life in Letters' (doctoral thesis, Queen Mary University of London, 2009), p. 3.
[6] L. Magnusson, 'Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon's Epistolary Advice', *English Literary Renaissance*, 31/1 (2001), p. 5.
[7] P. Demers, 'Introduction', in P. Demers (ed.), *'An Apology or Answer in Defence of the Church of England': Lady Anne Bacon's Translation of Bishop John Jewel's 'Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae'* (Cambridge, 2016), p. 2. Demers, '"Neither bitterly nor brablingly": Lady Anne Cooke Bacon's Translation of Bishop Jewel's *Apologia*

Demers also made the connection between Anne's 'humanistic' education and her religious efforts.[8] This chapter builds upon Demers's examination of Anne to view her education and religious reform in light of Italian influence in England. Other scholars have also examined works of translation completed by early modern women, like Anne, as a reflection of the limitations placed on women in society. Mary Ellen Lamb has argued that translation was one of the only relatively safe avenues for women who sought to write and publish because, in theory, the necessary exactness of translations prevented women from sharing their true voices.[9] However, as Anne's translation of Jewel's *Apologia* and Mary Sidney's translation of Petrarch's *Trionfi* in Chapter Five will show, translations, which could be described more aptly as adaptations, were often used to express the translator's personal views or support a particular ideology or cause. This chapter examines Anne's works as an example of how receiving a classical education allowed her to participate in the discourse and shaping of the Protestant Reformation. Focusing only on the limitations placed on female writers at the time may ignore how impressive their contributions really were.

Understanding how female writers persisted against restrictive conditions, scholars have explored the social confines within which women, like Anne, intelligently operated. Alan Stewart examined how Anne's identity as a woman informed how she presented her religious translations, by adhering to while simultaneously disproving the humility topos, and was able to participate in the Reformation.[10] Others have explored how humanism and Protestantism helped Anne visualise a reformed church and society, which shaped her identity and published works. Magnusson has argued that the rhetorical and

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Ecclesiae Anglicanae', in M. White (ed.), *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500-1625* (London, 2011), p. 210.

[8] Demers, 'Introduction', p. 5.

[9] M. E. Lamb, 'The Cooke Sisters: Attitudes toward Learned Women in the Renaissance', in M. P. Hannay (ed.), *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH, 1985), pp. 124-5.

[10] A. Stewart, 'The Voices of Anne Cooke, Lady Anne and Lady Bacon', in D. Clarke and E. Clarke (eds.), *'This Double Voice': Gendered Writing in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 90-5.

linguistic skills Anne learned as a part of her humanistic education were consistently present in all of Anne's reform efforts throughout her life.[11] This chapter builds upon this assessment and situates Anne's humanistic efforts within a larger pattern of cultural transference between Italy and England. Her humanistic, classical education based on the *studia humanitatis* popularised in Italy and the religious aspect of her education due to northern humanism enabled Anne to translate Italian and Latin religious texts and become part of the theological and intellectual conversations from which women were typically barred. Thus far, Anne has only been examined in the English context, but she was not just a product of her immediate English environment. She also contributed to an intellectual movement that stretched across Europe.

Political context and education

Anne was born twenty-three years after Margaret Roper, during the reign of Henry VIII and while he was still married to Catherine of Aragon. Anne lived through the rule of five monarchs and matured while the Reformation transformed England. She was eight years old when Cromwell implemented the 1536 Act of Dissolution, an event that profoundly influenced how she later applied her classical education. The northern humanists' pursuit of biblical reinterpretation and promotion of the *studia humanitatis* complemented the Reformation's aim to challenge papal authority in England.[12] This convergence is evident in Anne's translations of religious texts and her active commitment to Protestant reform, which were direct outcomes of her humanist upbringing.

When Edward VI succeeded the throne in 1547, Anne was nineteen. Before his reign, her Protestant beliefs had been precarious. In his final years, Henry VIII reversed many of Cromwell's reforms and restricted religious expression under conservative advisors like

[11] L. Magnusson, 'Imagining a National Church: Election and Education in the Works of Anne Cooke Bacon', *Literature Compass*, 9/3 (2012), p. 242.
[12] M. McGlynn and K. R. Bartlett, *The Renaissance and Reformation in Northern Europe* (Toronto, 2014), p. xviii.

Stephen Gardiner.[13] Yet Henry also permitted evangelical politicians to gain influence, particularly around the young Edward.[14] Upon Henry's death, reformers led by Edward Seymour confronted the conservative factions defending the restrictive religious statutes of 1539 and 1543.[15] By the end of 1547, Seymour and Archbishop Thomas Cranmer had achieved significant reform, allowing open Protestant practice.[16] Parliament ordered that the Great Bible and Erasmus's Paraphrases of the New Testament be made available in every parish, and the 1549 Book of Common Prayer introduced a uniform vernacular liturgy grounded in Protestant theology.[17] Anne would later take part in similar efforts to standardise English religious texts.

Anne's family connections placed her within Edward's reformist circle. Her brother-in-law, William Cecil, married her eldest sister Mildred in 1546 and became one of Seymour's closest allies.[18] Her father, Anthony Cooke, was knighted at Edward's coronation and joined the royal household.[19] Although sometimes described as Edward's tutor, he more likely served as a reader following Richard Cox's retirement in 1550.[20] Her father's commitment to Protestantism and humanism deepened over the following years, culminating in his role on the 1552 commission for ecclesiastical law reform.[21]

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[13] D. Bagchi, 'The Henrician Reform', in A. Hiscock and H. Wilcox (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion* (Oxford, 2014), p. 28
[14] D. MacCulloch, 'Parliament and the Reformation of Edward VI', *Parliamentary History*, 34/3 (2015), p. 387.
[15] MacCulloch, 'Parliament', p. 398.
[16] MacCulloch, 'Parliament', p. 398. This is true, generally speaking, for elite members of society with ties to the government, like Anne and her father. There were parts of England where there was still major pushback against new Protestant rules even after 1549, like in the West Country where the Prayer Book Rebellion happened.
[17] J. N. King, 'Paul's Cross and the Implementation of Protestant Reforms under Edward VI', in T. Kirby and P. G. Stanwood (eds.), *Paul's Cross and the Culture of Persuasion in England, 1520-1640* (Leiden, 2014), p. 142.
[18] D. Spring, *Mistress of Gorhambury: Lady Anne Bacon, Tudor Courtier and Scholar* (St Albans and Hertfordshire, 2021), p. 9.
[19] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 9.
[20] M. K. McIntosh, 'Sir Anthony Cooke: Tudor Humanist, Educator, and Religious Reformer', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 119/3 (1975), p. 241.
[21] McIntosh, 'Sir Anthony Cooke', p. 233.

In February 1553, five months before Edward's death, Anne married Nicholas Bacon, a lawyer and friend of Cecil.[22] The match was advantageous for Nicholas, who had risen from a modest background, and the marriage proved affectionate and intellectually rich.[23] He served in the Court of Augmentations, overseeing the sale of monastic lands.[24] Anne and Nicholas both shared a passion for classical literature.[25] This was reflected in their home at Redgrave Hall, where Seneca's phrase *mediocria firma*, meaning 'moderation is safe', was written above the main entrance.[26] This motto came to symbolise the Bacon family's ideal of harmony and measured conduct.[27] After the loss of their two infant daughters, Nicholas wrote a poem to Anne in which he thanked her for comforting him with readings of Cicero and Seneca, a testament to how their shared love of classical philosophy shaped both their marriage and her literary inspiration.[28]

Following Edward's death in July 1553, Protestant reformers attempted to prevent Mary Tudor's accession by proclaiming Lady Jane Grey queen.[29] Despite their Protestant beliefs, Anne and Nicholas Bacon pledged loyalty to Mary, a decision later echoed by Cecil and others.[30] Anne's father was briefly imprisoned for involvement in the failed coup and later fled to Geneva.[31] Despite Anne's Protestant convictions, she was allowed to serve as a lady-in-waiting to the Catholic queen.[32] Though she published no religious works during this

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[22] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 10.
[23] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 11.
[24] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 11.
[25] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 11.
[26] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 11. The idea that there is safety in moderation is discussed in many classical texts, but for the Bacons it was taken from the context of Seneca's *Oedipus*. See Seneca, A. J. Boyle (ed. and trans.), *Seneca: Oedipus* (Oxford, 2010), p. 65.
[27] P. Collinson, 'Sir Nicholas Bacon and the Elizabethan Via Media', *The Historical Journal*, 23/2 (1980), p. 257.
[28] N. Bacon, C. H. O. Daniel (ed.), *The Recreations of his Age* (Oxford, 1919), p. 27.
[29] J. Richards, 'Edward VI and Mary Tudor: Protestant King and Catholic Sister', *History*
[30] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 14. R. Wingfield, *The Vitae Mariae Angliae Reginae of Robert Wingfield of Brantham* (1554) in D. MacCulloch (trans. and ed.), Camden third series, vol. 29 (London, 1984), p. 252.
[31] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 15.
[32] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 16.

period, her later activism suggests she practiced Nicodemism, concealing her Protestant convictions while maintaining outward conformity.[33] Like other cautious reformers, she resumed her public commitment to Protestantism when the political climate allowed.[34]

Anne's life of service to two Tudor queens, Mary I and Elizabeth I, demonstrates her resilience and adaptability. By the time Mary ascended the throne, Anne was a married woman, stepmother to six children, and a published intellectual. Mary's accession reversed the nation's religious trajectory. Her determination to restore Catholicism after the Protestant reforms of her brother's reign ushered in a campaign of persecution.[35] Although her efforts to revive Catholic institutions were hindered by years of dissolution, she nonetheless re-established papal authority and executed hundreds of Protestants.[36] During this period, Anne's silence was one of survival rather than submission.

With Mary's death in 1558, Elizabeth I restored Protestantism and created a more stable environment for reform.[37] Like Anne, Elizabeth had received a humanist education under tutors such as William Grindal and Roger Ascham, which shaped her sympathy toward Protestant and classical thought.[38] The memory of Marian

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[33] Nicodemites, named after Nicodemus from the Bible, were people who outwardly conformed to the government mandated religion to avoid persecution while silently biding their time and waiting for the religion they truly believed in to become safe enough to worship again. See M. A. Overell, *Nicodemites: Faith and Concealment Between Italy and Tudor England* (Leiden, 2018), pp. 2-3. This important work explains how Nicodemites in sixteenth-century England were connected to Italy. Anne Bacon is not mentioned in this work, even though Bernardino Ochino and Bishop John Jewel, whose works she translated and popularised, are mentioned many times. See also P. Marshall, *Heretics and Believers: A History of the English Reformation* (New Haven, CT, 2017), pp. 382-8; K. J. Woo, *Nicodemism and the English Calvin, 1544-1584* (Leiden, 2019); A. Griffiths, "The infyrmitie of fayth': Anti-Nicodemism and religious insecurity in Marian and early Elizabethan England' (doctoral thesis, University of Nottingham, 2022).

[34] D. MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England* (London, 1990), p. 27.

[35] J. Loach, *Edward VI* (New Haven, CT, 2014), pp. 104-5. Richards, 'Edward VI and Mary Tudor', pp. 19, 21.

[36] J. Edwards, *Mary I* (New Haven, CT, 2011), pp. 226, 246 J. M. Richards, *Mary Tudor* (Abingdon, 2009), p. 186. K. O. Morgan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Britain*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 259. E. Duffy, *Fires of Faith: Catholic England Under Mary Tudor* (New Haven, CT, 2008), p. 79.

[37] J. M. Richards, *Elizabeth I* (Abingdon, 2011), pp. 44-5.

[38] Richards, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 18, 23.

persecution, popularised by John Foxe's Acts and Monuments, reinforced anti-Catholic sentiment and provided fertile ground for religious settlement.[39] Many exiled Protestants returned to England, bringing with them a diversity of continental ideas shaped by Geneva, Zurich, and Frankfurt.[40] This theological variety occasionally clashed with Elizabeth's desire for unity, which she enforced through mandatory attendance at services using the Book of Common Prayer.[41] Although penalties for nonconformity were milder than under Mary, dissent still carried social and legal risks.[42]

For Anne and her family, Elizabeth's accession secured renewed safety and influence. Her brother-in-law Cecil became one of the Queen's principal ministers, and her husband Nicholas was knighted and appointed Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, serving as the Crown's chief parliamentary spokesperson.[43] Anne remained active at court and earned a formidable reputation for her intellect and moral authority.[44] Under Elizabeth, Anne resumed her literary engagement with reformist ideas. In 1548 and 1551, she translated a number of sermons by the Italian preacher Bernardino Ochino of Siena and in 1564 she translated Bishop John Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (*Defence of the Church of England*), a key Protestant text articulating the legitimacy of the English Church.

Like Margaret Roper, Anne was given an extensive classical education which reflected the humanist ideals of sixteenth-century England.[45] Her father provided her and her sisters with the same

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[39] K. Gunther, 'The Marian Persecution and Early Elizabethan Protestants: Persecutors, Apostates, and the Wages of Sin', *Archive for Reformation History*, 107/1 (2016), pp. 145-9.
[40] S. Doran, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 2003), p. 4. Richards, *Elizabeth I*, p. 52.
[41] P. Collinson, 'The Politics of Religion and the Religion of Politics in Elizabethan England', *Historical Research*, 82/215 (2009), p. 75.
[42] Collinson, 'Politics of Religion', p. 75.
[43] See S. Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I* (New Haven, CT, 2008), pp. 85-6; Spring, *Mistress*, p. 15.
[44] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 15.
[45] Allen (ed.), *Letters*, p. 4. For more on English humanism and the northern Renaissance, see J. M. Levin, 'The Antiquarian Enterprise, 1500-1800', in J. M. Levin, *Humanism and History: Origins of Modern English Historiography* (Ithaca,

education as his sons, an approach that defied contemporary gender expectations.[46] Writers like Thomas Fuller and William Barker later praised Anne and her sisters as exceptional scholars, proficient in Greek and Latin and versed in prose and poetry.[47] Their education was rooted in the *studia humanitatis*, emphasising moral philosophy, rhetoric, poetry, grammar, and history, and promoting the cultivation of virtue and intellect.[48] Her studies combined humanist and religious instruction, shaping the intellectual and spiritual perspective evident in her later writings. By adulthood, Anne was fluent in Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and possibly Hebrew.[49] Her command of Italian enabled her to translate Ochino's sermons. She studied classical authors like Terence, Horace, Cicero, and Seneca, as well as texts like Moschopulus's *De ratione examinandae orationis libellus*.[50] The family libraries contained a Greek New Testament, Erasmus's *Paraphrase of the Gospel of St John*, and St Basil's *Opera Graeca* annotated in Anne's hand, showing her continued engagement with classical and theological scholarship.[51]

How Anne's classical education shaped her life and works

The influence of her education is apparent in her letters. In a 1592 letter to her son Anthony, she moved seamlessly between English, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, displaying both her erudition and her awareness of linguistic discretion.[52] When discussing private matters, she often wrote in Greek or Latin to protect her meaning.[53] In one

NY, 1987), pp. 73-106; D. Bush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto, 2016); McGlynn and Bartlett, *The Renaissance and Reformation*.
[46] L. Magnusson, 'Bacon [née Cooke], Anne, Lady Bacon', *ODNB*.
[47] T. Fuller, *The History of the Worthies of England* (London, 1662), p. 328. W. Barker, *The Nobility of Women* (1559), in W. Bond (ed.), (London, 1904), p. 155.
[48] D. Rush, 'English Humanism', in D. Rush, *The Renaissance and English Humanism* (Toronto, 2016), p. 78. Spring, *Mistress*, p. 9.
[49] Allen (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 4-5.
[50] Allen, *Cooke Sisters*, pp. 35-6, 38. Inside a copy of Moschopulus's *De ratione* given to Anne and her brother, Anthony, Anne wrote that it was given to them for the purpose of 'writing of Greek'. Allen, 'Introduction', p. 5.
[51] Allen, *Cooke Sisters*, p. 32.
[52] Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon, 3 February 1592, LPL 653, fols. 343^{r}-4^{v}.
[53] Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon, 24 July 1592, LPL 648, fols. 196^{r}-7^{v}.

instance, she used Greek to remind Anthony to show respect to his uncle Cecil, and elsewhere she adapted Terence's phrase "mala mens, malus animus" to advise him to remain optimistic.[54] She also invoked Pindar to warn him against careless friendships and debts.[55] Letters written in Latin between Anne and her sister Mildred still survive.[56] Later exchanges with Nicholas Trott and the Earl of Essex referencing Tertullian and Plutarch, demonstrate that her classical fluency allowed her to engage intellectually with educated men of her time.[57] Through her letters and translations, Anne exemplified the integration of humanist learning with moral and religious reflection, standing as one of the most accomplished female scholars of sixteenth-century England

The influence of Italian ideas on Anne's life went beyond her studying the *studia humanitatis* and being proficient in Latin and Greek. How she applied the critical thinking skills acquired by this training is crucial to understanding how Anne's life was affected by the English adoption of Italian ideas. Anne is the perfect example of how the *studia humanitatis* of original Italian humanism blended with the theological focus of northern humanism in sixteenth-century England and affected women. Like Margaret Roper, there was a strong religious component to Anne's education, but in her case, it was Protestant rather than Catholic.[58] She used her classical education to become involved in the Reformation and form relationships with religious figures. For instance, letters between Anne and the French theologian

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[54] Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon, April 1594, LPL 653, fols. 246^{r}-274^{v}. Translation from Allen (ed.), *Letters*, p. 179.
[55] Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon, March 1595, LPL 650, fols. 117^{r}-8^{v}.
[56] Mildred Cooke Cecil to Anne Bacon after 9 July 1592, BL, Lansdowne MS 104, fols. 156^{r}-7^{v}, translated in Allen, *Letters* (ed.), pp. 55-6.
[57] In his letter thanking her for her generous gift of a new horse, Trott wrote, 'And Tertullian rightly applies the term Dead Sea to a peaceful life with things flowing as one wishes and with winds that blow gently towards one's desires as one breathes, whereby one rarely sails into the port of happiness like this'. Nicholas Trott to Anne Bacon, 3 August 1594, BL Harley MS 871, fols. 8^{r-v}. The letter from Trott is translated by Allen on pp. 190-2. The letter from the Earl of Essex is his refutation of allegations that he had inappropriate relations with Anne's great niece Elizabeth Vere. In the letter, Essex wrote, 'Plutarch taught me long since to make profit of my enemies, but God teacheth it me much better now'. Essex to Anne Bacon, 1 December 1596, LPL 660, fols. 281^{r-v}.
[58] Magnusson, 'Bacon [née Cooke], Anne', *ODNB*.

Theodore Beza reveal that they knew each other, and that he respected her as a godly woman. In May 1581, she sent him a letter written entirely in Latin asking him to watch out for her son Anthony while he was travelling.[59] In November that same year Beza sent Anne a letter telling her he was dedicating a book to her and he praised her virtue and religious devotion.[60] Multiple religious leaders dedicated sermons and theological texts to Anne, praising her Christian devotion and knowledge. For example, John Walsall dedicated one of his published sermons to Anne in 1578 praising her work in the 'advancing of the true religion' and her education of her children.[61] Similarly, in 1589 Thomas Wilcox, a clergyman whom Anne supported, dedicated his notes and meditations on the Book of Solomon to Anne, praising her devotion and knowledge of Christianity and seeking her approval.[62]

The same year Edward VI became king, exiled Italian preacher Bernardino Ochino was invited to England by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer.[63] Ochino had previously been the Superior of the Capuchin monks in Italy but fled to avoid persecution for his reformatory ideas in 1542.[64] After spending five years in Germany and Switzerland, he came to England, which was one of the only places in Europe considered a safe haven for Reformers in 1547, and began preaching in London.[65] He taught at the Stranger Church in London and was given a non-resident prebend at Canterbury Cathedral by Cranmer.[66] Anne's father described Ochino as a respected colleague, and evidence suggests that she may have heard his sermons when he was a guest at her family home Gidea Hall.[67] This is probably

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[59] Anne Bacon to Beza, 18 May 1581, in Allen (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 81-2.
[60] Beza to Anne Bacon, 1 November 1581, published in T. de Bèze, *Chrestienes meditations sur huict pseaumes du prophete David* (Geneva, 1581). Translation in Allen (ed.), *Letters*, pp. 85-6.
[61] J. Walsall, *A sermon preached at Pauls Cross by John Walsall, one of the preachers of Christ in his Church in Canterburie* (London, 1578), sigs. Aii^{r}-Av^{v}.
[62] T. Wilcox, *A short, yet sound Commentarie, written on that woorthie worke called; the Proverbs of Salomon* (London, 1589), sigs. Aii^{r}-Aiv^{v}.
[63] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 9.
[64] Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 24.
[65] Overell, *Nicodemites*, p. 98.
[66] P. Demers (ed.), *Anne Cooke's Englishing of Bernardino Ochino* (Cambridge, 2023), p. 10.
[67] Demers (ed.), *Anne Cooke's Englishing,* p. 2.

how Anne encountered Ochino and his sermons.[68] Anne was so moved by Ochino's sermons, which were evangelical and highly critical of the corruption of the Catholic Church, that she was inspired to translate them from their original Italian when she was just twenty years old.[69] As humanism became more prominent in England, and classical education for women became more common, direct links between English women and Italian ideas became more apparent. More than the case of Margaret Roper, Anne's translation of Ochino serves as evidence of her direct connection to Italian ideas and culture. Learning languages, like Italian, was an essential part of classical education, so Anne's analysis of Italian religious texts was made possible because of the influence of humanism in her life.[70] Anne first published five of Ochino's translated sermons in 1548 in a collection titled *Sermons of Bernadine Ochine of Sena*. This first collection was anonymous, and happened around the same time Richard Argentyne published his own Ochino translation titled *Sermons of the Ryght famous and excellent clerk master Bernardine Ochine*.[71] Argentyne's work was printed by Anthony Scholoker, who started working with printers John Day and William Seres in London the year that Argentyne's translation was published.[72] Day and Seres then printed Anne's second collection of fourteen more of Ochino's translated sermons in 1551.[73] This time Anne's work was attributed to her and clearly titled *Fourtene Sermons…Translated out of Italian in to oure natyve tounge by A. C.*[74] Also in 1551, Day, who had been working with Seres and Scholoker,

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[68] Ochino also gave sermons about women and marriage, but it is unknown whether Anne ever heard them or knew about his ideas pertaining to them. For Ochino's thoughts on marriage, see, for example, two sermons he gave in August and September 1527 in Siena: B. Ochino, 'Two Sermons on Wives and Widows', in C.G. Coulton (ed.), *Life in the Middle Ages*, Vol. 1 (New York, 1910), pp. 216-29.
[69] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 10.
[70] J. Gallagher, *Learning Languages in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2019), p. 6.
[71] B. Ochino, *Sermons of Barnardine Ochine of Sena godlie, frutefull, and uery necessarye for all true Christians translated out of Italien into Englishe* (London, 1548). B. Ochino, *Sermons of the ryght famous a[n]d excellent clerke Master Bernardine Ochine* (Ipswich, 1548).
[72] Stewart, 'Voices', p. 90.
[73] B. Ochino, *Fourtene Sermons…Translated out of Italian in to oure natyve tounge by A. C.* (London, 1551).
[74] Ochino, *Fourtene Sermons.*

took Anne and Argentyne's translations and published them together.[75] This edition contained six of Argentyne's translations and nineteen of Anne's.[76] Anne's translation of Ochino's Italian sermons, which used the ideas of many classical thinkers to promote Protestant reform, reflects the influence of her classical education on her intellectual achievements and religious reform efforts, demonstrating her indirect participation in the Italian classical inheritance in England.[77]

Even before the translations begin, examples of classical and humanistic thought can be seen in Anne's ideas about reform in her Introduction. When Anne explained her decision to translate Ochino's sermons, she wrote that she 'thought it mete to publysh thē[m] to the ende so Godly Apostolyke doctryne should not be priuate to those onely whych vnderstande the Italian toung'.[78] This declaration reveals her conviction that sacred knowledge ought to be accessible beyond the narrow circle of those able to read Italian or Latin. It exemplifies a humanistic approach to Protestant reform, one That values education and intellectual participation as instruments of moral and spiritual improvement. Anne's reasoning reflects the classical humanist belief that learning is a civic and ethical activity in which everyone should participate, echoing the ideals of Cicero and Quintilian, who argued that eloquence and wisdom must benefit the public rather than only the elite.

By rendering Italian religious thought into English, Anne brought the spirit of Italian humanism into an English Protestant

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[75] This work was B. Ochino, *Certayne sermons of the Ryght famous and excellent clerk* (London, 1551). Day reissued this text in 1570 and left only Anne's name in the title for reasons unknown. See Stewart, 'Voices', p. 90. The 1570 text is titled *Sermons of Bernadine Ochyne (to the number of .25)*. Perhaps by 1570 Anne's name was more well-known and would have sold more copies.

[76] V. Wayne, *Anne Cooke Bacon: Printed Writings 1500-1640: Series I, Part Two, Volume 1* (Abingdon, 2000), p. x.

[77] It is unclear which specific Ochino texts Anne used for her translations. She may have heard some of the sermons orally. For more on the original sermons with which Anne engaged, see Demers (ed.), *Anne Cook's Englishing*, pp. 18-31. Even without knowing the exact texts Anne used for her translations, her choice to complete and present them to an English audience still shows her participation in the Italian classical inheritance.

[78] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Aii^{r}.

framework. Her work embodies the conviction, rooted in both the classical and Renaissance traditions, that knowledge attains its highest purpose when it enlightens and uplifts the broader community. In this way, Anne's translation becomes evidence of her participation in the Italian classical inheritance circulating in sixteenth-century England. It demonstrates how women of learning could engage with transnational intellectual currents to shape the moral and theological discourse of their time, fusing the humanist pursuit of accessible wisdom with the Protestant commitment to vernacular faith.

Similarly, her appeal to 'the Christiā[n] Reader wyth iudgement to reade, & in the equal balaunce of Scripture to way these learned & godly sermons' articulated an approach to faith that reflected the intellectual independence central to both Italian humanism and Protestant reform.[79] Her instruction to her audience to engage critically and thoughtfully with the sermons demonstrated her belief in the reader's capacity for discernment and moral reasoning. This confidence in the interpretive abilities of the lay reader reflects the humanist conviction, inherited from classical antiquity, that the pursuit of wisdom and truth should be an active and participatory process rather than one controlled by institutional authority.

Ancient thinkers like Cicero and Quintilian promoted the idea that education should nurture judgment and virtue through individual inquiry and reflection.[80] When Anne encouraged her readers to exercise reason in dialogue with Scripture, she drew upon the same intellectual inheritance that shaped humanists like Petrarch and Erasmus. Both the classical philosophers and these later scholars shared a belief that moral learning and the pursuit of truth must be grounded in direct engagement with texts. Erasmus in particular maintained that every Christian should have access to the Bible in a

[79] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Aii.^{v}.
[80] For Cicero's and Quintilian's thoughts on how virtue and education should be guided by reason and reflection, see Cicero, W. Miller (trans.), *De Officiis* (London, 2014), pp. 15-7, 19-21; Quintilian, D. A. Russell (ed. and trans.), *Institutio Oratoria*, Volume V, (Cambridge, MA, 2002), pp. 220-1.

language they could understand, an idea that mirrored Cicero's conviction that eloquence and knowledge exist for the good of the whole community rather than the privileged few.[81]

Anne's insistence that her readers approach the translated sermons with judgment and with scriptural balance situates her firmly within this intellectual tradition. She adapted the Italian humanist ideal of the educated and morally responsible reader to the context of English Protestantism, promoting a model of faith that valued reason, education, and the accessibility of divine truth. Through this work, she participated in the Italian classical inheritance and demonstrated how the humanist devotion to personal study could serve the spiritual renewal sought by the Protestant reformers.

The passages from Ochino's sermons that Anne chose to translate demonstrate how Anne's involvement in the Protestant Reformation was shaped, at least in part, by the Italian classical inheritance in England. Anne's remark that the translated sermons, 'truely conteyne moch to the defacyng of al papistrie, and hipocrysie, and to the aduancement of the glorye of god, and of the benefytes of Christ Iesus' exemplifies her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by foregrounding the transformative power of scripture for individual understanding.[82] By choosing texts that exposed corruption and hypocrisy while promoting the benefits of Christ, she emphasised the necessity for Christians to engage directly with scripture in order to discern God's will, a principle that contrasted sharply with Catholic reliance on clerical mediation. This insistence on personal study reflects the values of classical thinkers like Cicero and Seneca, who stressed disciplined reading and moral reflection as essential to cultivating virtue and wisdom.[83] Anne's careful selection, translation, and study of authoritative texts demonstrate her application of humanist textual methods to theological ends, merging classical

[81] D. Erasmus, *Novum Instrumentum Omne* (Basel, 1516), sig. Av[r].
[82] Ochino, *Sermons* (1548), sig. Aiv[r].
[83] Cicero, *De Officiis*, p. 83. Seneca, R. L'Estrange (trans.), *Seneca's Morals of a Happy Life, Benefits, Anger and Clemency* (Chicago, 2014), p. 308.

intellectual rigor with Reformation ideals. In this way, her work embodies the Italian classical inheritance, showing how humanist techniques of close reading, critical engagement, and moral inquiry could serve the advancement of Protestant religious understanding and the cultivation of an informed, morally responsible Christian conscience.

Anne's translation, 'Concience are all theyr dedes layed vppe, to be opened at the audit day of our death…me thynk nothyng can be a greatter staye to the concience of man, then to know how he ought to go owt of thys present lyfe, and what to cary wythhym to hys account, or leue behynd hym in the world' illustrates her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by emphasising the moral responsibility of the individual and the centrality of conscience in preparing the soul for God.[84] By linking awareness of one's deeds to the reading and understanding of scripture, which her translated sermons facilitate, Anne underscored the Protestant ideal that Christians must engage directly with sacred texts to discern God's will, rather than relying on clerical intercession. Her attention to conscience resonates with classical conceptions of moral accountability found in the works of Cicero and Seneca, where the examined life and reasoned reflection govern ethical action.[85] This integration of careful textual study, moral self-scrutiny, and individual responsibility demonstrates Anne's indirect participation in the Italian classical inheritance by applying humanist principles of learning and moral philosophy to the cultivation of a Protestant Christian conscience grounded in personal engagement with authoritative texts.

The fourteen sermons Anne translated in her 1551 edition offer guidance on achieving salvation and explore theological concepts like predestination, election, and divine liberty. On predestination, Anne cautioned that, 'as it is euel to be curiouse in wyllynge to knowe more then that whych in the scripture is conteyned, and to vs reueled, so is it

[84] Ochino, *Sermons* (1548), sig. Aiii[r].
[85] Cicero, *De Officiis*, p. 83. Seneca, *Seneca's Morals*, pp. 94, 102.

also euell, to be ignorant and not to seke to vnderstande as much as therin is', expressing a balanced and distinctly humanistic approach to Protestant reform.[86] Her words reveal an understanding of faith grounded in moderation, reason, and the disciplined pursuit of knowledge. Anne recognised the danger of intellectual arrogance, yet she equally condemned complacent ignorance, affirming that the believer has both the capacity and the duty to seek understanding. This position reflects the humanist belief, inherited from classical philosophy, that knowledge should serve the moral improvement of all people rather than remain the privilege of the learned few. Thinkers like Aristotle, Cicero, and Seneca taught that education should cultivate virtue and discernment in the individual.[87]Anne's encouragement for ordinary readers to seek knowledge within Scripture echoes the Italian Renaissance revival of these ideals, which joined classical ethics with Christian learning.

On election, Anne's translation, 'Therfore lokinge in the holy scriptures, I find that God hath elected vs by Chryste, that is, that God lokinge in the progeny of Adam, saw nothing there that was worthy of our election: but tourninge the regarde to his own goodnes and Christes, in whom he was so wel pleased, that bi him he did electe vs, he therfore chose vs not because we were holie, but because we shulde be' exemplifies her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by emphasising both the authority of scripture and the moral responsibility of the believer.[88] She interpreted the biblical concept of election not as a static judgment of human merit, but as a reflection of divine grace mediated through Christ, thereby encouraging careful engagement with scripture to understand God's purposes. This approach resonates with classical conceptions of reasoned reflection and ethical cultivation found in the works of Cicero and Seneca, who emphasised that virtue and moral insight are attained through

[86] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Av^{v}.
[87] Aristotle, H. Rackham (trans.), *Nicomachean Ethics* (Cambridge, MA, 1926), pp. 67, 367. Cicero, *De Officiis*, p. 19. Seneca, *Seneca's Morals*, pp. 128-32.
[88] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sigs. Fvi^{v}-Fvii^{r}.

disciplined study, self-examination, and attention to authoritative texts.[89] Anne's insistence on attentive reading and interpretation demonstrates the adaptation of humanist scholarly methods to Protestant theology, aligning rigorous textual analysis with the cultivation of moral and spiritual understanding. In doing so, her work exemplifies the Italian classical inheritance in sixteenth-century England, showing how Renaissance humanist practices of philology, critical engagement, and moral reflection were mobilised to advance Reformation ideals. By merging classical ideals of reasoned inquiry with Protestant attention to scripture and grace, Anne demonstrated the continuity between Renaissance humanism and English theological reform, producing a learned, morally conscientious, and intellectually engaged Christian practice.

Anne's assertion that, 'The wordes of sainte Ihon ought to suffise, which saith, that he is the sonne of God, therfore electe and sauid, who so beleueth Iesu Christe to be the sonne of God' illustrates her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by centring personal engagement with scripture at the foundation of faith.[90] By emphasising belief at the core of election, she encouraged individual study and reflection, underscoring the Protestant principle that Christians must read and interpret the Bible for themselves rather than rely solely on clerical authority. This approach, again, resonates with classical conceptions of moral and intellectual development found in the works of Cicero and Seneca. Anne's careful reading of scripture demonstrates the humanist commitment to textual authority, critical engagement, and moral application, which were key features of Italian humanist scholarship. In this way, her work exemplifies how the Italian classical inheritance promoted the rigorous study of authoritative texts and the integration of ethical reasoning, and how this was adapted for Protestant reform. Anne's writings show how classical humanist

[89] Cicero, *De Officiis*, pp. 21, 109, 158-9. Seneca, R. M. Gummere (trans.), *Epistles, Vol. I: Epistles 1-65* (Cambridge, MA, 1917), pp. 6-9.
[90] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Bvii^{r}.

methods of textual analysis and moral reflection were used to cultivate intellectually engaged and spiritually informed Protestantism.

When she reiterated that, 'And also Christ sayde who so beleueth in me hath lyfe euerlasting', Anne exemplified a humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by emphasising the direct engagement of the individual with scripture.[91] She implicitly encouraged personal interpretation rather than reliance on clerical mediation, reflecting the humanist conviction that reasoned study and moral reflection cultivate virtuous understanding. This approach resonates with the pedagogical ideals of ancient thinkers like Cicero and Plutarch, who promoted self-directed inquiry and the cultivation of knowledge through textual study.[92] Anne's insistence that readers access and study biblical texts themselves parallels classical humanist methodologies, wherein the careful reading of authoritative texts is crucial in developing intellect and virtue. Moreover, her close engagement with scriptural texts demonstrates her participation in the Italian classical inheritance, which sixteenth-century English intellectuals adapted to merge humanism with Reformation thought. Anne's work thus illustrates a continuity between classical textual reverence and the Protestant emphasis on individual comprehension and moral responsibility.

The extensive passages on divine liberty that Anne chose to translate further stress the connection between Italian humanism, Protestant reform, and Anne's participation in the Italian classical inheritance. For instance, she selected:

> 'Some myght thinke it superfluous for a christiane, to thynke whether he be fre or not, but that it is inough to force him self to make all possible resistence agaynst euell, and his best power to do wel, geuyng al honor & glory to god…But herein cō[n]sisteth the difficultie, in geuing all the glorie to god. Yea it is not possible that man…can geue al the glory to god. Therfore

[91] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Bvii[r].
[92] Cicero, *De Officiis*, pp. 21, 109, 158-9. Plutarch, F. C. Babbitt (trans), *Moralia*, Volume I (Cambridge, MA, 1927), pp. 210-1.

> haue I iudged it necessarye to shewe what man can do, to thend yt beyng able to knowe and discerne betwene that which in dede is his, and that that is goddes, he can and maye render all prayse and lande vnto him to whom of duty it belongeth'.[93]

This quote exemplifies her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by emphasising reasoned moral discernment, self-knowledge, and conscientious engagement with scripture. As the mediator of this text to the English public, Anne argued that humans must recognise their limitations and distinguish between what belongs to God and what is their own, enabling them to worship God appropriately. This concern with human nature and the cultivation of virtue resonates with classical thinkers like Cicero, Seneca, Quintilian, and Aristotle, all of whom stressed self-examination, rational deliberation, and ethical responsibility as central to leading a good life.[94] Anne's integration of careful reflection, moral responsibility, and textual study demonstrates how humanist methods of disciplined inquiry and ethical cultivation, developed in the Italian Renaissance, could be applied to Protestant theology. Her work exemplifies the Italian classical inheritance in sixteenth-century England by showing how the rigorous study of authoritative texts, critical reasoning, and moral self-awareness were mobilised to help Protestants become more conscientious and spiritually informed.

Anne's observation that, 'Therfore when the Lord had created the world, he cō[m]maunded the earth to sprynge, and the waters to bringe forthe. Then false is the opinion of them that Imagine that god, & not the sunne dothe geve lyght, & god not the fyre doth geve heate, and so of al the reste of thinges created, that God dothe worke in thē[m]' demonstrates her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by emphasising the proper understanding of God's work through reason

[93] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Giv[r].
[94] Cicero, *De Officiis*, p. 53, 161-3. Seneca, *Epistles, Vol. I*, pp. 103, 224-5. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Volume V, pp. 329-31. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 91, 325-31.

and observation of the natural world.[95] She critiqued the mistaken view that God is directly responsible for everything that happens in life, instead asserting that God created the structure of the world and other things are responsible for what happens within it. This reflects the humanist emphasis on careful inquiry, observation, and interpretation as pathways to understanding both the natural and the divine order. Anne's approach mirrors classical thinkers like Aristotle, who analysed causality and natural phenomena, Cicero, who advocated the application of reason to ethical and philosophical questions, and Seneca, who emphasised the disciplined use of knowledge to align human action with moral and natural law.[96] Her work also recalls Pliny the Elder's ideas on nature, demonstrating her engagement with classical models of observation and analysis.[97] By combining careful reasoning with scriptural interpretation, Anne applied humanist methods to theological questions, showing how study, discernment, and critical thinking can illuminate both moral and natural truth. Anne's application of classical thinking and humanism to advance Protestant understanding of divine order demonstrates her participation in the Italian classical inheritance.

Another translated quote about divine liberty and human agency demonstrates how Italian humanism contributed to Anne's participation in Protestant reform and the classical inheritance:

> 'But speakinge, of the foure operacions whiche are humaine, as to thincke one or an other thinge, to speake or not, in this maner or in that, to lerne this or that science, to gouerne him selfe or others in this waye or in the other, yea not to do, or else to do…to fast watch, praye, to heare the word of God, to communicate or not, and so of all the other like operacions, I

[95] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Giv[v].
[96] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 11, 135, 365-7. Cicero, *De Officiis*, pp. 11, 15, 17. Seneca, *Epistles, Vol. I*, pp. 109, 229, 383.
[97] Pliny the Elder's only surviving work *Naturalis historia* discusses the nature of the world based on hundreds of his own and secondary observations. See Pliny the Elder, J. Bostock, and H. T. Riley (trans.),
The Natural History of Pliny, Volume 1 (London, 2018).

> saye…that is that men (without •[o]ther special grace and miracle but only d•[u]ringe the generall influence of God) haue in their power to do them, & also not to do them'.[98]

Anne choice to translate this passage for an English audience exemplifies her humanistic approach to Protestant Reform by stressing the capacity and responsibility of the individual in moral and spiritual decision-making. Anne emphasised that humans, while operating under God's general providence, possess the power to act, to study, to pray, and to govern themselves or others. This focus on reasoned moral choice and disciplined self-governance resonates closely with classical conceptions of ethical agency, as articulated by Cicero, who highlighted the importance of rational deliberation in virtue, and Seneca, who emphasised the cultivation of self-control and moral discernment.[99] Aristotle's analyses of voluntary action and moral responsibility further inform the framework within which Anne situates human agency, while Quintilian and Plutarch offer models for the ethical and civic application of learned knowledge.[100]

By applying classical ideals to a Protestant context, Anne demonstrated how humanist methods of careful textual study, critical reflection, and the disciplined exercise of reason can illuminate theological questions. Her insistence on the power and responsibility of the individual in spiritual practice reflects the Italian classical inheritance in sixteenth-century England, showing how humanist approaches to ethics, learning, and textual authority were used to support Reformation principles. Anne's translations of Ochino's sermons exemplify the synthesis of classical learning and Protestant theology, presenting a model of intellectual engagement and moral responsibility in which reason, study, and conscience were crucial in

[98] Ochino, *Fouretene sermons* (1551), sig. Gvi^{v}.
[99] Cicero, *De Officiis*, p. 12. Seneca, *Epistles, Vol. I*, pp. 21, 163, 215.
[100] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, pp. 153, 299. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, Volume IV, pp. 329, 339, 365. and Plutarch, *Moralia*, Volume I, pp. 405-9.

cultivating an informed, ethically vigilant, and spiritually active Christian life.

Anne's other most notable work is her adaptation of Bishop John Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, which was one of the most important works of the English Reformation, from Latin into English.[101] Anne was able to complete this work a direct result of her classical education, and it shows how Anne used her classical knowledge to promote the Protestant cause.[102] In 1562, Anne's brother-in-law Cecil and some others commissioned Bishop John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, to write two texts that justified England's separation from the Catholic Church and the existence of the Church of England.[103] These texts were meant to be in Latin so they could reach international audiences. This became the *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*.[104] Two years later, Cecil and the other commissioners asked Anne to produce an English translation of the text so that it was accessible for an English audience.[105] This became Anne's *An apologie or answere in defence of the Churche of Englande* (1564). During Queen Mary's reign, the number of Protestant ministers in England was depleted, so texts like the one Anne created were essential for spreading the Protestant message and upholding the Church of England.[106] Anne's voice is less present in this work because she only speaks through her translation, unlike in her Ochino translations which contained introductory messages from her, but the impact of her classical education on her actions as a religious reformer can still be observed in it. Like her 1551 collection of Ochino's sermons, Anne is named as the author of this text. In the dedication written by Archbishop of Canterbury, Matthew Parker, 'the right honorable learned and vertuous Ladie A. B' is exalted for her translation skills as

[101] Demers, 'Introduction', in '*An Apology or Answer*', p. 3.
[102] Allen (ed.), *Letters*, p. 6.
[103] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 21.
[104] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 21.
[105] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 21.
[106] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 23.

well as her modesty and virtue.[107] Parker leaned into the standard humility topos inserted into all texts written by women in the medieval and early modern periods, like Anne did in her 1551 work, stressing the connection between Anne's work of translation and her Christian duty.[108]

The persuasive tone and accessibility of the text for an English lay audience demonstrate Anne's expert understanding of classical rhetorical strategies—an understanding obtained through her classical education as a result of the Italian classical inheritance in England. At times, the text explicitly compares the plight of the Protestants to examples from antiquity. For example, there is a passage which uses Sophocles's being accused of insanity by his sons to discuss accusations of heresy aimed at Protestants. Jewel wrote:

> *Aiunt: Sophoclem poetam tragicum, cum iam ſenex eſſet, & accuſaretur apud iudices a filiis ſuis pro deliro, & fatuo…& opus iam habere uideretur curatore, at ſe purgaret co crimine, ueniſſe in iudicum, & cum pronunciaſſet, Oedipum Coloneum, Tragediam a se illis ipſis diebus, cum accuſaretur, ualde elaborate & pereleganter ſcriptam altro interrogaſſe iudices, nun illud carmen uideretur eſſe hominis delirantis*.[109]

This translates to:

> They say: Sophocles, the tragic poet, when he was already old, and was accused by his sons before the judges of being mad and foolish… and seemed now to have the need of a guardian. But to clear himself of that charge, [he] came before the judge, and delivered Oedipus at Colonus, a tragedy written by himself in those very days when he was being accused [of being mad], very elaborately and elegantly, he had asked the judges if that play was that of a delirious man.[110]

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[107] J. Jewel, *An apologie or answere in defence of the Churche of Englande* (London, 1564), sigs. A1ii^{r}-A1iii^{v}.
[108] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sigs. A1iii^{v}-A1iii^{r}.
[109] J. Jewel, *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (London, 1562), sigs. Aviii^{r-v}.
[110] Translation is mine.

Anne wrote:

> Men say that Sophocles the tragicall Poet, when in his oulde dayes he was by his own sonnes accused before the Iudges for a dotinge and sottishe man…and seemed to neede a Gouernour to see vnto him: to thintent he might cleere him selfe of the faulte, he came into the place of Iudgemente, and when he had rehearsed before them his Tragedye called *Oedipus Coloneus,* which he had written at the verye tyme of his accusation, maruelous exactly and conningly, did of him selfe aske the Iudges, whether they thought any sottish or doting man could do the like peece of worke.[111]

This example demonstrates the humanistic tendency to use examples from antiquity to support contemporary ideas, and Anne's adaptation of the passage reveals how she fostered this strategy for the Protestant cause. Anne's rendering of Jewel's anecdote about Sophocles shows her linguistic and rhetorical precision. Her ability to translate a dense Latin account into more rhythmically balanced English demonstrates the humanistic use of *eloquentia et sapientia*, a classical concept meaning the union of eloquence and wisdom.[112] Phrases such as 'maruelous exactly and conningly' and 'to thintent he might cleere him selfe of the faulte' reveal her understanding of rhetorical ornamentation that conveys both moral clarity and stylistic grace, qualities derived from her humanistic training.

The passage also illustrates her understanding of ancient rhetorical strategies, particularly *ethos* and *amplificatio*.[113] By framing Sophocles as a pinnacle of reason triumphing over false accusation,

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[111] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. Bvii^{r}.

[112] Cicero promoted the concept of *eloquentia et sapientia*, which means that eloquence and wisdom must go hand in hand to be effective. Cicero, E. W. Hutton (trans.), *De Oratore* (Cambridge, MA, 1942), pp. 459-61.

[113] *Ethos* is a rhetorical tool conceptualised by Aristotle which refers to strengthening of a speaker's credibility based on their good character. Aristotle, J. H. Freese (trans.), G. Striker (ed.), *Art of Rhetoric* (Cambridge, MA, 2020), pp. 2-3. For *Amplificatio*, defined in Chapter Three, see Cicero, *De Oratore*, pp. 84-5; Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume III, pp. 398-9.

she evoked the ideas of Cicero and Quintilian, using narrative persuasion to illustrate integrity and intellectual authority.[114] Her subtle intensification through repetition of 'dotinge and sottishe man' adds emotional resonance and moral contrast, enhancing accessibility for an English lay audience.[115] Anne's substitution of 'governour' for Jewel's 'guardian' carries resonance within the context of sixteenth-century Protestant England, where the term governor evoked ideas of moral and spiritual oversight rather than custodial control. This shift subtly aligns with Protestant notions of godly governance and individual conscience, recasting authority as rational guidance rather than imposed hierarchy.

> Later in the passage about Sophocles, Jewel wrote:
> *non alienum aut inutile for è exiſtimauimus, ſi apertè, & libere propnamus fidem noſtram in qua ſtamus*[116]
>
> This translates to:
> We do not consider it foreign or useless if we openly and freely proclaim our faith in which we stand.[117]
>
> Anne wrote:
> It ſhoulde be to good purpoſe and not unprofitable, that wee doe openlye and frankely ſet furth our faith wherein we ſtande, and ſhew al that confidence which wee have in CHRIST'.[118]

Anne's translation of Jewel's statement reflects her classical education and humanist training through its rhetorical precision and moral clarity. She transformed a neutral reflection into a confident moral assertion. The paired terms 'good purpose' and 'not unprofitable' demonstrate a Ciceronian balance that links eloquence with ethical

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[114] Cicero, *Oratore*, p. 23. Quintilian, *Institutio,* Volume I, p. 287.
[115] In a sixteenth-century context both words mean foolish or weak-minded.
[116] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[117] Translation is mine.
[118] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. Bvii^{r}.

conviction, while her phrase ‘we doe openlye and frankely set furth our faith’ replaces abstraction with active and persuasive declaration.[119] Her use of *ethos* and *amplificatio* also reflects classical rhetorical style. These strategies strengthen the persuasive force of Jewel’s defence of faith, making it both accessible and compelling to an English audience shaped by humanist ideals of plain yet elevated style. Through her elegant reworking of theological argument, Anne contributes to the Italian classical inheritance in England, transforming humanist rhetoric into a vehicle for Protestant reform.

Another way Anne used her classical training to make Jewel’s text more impactful to her audience was by capitalising certain words to show emphasis. For example, Jewel wrote:

> *ita nos quoquè, quoniam iſtis furere uidemur, & ab illis traducimur pro Hereticis, quasi quibus nihil iam rei ſit nec cum Chriſto, nec cum Eccleſia Dei*[120]

This translates to:

> So we also, since we seem to be mad at them, and are being passed off by them as heretics, as if [we] had nothing to do with Christ or the Church of God.[121]

Anne wrote:

> appeache us [Protestants] for heretikes, as men which have nothing to do neyther with CHRIST, nor with the Churche of GOD.[122]

By capitalising ‘CHRIST’ and ‘GOD’, Anne emphasised theological authority and divine truth. This choice transformed the text into a visual assertion of faith, guiding readers toward the ultimate source of religious legitimacy. Her restructuring of Jewel’s phrasing

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[119] Cicero, *Oratore*, p. 451.
[120] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. Bi^{v}.
[121] Translation is mine.
[122] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. Bvii^{r}.

into ‘appeache us for heretikes…’ shows her application of Ciceronian clarity, balancing accusation with dignified defence.[123] The use of ‘appeache’, meaning to charge or accuse typically in a legal context, makes the argument even stronger and highlights the impending danger the Protestants faced.

Evidence of Anne’s use of her classical education to make this text more accessible and impactful for her audience can be seen the most in how she changed certain passages from Jewel’s original text. For example, her rendering of Jewel’s phrase about the eating of bread, which represents the body of Christ, as part of the Eucharist reflects her knowledge of classical translation and persuasion strategies. Jewel wrote that once the bread has been consumed, it:

in ventrem abit, & in secessum ciicitur.[124]

This translates to:
goes into the belly, and is cast into retirement.[125]

Anne wrote:
goeth into ye belly and is caſt out into the priuey.[126]

Her choice of ‘privy’, a term both vivid and concrete, reveals an awareness of the rhetorical principle of *enargeia*, the classical technique of using precise and sensory language to make abstract ideas more immediate and comprehensible.[127] This approach mirrors the methods taught within humanist pedagogy, which valued clarity, accessibility, and the moral purpose of language. By translating in this manner, Anne demonstrated not only her grasp of Latin and the rhetorical traditions derived from Cicero and Quintilian, but also her ability to apply these techniques to theological discussions. Her decision to make Jewel’s phrasing more direct enhanced the persuasive

[123] Cicero, *Oratore*, pp. 17, 447.
[124] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. Bvi^{r}.
[125] Translation is mine.
[126] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. Diii^{v}.
[127] Quintilian, *Institutio*, p. 375.

power of the text for a lay English audience. This adjustment situates her within the broader current of humanism that sought to align eloquence with truth and moral reform. Through her translation, Anne indirectly participated in the transmission of the Italian classical inheritance into English religious culture, employing humanist strategies to advance the Protestant cause through clarity and rhetorical precision.

Another example comes during a discussion of how the original Christians were treated in Ancient times. Jewel wrote:

> *quis neſcit que olim connitia iata fuerint in Patres noſtros, qui primi caeperunt agnoſcere & profiteri nomen Chriſti*[128]

This translates to:

> Who does not know that in the past there were quarrels against our Fathers, who were the first to acknowledge and profess the name of Christ?[129]

Anne wrote:

> who knoweth not after what ſorte our Fathers were railed vpon in times paſt, which firſt began to acknowledge and profeſſe the name of Chriſte[130]

Anne's choice to change Jewel's 'quarrels' to 'railed vpon' enhanced the emotional immediacy of the text and reflected a Ciceronian preference for vivid expression to engage moral sympathy.[131] This rhetorical adjustment makes the historical persecution of the early Christians more relatable to English readers confronting perceived Catholic hostility. Through such stylistic precision, she transformed Jewel's argument into an accessible yet intellectually refined statement of Protestant identity.

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[128] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. Aiii^{r}.
[129] Translation is mine.
[130] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. A2iii^{r}.
[131] Cicero, *Oratore*, pp. 83-5.

Another example of subtle changes which made the text more understandable and relatable to her English audience appears in a discussion of the ancient Pagans. Jewel wrote:

> [The Pagans] *llos inter ſe conſpirare & occulta conſilia mire contra Re mp*.[132]

This translates to:

> [The Pagans] conspired among themselves and had secret plans against the commonwealth.

Anne wrote:

> they made privat conſpiracies, devised ſecrete councels againſt the common welth[133]

By using 'councels' instead of Jewel's 'plans', Anne evoked the recent Council of Trent, which concluded just before her work was published and sought to reform the Catholic Church and reaffirm its power.[134] This subtle change would have resonated with an English Protestant audience quite strongly, and it shows Anne's understanding of Ciceronian rhetoric.[135]

Anne's classical knowledge and rhetorical skill can be seen in another discussion of the ancient Pagans. Jewel wrote:

> [The Pagans] *explere ſe humanis carninjs, & ferali ritu bibere humanum ſanguinem*[136]

This translates to:

> [The Pagans] filled [themselves] with human flesh, and drank human blood in a feral rite.[137]

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[132] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. Aiii^{r}. *Re mp* is probably a shorted version of *res publica*, meaning public affair or commonwealth.
[133] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. A2iii^{r}.
[134] P. Demers, 'Tails of Cross-Channel Comets: From Acclaim to Obscurity', *Renaissance and Reformation*, 43/2 (2020), p. 218.
[135] Cicero, *Oratore*, pp. 163-5.
[136] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. A2iiii^{v}.
[137] Translation is mine.

Anne wrote:

> [they] fedd themſelves with mens fleſhe, and lyke ſavage and brute beaſtes, didde drinke their bloude.[138]

Her choices heightened the sensory and moral intensity of the passage, transforming Jewel's phrasing into an image that evokes horror and moral disgust. The substitution of 'fedd' for 'filling' demonstrates her sensitivity to verbal precision, a quality central to humanist pedagogy shaped by Cicero's emphasis on linguistic purity and decorum.[139] Her insertion of 'like savage and brute beasts' uses *amplificatio*, to heighten the reader's emotional response. By rendering it in this way, Anne created a more immediate and emotionally persuasive image for her English audience, making Jewel's ideas accessible beyond learned circles while strengthening its moral resonance. Her choice to render 'human blood' as 'their bloude' further personalised the violence, aligning the imagery with the Protestant view of Catholic cruelty and superstition. This strategy of vivid exemplification mirrors the Italian humanists' belief that eloquence should serve truth and reform. Her adaptation used classical techniques of persuasion to promote Protestant ideals of reason, purity, and divine truth, situating her work firmly within the humanist moral and spiritual renewal of the English Reformation.

Anne's use of classical rhetorical strategies to make her text more accessible can also be seen in a discussion of how the first Christians were treated in ancient times. Jewel wrote:

> *reges & principes huiuſ modi tum perſuaſionibus inducti, occidêre Prophetas Dei ad unum omnes, Eſaiam ad ſerram: Hicremian il lapides: Danielem ad leones: Amos ad uctem: Paulum ad gladi-am: Chriſtum ad crucem: Chriſtianos omnes ad car-ceres, ad equuleos, ad furcas, ad rupes, ad preci-pitia,*

[138] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. A2iiii[v].
[139] Cicero, *Oratore*, pp. 31-3.

ad bestias, ad ignes condemnare: & rogos in-gentes ex illorum uiuis corporibus, tantum ad uſum nocturni luminis, & ad ludibrium inflammare: cosq' ron alio loco numerare, quam quo ſordes uiliſsimas, & catharmata ac ludibria totiu mundi. Sic uidelicet ſemper accepti ſunt authores & prefeſſores ueritatis.[140]

This translates to:
Kings and princes of this kind, then induced by persuasions, killed the Prophets of God one by one, Isaiah to the saw: Jeremiah to the stones: Daniel to the lions: Amos to the hounds: Paul to the sword: Christ to the cross: condemned all Christians to prisons, to stocks, to forks, to rocks, to precipices, to beasts, to fires: and to kindle pyres of their living bodies, only for the use of night light, and for mockery: so that they may be numbered in another place, than in that of the most base words, and of the jokes and mockeries of the whole world. Thus, of course, the authors and leaders of truth have always been accepted.[141]

Anne wrote:
Herevpon Kings and Princes beinge ledde then by ſuche perſwaſions, killed all the Prophetes of God, lettinge none eſcape: Eſai [Isaiah] with a ſawe, Ieremy [Jeremiah] with ſtones, Daniell with Lyons, Amos with an yron barre, Paule with the ſword, & Chriſt vpon ye croſſe, and condemned all Chriſtians to impriſonmentes, to tormentes to the pikes, to be thrwone doune headlong from rocks & ſtepe places, to be caſte to wild beaſtes and to be burnt, & made great ſyres of their quicke bodies, for ye only purpoſe to giue light by night, & for a very ſcorne & mockinge ſtocke: and didde compt them no better then the vileſt fylth, thoffcouringes and laughing games

[140] Jewel, *Apologia*, sigs. aiii.[r-v].
[141] Translation is mine.

> of ye whole worlde. Thus (as ye see) haue the Authors and profeſſours of the trueth euer ben entreated.[142]

Anne's translation of Jewel's passage intensifies both the rhythm and emotional force of the original. Her reworking of the sequence listing how the Christians were killed and addition of 'lettinge none escape' shows an awareness of variation, the classical rhetorical technique that gives vitality through stylistic diversity.[143] The repetition of violent imagery combined with increasingly vivid verbs such as 'thrwone doune headlong' and 'to be caste to wild beastes' exemplifies *amplificatio*. Anne's translation replaces Jewel's ordered phrasing with more visceral, kinetic language, reflecting the humanist belief that clarity and vividness served both truth and persuasion. Her use of 'quicke bodies' and 'vilest fylth' invokes sensory immediacy, allowing English readers to feel the injustice of Christian suffering. This method aligns with the humanist goal of making moral argument accessible and affective. By merging eloquence with moral purpose, Anne participates in the Italian classical inheritance that linked rhetoric to reform.

Another example can be seen in a passage comparing the Protestants to the ancient Christians. Jewel wrote:

> *Quo nos animo acquiore ferre debemus, quic unque profeſſionem evangelii Jeſu Chriſti ſuicepimus, ſi in ea-dem cauſa ad eundem tractamur modum, utque olim patres noſtri, ita nos quoque bodie, nullo noſtro meri-to, tantum quia docemus & profitemur ueritatem, con-uitiis, contumeliis, mendaciis exagitamur.*[144]

This translates to:

> With what spirit should we bear ourselves, who have ever professed the gospel of Jesus Christ, if in the same cause we are

[142] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sigs. Aiv^{r-v}.
[143] Cicero, *Oratore*, pp. 181, 183, 391.
[144] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. aiii^{v}.

> treated in the same manner, and as our fathers were of old, so also we, the body, are harassed with vices, insults, and lies, through no merit of our own, only because we teach and profess the truth.[145]

> Anne wrote:
> Wherefore wee oughte to beare yt the more quyetlye, which haue taken vppon vs to profeſſe the Goſpell of Chriſt, yf we for the ſame cauſe be handled after the ſame ſorte: and yf wee, as our forefathers weare longe ago, bee lykewyse at thys day tormented & bayted with raylings, with ſpitefull dealinges and with lyes, and that for no desert of our owne, but onely bicauſe we teach and acknowledge the truthe.[146]

Anne's adaptation of Jewel's phrase from 'With what spirit should we bear ourselves' to 'Wherefore wee oughte to beare yt the more quyetlye' demonstrates her classical education and her grounding in humanist rhetorical practice. Her shift from the interrogative to the assertive form reveals her understanding of rhetoric as moral persuasion rather than abstract contemplation. By turning Jewel's question into a calm exhortation, Anne invokes the Stoic virtue of *patientia*, the classical ideal of enduring injustice with reason and faith.[147] This humanist emphasis on moral steadiness in the face of hardship was deeply influenced by classical ethics.[148] Her phrasing also shows her command of rhythm and variation, devices central to humanist rhetoric. Expressions such as 'bee lykewyse at thys day tormented and bayted with raylings, with spitefull dealinges and with lyes' employ balanced clauses and alliteration to intensify emotional impact while maintaining clarity. By using vivid and accessible language, Anne makes Jewel's theological argument more relatable for

[145] Translation is mine.
[146] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. aiv^{v}.
[147] Seneca, *Epistles, Vol. I*, pp. 5, 77, 99, 441. Cicero, *Oratore*, p. 61.
[148] Seneca, *Epistles, Vol. I*, pp. 5, 215, 389.

an English audience familiar with contemporary religious hostility. Through this method, she transforms humanist eloquence into a vehicle for Protestant resolve.

Anne's understanding of persuasive techniques derived from classical rhetoric can be seen in another example discussing the treatment of the Protestants. Jewel wrote:

> *Clamā[n]t hodie paſſim nos omnes eſſe Haetericos, diſ-eſſifse à fide, & nouis perſuaſionibus atq; impiis dog-matus, Eccleſiae conſenſum diſsipauiſſe:*[149]

This translates to:

> Today we all cry out that we are heretics, separated from the faith, and with new persuasions and impious dogmas, we have scattered the consensus of the Church:[150]

Anne wrote:

> They crye out vpon vs at thys preſent euery wheare, that we are all heretiques, and haue forsſken the fayth, and haue with newe perſwaſions and wicked learninge vtterly dyſſolued the concorde of the Churche.[151]

The phrase 'at thys present euery wheare' introduces immediacy and universality, a technique reminiscent of Cicero's appeals to collective emotion and shared moral experience. Her substitution of 'impious dogmas' with 'wicked learninge' further exemplifies humanist emphasis of moral language. The vivid 'vtterly dyssolued' strengthens the sense of destruction and moral decay, employing *amplificatio* to heighten emotional force and moral urgency. Through such choices, Anne reshaped Jewel's text into a more accessible and rhetorically charged expression of Protestant endurance. Her linguistic precision and rhetorical awareness align with the Italian

[149] Jewel, *Apologia*, sig. aiii^{v}.
[150] Translation is mine.
[151] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sig. aiv^{v}.

humanist belief that eloquence serves truth and reform. In doing so, Anne participated in the transmission of classical ideals into English religious discourse, using clarity, emotional appeal, and moral emphasis to promote Protestant conviction within the framework of humanism.

In another example, Jewel wrote:

utq́; omnes intelligā[n]t cuiuſ modi tandem homines illi ſint, quidq́; de Deo, & re-ligione ſentiant, quos Romanus Epiſcopus, antequam uocarentur ad dicendam cauſam, non ſatis conſideratè[m], nullo exemplo, nullo ivre, tantum quod illos audiret à ſe ſuisq́; in aliqua parte Religionus diſcrepare, condem-nauit pro Heretick.[152]

This translates to:

So that everyone understands what kind of men they are, what they think about God and religion, whom the Roman Bishop, before they were called to give a reason, did not consider, without example, without reason, only because he heard them from themselves; in some part the religion differed, he condemned them as heretics.[153]

Anne wrote:

And yt al men may vnderſtand what manner of people they be, and what opinion they haue of God and of Religion, whome the Byſſhop of Rome before they were called to tell theire tale, hath condemned for heretikes, without any good conſideratiō[n], without any exaumple, & vtterly without lawe or righte, onelye bycauſe he hearde tell that they did diſſente from hym and his in som pointe of Religion.[154]

[152] Jewel, *Apologia*, sigs. avi^{r-v}.
[153] Translation is mine.
[154] Jewel, *An Apologie*, sigs. Biii^{r-v}.

By transforming Jewel's Latin into 'And yt al men may vnderstand what manner of people they be…', Anne adopted a direct and accessible tone that reflects the humanist principle of *perspicuitas*, or transparent expression.[155] Her phrasing 'to tell theire tale' translates an abstract idea into colloquial English, grounding the argument in lived experience and strengthening its persuasive appeal for a wider audience. Her expansion of Jewel's phrase to include 'without any good consideration…example…lawe or righte' demonstrates *amplificatio*, intensifying the moral critique through repetition and variation. This structure, reminiscent of Cicero's style, adds rhythm and authority to the argument. By emphasising the bishop's irrational and unjust condemnation, Anne framed the Catholic hierarchy as antithetical to natural reason and divine justice, both central concepts in humanist moral philosophy. Her translation transforms learned rhetoric into a vehicle for Protestant reform, participating in the Italian classical inheritance that sought to unite eloquence, truth, and moral renewal in religious discourse.

Conclusion

In 1579, Anne's husband Nicholas died, and he left her a life interest in the home they shared, Gorhambury Abbey, and nearby lands.[156] She never remarried, and remained a devoted mother. She ruled over Gorhambury Abbey essentially alone. Her letters with her sons, who were always abroad, reveal that they were not very responsible with the money and responsibilities their father left behind.[157] Anne was distressed about this and their hesitation to accept the responsibility of their station in many of her letters.[158] Her son Anthony died in 1601 and she signed Gorhambury over to her remaining son Francis in 1602 due to his financial troubles.[159] *An Apology* in 1564 was the last thing

[155] Quintilian, *Institutio*, Volume I, pp. 327, 339, 375.
[156] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 27.
[157] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 27.
[158] Anne Bacon to Anthony Bacon,1592, LPL 648, fols. 196^{v}-7^{r}, and a letter from Anne to Anthony in 1593, LPL 653, fols. 330^{r}-1^{v}, are two examples of this.
[159] Magnusson, 'Bacon [née Cooke], Anne', *ODNB*.

Anne published, though she continued to promote religious reform for the rest of her life.[160] For example, she defended preachers at risk of suspension in the 1580s for not complying with the religious guidelines set out by John Whitgift, who became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1583.[161] She even wrote to Cecil asking him to arrange for the preachers to be given a fair hearing before the Queen.[162] She illegally gave shelter to Puritan priests who had lost their licences for offences like refusing to wear clerical robes or improvising their own sermons.[163] Her last known letter is from 1600, and she died in 1610 at age eighty-two, seven years into the reign of King James I.[164] Little is known of the last decade of her life, but she probably suffered from illness and financial insecurity.[165]

Like Margaret Roper, Anne used the intellectual abilities given to her by her classical education to join an intellectual and theological discourse that would have otherwise been closed to her. Margaret and Anne are examples of how the influence of humanism in England allowed for some elite women to receive classical education and become part of political and religious environments in a way that other women could not, thus gaining a significant degree of authority and influence. It is impossible to know whether Anne still would have been such a devout Protestant had she not received a classical education and been able to engage with non-English theological texts for herself, but she certainly would not have been able to translate Ochino's sermons and probably not Jewel's *Apologia* without it. Anne Bacon exemplifies the impact of this Italian intellectual movement on women in England, as seen through her education, her works of translation, and her active involvement in the Protestant Reformation.

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[160] Magnusson, 'Bacon [née Cooke], Anne', *ODNB*.
[161] Spring, *Mistress*, p. 35. Whitgift's *Articles Touching Preachers and Other Orders for the Church* (1583) can be found in H. Gee and W. J. Hardy (eds.), *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (New York, 1896), pp. 481-4.
[162] Anne Bacon to William Cecil, 26 February 1585, BL, Lansdowne MS 43, fols. 119^{r}-120^{v}.
[163] Wayne, *Anne Cooke Bacon*, p. ix.
[164] Spring, *Mistress*, pp. 37-8.
[165] Spring, *Mistress*, pp. 37-8.

Chapter Five: Mary Sidney: Italianate Commentator

Introduction

The seventeenth-century philosopher John Aubrey described Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, as 'the greatest patroness of wit and learning of any lady in her time'.[1] Although she is often analysed in the shadow of her brother, the celebrated Elizabethan poet, Philip Sidney (1554-1586), Mary Sidney was a translator, poet, religious reformer, patron of the arts, and even scientist in her own right.[2] Born three years into the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Mary Sidney entered the literary scene by first completing unfinished works left behind by her brother after his death in the 1580s, and then through works of translation, which, as described above, was an acceptable medium within which women could write during the sixteenth century, until finally she produced her own original poetry, some of which was published under her name. Like Margaret Roper and Anne Bacon, Mary Sidney was an elite Tudor woman with an extensive classical education. Mary is the strongest example of how the lives of English women were affected by the appreciation and influence of Italian culture in England. Although many scholars have studied Mary's life, this is an aspect of it which has not yet been explored. To show how Mary's life was affected by the promotion of Italian ideas, mainly classical education, in England, this chapter will examine the political context in which Mary lived, her classical education, and how she put her education to use in her translation of the first two chapters of Petrarch's 'The Triumph of Death' and in her original poem titled 'A Dialogue Between Two Shepherds, Thenot and Piers', published in 1602.

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[1] J. Aubrey, A. Clarke (ed.), *'Brief Lives', Chiefly of Contemporaries, Set Down by John Aubrey, Between the Years 1669 and 1696, Volume One*, (Oxford, 1898), p. 311. *Brief Lives* was compiled from a plethora of scribbled notes and manuscripts Aubrey left behind after his death in 1697.

[2] M. P. Hannay, 'Herbert [née Sidney], Mary, countess of Pembroke', *ODNB.*

Historiographical review

Of the three case studies examined in this thesis, Mary Sidney has received the most scholarly attention, but this chapter examines her in a context in which she has not yet been considered.[3] Mary was the most elite of the three women, and she left the most work behind to be studied by scholars. To summarise, this scholarship tends to fall within two categories. The first category is analysis of her works, which include her translations of Robert Garnier's play *Marc Antoine* from French into English and Philippe de Mornay's *A Discourse of Life and Death* (both completed in 1590); the *Sidney Psalms*, which included 107 psalms translated by Mary alongside others by her late brother Philip Sidney as well as two original poems titled 'Even Now That Care' and 'To the Angell Spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney', completed in the 1590s; her translation of Petrarch's canto '*Trionfo della Morte*' from Italian into English (1590s); an original poem titled 'The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda' (1595); and another original poem titled 'A Dialogue Between Two Shepherds, Thenot and Piers' (published in 1602).[4] *A Discourse of Life and Death* and *Antonius* were printed together in 1592. 'The Doleful Lay of Clorinda' was printed in a collection of elegies by Edmund Spenser, who authored famous works like *The Faerie Queene* (published in 1590 and 1596), for Philip Sidney in 1595. 'A Dialogue between Two Shepherds, Thenot and Piers, in Praise of Astrea' was printed in Francis Davison's *A Poetical*

[3] Martine Van Elk has examined Mary's *Psalmes* within the context of patronage, performance, and expression in relation to Dutch traditions, but no scholar has considered them in connection to Italian ideas or practices. See M. Van Elk, 'Muses and Patrons: Mary Sidney Herbert and Anna Roemers Visscher', in M. Van Elk (ed.), *Early Modern Women's Writing: Domesticity, Privacy, and the Public Sphere in England and the Dutch Republic* (London, 2017), pp. 81-124.

[4] There were probably more works completed by Mary Sidney which circulated in manuscript, but they are lost. Fires at her primary homes of Wilton, Ramsbury, and Baynards Castle in the seventeenth century probably destroyed her other manuscripts and letters. M. P. Hannay (ed.), *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700: Volume 2: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (London, 2009), p. xviii.

Rapsody in 1602. Her other works were only published and circulated in manuscript.[5] Still, they were widely read.[6]

Numerous edited collections of Mary's works have been published in recent decades.[7] Mary is also included in more general edited collections of writings by early modern women.[8] Margaret Hannay's biography on Mary remains the most thorough of its kind.[9] Other scholarship has focused on the lives of Mary and her family as well as their works.[10] Scholars have situated Mary's works in religious and political contexts as well. Hannibal Hamlin examined how Mary's *Psalmes* fit into the wider tradition of English psalms.[11] Danielle Clarke demonstrated how Mary's religious writings reflected her evolving Protestant beliefs, while also engaging with the broader state of Protestantism in Elizabethan England.[12] Victor Skretkowicz analysed how the Protestant political climate of the 1590s was reflected in Mary's secular writings.[13] Kimberly Coles argued that Mary purposefully used poetry as a tool to promote the Protestant cause, intertwining this with her commentary on England's

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[5] M. P. Hannay, 'Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke (1561-1621)', *COPIA* (2000), <https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/sidney/pembroke_biography.htm>.
[6] Hannay (ed.), *Ashgate Critical Essays: Mary Sidney*, p. xv.
[7] B. S. Travitsky and P. Cullen, *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part One: Printed Writings, 1500-1640, Volume 6 Mary Sidney Herbert* (Aldershot, 1996). M. P. Hannay, N. J. Kinnamon, and M. G. Brennan (eds.), *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert Countess of Pembroke, Volume I: Poems, Translations, and Correspondence* and *Volume II: The Psalmes of David* (Oxford, 1998). H. Hamlin, M. G. Brennan, M. P. Hannay, and N. J. Kinnamon (eds.), *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney* (Oxford, 2009).
[8] See, e.g., D. Clarke (ed.), *Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney, and Aemilia Lanyer: Renaissance Women Poets* (London, 2000).
[9] M. P. Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (Oxford, 1990).
[10] M. P. Hannay, M. G. Brennan, and M. E. Lamb (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Sidneys, 1500-1700, Vol. 1: Lives* and *Vol. 2: Literature* (London, 2015). Hannay, *Ashgate Critical Essays: Mary Sidney*.
[11] H. Hamlin, 'Piety and Poetry: English Psalms from Miles Coverdale to Mary Sidney', in M. Pincombe and C. Shrank (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature, 1485–1603* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 203-21.
[12] D. Clarke, 'The Countess of Pembroke and the Practice of Piety', *Literature Compass*, 9/3 (2012), pp. 252-61.
[13] V. Skretkowicz, 'Mary Sidney Herbert's *Antonius*, English Philhellenism and the Protestant Cause,' *Women's Writing*, 6/1 (1999), pp. 7-25.

international policies.[14] Through an examination of Mary's *Psalmes*, Jaime Goodrich observed how Mary asserted her views on the ongoing conflict between England and Spain.[15] Moreover, Paulina Kewes suggested that in her translation of *Antonius*, Mary depicted Rome as a symbol of imperialist Spain, while also commenting on Elizabeth's actions against both Catholics and the Spanish.[16] Elizabeth Pentland contended that Mary's translation of *A Discourse of Life and Death* not only mentioned the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre but also drew implicit connections to Elizabeth's foreign policy.[17]

The second major area of scholarship examines Mary's relationships with prominent literary figures in Elizabethan England, particularly her brother, Philip. Since Mary began her writing career in response to his death, this connection is a central focus for many scholars. Gavin Alexander explored how her completion of Philip's unfinished works contributed to her development as an author.[18] Elizabeth Hodgson similarly emphasised how her grief not only led her to finish his texts but also facilitated her emergence as an independent writer.[19] Others, though, like Natasha Distiller, have offered a counterpoint, arguing that Mary's works should be understood in terms of her own identity rather than her brother's death.[20] The theme of grief is central in other scholarship, such as that by Andrew Hiscock, which

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[14] K. A. Coles, "[A] pen to paynt': Mary Sidney Herbert and the Problems of a Protestant Poetics', in K. A. Coles (ed.), *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 75-112.
[15] J. Goodrich, 'Princely Counsel: Mary Sidney Herbert, Elizabeth I, and International Protestantism', in J. Goodrich (ed.), *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender, and Religion in Early Modern England* (Evanston, IL, 2014), pp. 107-44.
[16] P. Kewes, "A Fit Memorial for the Times to Come …': Admonition and Topical Application in Mary Sidney's Antonius and Samuel Daniel's Cleopatra', *The Review of English Studies*, 63/259 (2012), pp. 243-64.
[17] E. Pentland, 'Philippe Mornay, Mary Sidney, and the Politics of Translation', *Early Modern Studies Journal*, 6 (2014), pp. 66-99.
[18] G. Alexander, 'The Last Word: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke', in G. Alexander (ed.), *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586–1640* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 76-128.
[19] E. Hodgson, 'Inheriting Loss: Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke', in E. Hodgson (ed.), *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 22-49.
[20] N. Distiller, "Philip's Phoenix'?: Mary Sidney Herbert and the Identity of Author', in M. Pincombe (ed.), *The Anatomy of Tudor Literature: Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Tudor Symposium (1998)* (London, 2001), pp. 112-29.

analysed how Mary's writings about her brother illuminate early modern practices of mourning and memorialisation.[21] Danielle Clarke showed how *Psalmes* used established conventions of grief to help establish Mary's authority as an author.[22] Marion Wynne-Davies contended that Mary's portrayals of women's mourning practices functioned as a critique of the regulation of female emotion during times of grief.[23]

Mary's role as both an author and literary patron has been the subject of considerable scholarly attention. Mary Ellen Lamb has argued that the extent of her patronage has been exaggerated, but that her involvement still fit within the broader patronage practices of the period.[24] Building upon this notion, Michael Brennan explored Mary's position within the wider patronage network of her husband's family.[25] In contrast, scholars have focused on the significant literary status Mary achieved, not only through her own writings and her completion of her brother's works but also through her patronage. Patricia Pender has further observed that, despite this prominence, Mary's contributions were largely overlooked and erased from history for a considerable time.[26]

Political context and education

Mary was born during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, a period defined by intense religious and political conflict between Catholics and Protestants. Elizabeth's pro-Protestant reforms and refusal to marry

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[21] A. Hiscock, 'The Dolefull Clorinda? Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and the Vocation of Memory', in A. Hiscock (ed.) *Reading Memory in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 138-64.
[22] D. Clarke, 'Memory and Memorialization in the *Psalmes* of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke', *Memory Studies*, 11/1 (2018), pp. 85-99.
[23] M. Wynne-Davies, ''More Women, More Weeping': The Communal Lamentation of Early Modern Women in the Works of Mary Sidney Herbert and Mary Wroth', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 22 (2014), pp. 1-25.
[24] M. E. Lamb, 'The Countess of Pembroke's Patronage', *English Literary Renaissance*, 12/2 (1982), pp. 162-79.
[25] M. G. Brennan, 'The Queen's Proposed Visit to Wilton', in M. G. Brennan (ed.), *Literary Patronage in the English Renaissance: The Pembroke Family* (London, 1988), pp. 55-82.
[26] P. Pender, 'The Ghost and the Machine in the Sidney Family Corpus', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 51/1 (2011), pp. 65-85.

challenged both ecclesiastical authority and gender conventions, prompting resistance among Catholic sympathizers who sought to replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots.[27] Despite questions over Elizabeth's legitimacy as Henry VIII's daughter and her capacity to rule as a woman, she consolidated power through strategic appointments, surrounding herself with trusted and educated advisors such as William Cecil and Robert Dudley.[28] Mary's mother, who was Dudley's sister, joined Elizabeth's privy chamber, situating the young Mary near the centre of court life.[29] Exposure to the Queen's navigation of gendered expectations offered Mary insight into how women could assert agency within restrictive social frameworks. Her own life mirrored these tensions: though married at fifteen to Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and fulfilling her expected roles as wife and mother, she also cultivated an intellectual identity.[30] For women like Mary, conformity to ideals of virtue and domesticity could coexist with participation in literary culture, offering a socially acceptable path to authorship. Encouraged by familial ties, particularly to her brother Philip Sidney, and grounded in her noble education, Mary transformed personal loss and duty into creative expression. Her literary pursuits emerged from a confluence of privilege, piety, and proximity to power, positioning her as a figure who both exemplified and subtly challenged the limitations imposed on women in Elizabethan England.

Among the three case studies considered, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, possessed the most extensive and influential

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[27] For more on tensions during Elizabeth's reign, see M. Christian, 'Elizabeth's Preachers and the Government of Women: Defining and Correcting a Queen', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 24/3 (1993), pp. 561-76; S. Doran, *Monarchy and Matrimony: The Courtships of Elizabeth I* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 6-7; J. M. Richards, *Elizabeth I* (Abingdon, 2012), pp. 84-5, 129-30, 133.
[28] S. Doran, *Queen Elizabeth I* (London, 2003), pp. 52, 57-8. Richards, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 15-6.
[29] Doran, *Queen Elizabeth I*, p. 61. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 4. Mary's mother, who was also named Mary, was deeply embedded in the English court. It is even suspected that she was the one to tell Lady Jane Grey that she was going to be queen after the death of Edward VI. A proper biography has not been done on Mary's mother, but for more, see S. Adams, 'Sidney [née Dudley], Mary, Lady Sidney', *ODNB*.
[30] Hannay, 'Herbert, Mary', *ODNB*.

ties to the English court. Her lineage was deeply embedded in Tudor politics. Through the Dudleys, one of the most powerful families of the Elizabethan period, Mary occupied an elevated position within the nobility.[31] Her father, Henry Sidney, served as Lord Deputy of Ireland and came from a family of considerable land and wealth.[32] Her marriage to the Earl of Pembroke, made her one of the richest women in England.[33] Although Margaret Roper and Anne Bacon also enjoyed distinguished connections, Mary's wealth and influence placed her in a different league and enabled her to participate more visibly in intellectual and literary culture. Like many elite women of her time, Mary received a classical education that included Latin, French, Italian, and possibly Hebrew, as well as the works of the Church Fathers.[34] Her studies were conducted at home under tutors, and her curriculum reflected both humanist ideals and Protestant devotion.[35] Evidence from family records and surviving texts suggests that she engaged in translation and poetic exercises from an early age and that her education, while less rigorous in philosophical study than that of Margaret or Anne, still nurtured her linguistic ability and literary skill.[36] Although her early training emphasised music and needlework,

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[31] Hannay, 'Herbert, Mary', *ODNB*.
[32] W. T. MacCaffrey, 'Sidney, Sir Henry', *ODNB*.
[33] There is an account from 1588 which described Mary riding into London in a regal carriage behind forty lavishly dressed gentlemen and in front of another lavish carriage for her ladies, a litter carrying her children, and fifty servants wearing the family's uniform. Hannay (ed.), *Ashgate Critical Essays: Mary Sidney*, p. xv.
[34] Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix*, p. 27. Melody D. Knowles in ''Now English Denizend, though Hebrue Borne': Did Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, Read Hebrew?,' *Studies in Philology*, 109/3 (2012), pp. 279-89, argues that she did not know Hebrew, and relied on already written translations to complete her *Psalms*. June Leavitt in 'The Influence of Medieval Rabbinical Commentaries on the Countess of Pembroke's Psalm 58' in M. P. Hannay (ed.), *Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700: Volume 2: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* (London, 2009), pp. 219-21, argues that Mary relied on the works of Jews in England who were familiar with Rabbinical commentaries rather than original Hebrew texts to complete her translations of the psalms.
[35] 'Mr. Thorneton, skolemaster' was paid £5 in 1574. See 'Penhurst Household Account 1573-1574', in C. L. Kingsford (ed.), *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord De l'Isle & Dudley Preserved at Penhurst Place* (London, 1925), p. 257. 'Mistress Maria, the Italian' was paid £5 for being the Italian tutor in the Sidney household from 1572 to 1573. 'Penhurst Household Account 1572-1573', in Kingsford (ed.), *Report on Manuscripts*, p. 247.
[36] There are few records of the texts Mary Sidney and her sisters read, though their education likely reflected the Sidney family's humanist interests. A Bible, twelve psalters, a service book, and John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* were listed in her

her intellect and social position enabled her to transcend gendered educational boundaries, and she eventually became a respected writer, translator, and patron whose influence rivalled that of her male contemporaries.[37] Her adaptation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine* is even thought to have influenced Shakespeare.[38] Her works attracted comparisons with celebrated Italian female intellectuals like Vittoria Colonna and Elisabetta Gonzaga, and she was celebrated for uniting moral virtue with literary genius.[39] Through her patronage of poets like Edmund Spenser and Abraham Fraunce, she cultivated a network of Protestant and humanist writers.[40]

Mary's intellectual partnership with her brother Philip Sidney profoundly shaped her career and legacy. After his death in 1586, she became his literary heir, transforming grief into creative achievement.[41] Mary's earliest works were written to honour Philip. In

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uncle Robert Dudley, the Earl of Leicester's library, and were possibly part of the Sidney library as well. Hannay, Phoenix, pp. 27-8. Her mother owned an Italian grammar containing a partial translation of Petrarch's *Triumph of Death*, signed "Maria Sidney," which scholars attribute to Mary herself. For deeper analysis, see A. Keener, 'A 1562 Petrarchan Italian-English Dictionary Inscribed by 'Maria Sidney", *Sidney Journal*, 36/1 (2018), pp. 41-52. She may have used her mother's Italian dictionary and her brothers' books, particularly those of Robert, who studied similar subjects at home. Hannay, *Phoenix*, p. 28. Her instruction also included elements of medicine, a skill valued for women of her rank that may have encouraged her later interest in alchemy and scientific experimentation. Hannay, *Phoenix*, p. 27.

[37] Early descriptions of Mary applauded her singing and needlework. In 1593 the musician Thomas Morley noted that she was famous for her singing. T. Morley, *Canzonets. Or Little short songs to three voyces* (London, 1593), sig. Aii^{r}. In 1631, the poet John Taylor said that her needlework would make her forever famous. J. Taylor, *The needles excellency* (London, 1631), sig. Biii^{r}.

[38] N. J. Miller, 'Imagining Shakespeare's Sisters: Fictionalizing Mary Sidney Herbert and Mary Sidney Wroth: From Biography to Biofiction', in J. Fitzmaurice, N. J. Miller, and S. J. Steen (eds.), *Authorizing Early Modern European Women: From Biography to Biofiction* (Amsterdam, 2021), p. 131.

[39] For comparisons of Mary to famed Italian female intellectuals, see N. Breton, *The Pilgrimage to Paradise* (London, 1592), sig. ai^{r}. Folios one through four are marked with a lower case 'a' and folios four through eight are marked with an upper case 'A'; T. Heywood*, Gynaikeion: or, Nine Bookes of Various History Concerninge Women* (London, 1624), p. 398. Heywood also praised Anne Bacon and her sisters, Lady Arabella Stuart, Lady Jane Grey, and Queen Elizabeth I, but declared Mary the most impressive of them all. See Heywood*, Gynaikeion*, p. 398. Also see P. Benson, 'The Stigma of Italy Undone: Aemilia Lanyer's Canonization of Lady Mary Sidney', in P. Benson and V. Kirkham (eds.), *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2005), p. 151.

[40] G. Alexander, *Writing After Sidney: The Literary Response to Sir Philip Sidney, 1586-1640* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 79-82.

[41] H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Sidney, Sir Philip', *ODNB*. B. W. Fisken, "To the Angell Spirit…': Mary Sidney's Entry into the 'World of Words', in M. P. Hannay (ed.),

the early 1590s, she completed his unfinished translation of the Psalms, rendering Psalms 44-150 into English and combining them with his earlier work. The resulting collection, distinctly Protestant and humanist in spirit, circulated widely in manuscript, and several copies survive.[42] Her poems 'To the Angel Spirit…' and 'The Doleful Lay of Clorinda' expressed her grief over his death, using classical themes and examples to do so.[43] Her engagement with Italian literature, potentially influenced by Philip's travels, reflected their shared classical education and mutual intellectual pursuits.[44]

How humanism inspired Mary Sidney's 'The Triumph of Death'

As humanism became more influential in England, classical education, even for women, became more standardised. It makes sense, then, that the most direct connection between English women and Italian ideas can be seen in Mary's works later in the period. This connection can be observed most clearly in Mary's translation of Petrarch's 'The Triumph of Death' from his *Trionfi*. Mary had a plethora of Italian authors to choose from, and she chose one of the leading humanistic and literary

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Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700: Volume 2: Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke (London, 2009), p. 27.

[42] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works Volume II: Psalmes*, p. 339. Hamlin, Brennan, Hannay, and Kinnamon, *The Sidney Psalter*, pp. xxiii, xxxii.

[43] M. Sidney, ''To the Angell Spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney', in M. P. Hannay, N. J. Kinnamon, and M. G. Brennan (eds.), *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert Countess of Pembroke*, Volume I (Oxford, 1998), pp. 110-2. Some scholars have attributed 'Clorinda' to Spenser rather than Mary. Spenser wrote 'Astrophel', in which the titular character is supposed to be Philip, and in it he says that Clorinda is Astrophel's sister. 'Clorinda' could have been written by Mary as a response to 'Astrophel'. The poem was originally untitled and no author was noted, though the anthology of poems was published under Spenser's name. Gary Waller first argued that the poem was written by Mary in 1979. Lisa M. Klein, Beth Wynne Fisken, and Margaret P. Hannay have also claimed the poem for Mary. But George Pigman, Anne Lake Prescott, and Theodore L. Steinberg doubt Mary's authorship. For more on this debate, see P. Coren, 'Edmund Spenser, Mary Sidney, and the Doleful Lay', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 42/1 (2002), pp. 25-41.

[44] Between 1572 and 1575, Philip lived in Venice and Padua, visited Florence and Genoa, and frequently attended book fairs. It's possible he shared some of these books or his thoughts on Italy with Mary. M. G. Brennan, 'Philip Sidney's Book-Buying at Venice and Padua, Giovanni Varisco's Venetian editions of Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (1571 and 1578) and Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579)', *Sidney Journal*, 36/1 (2018), pp. 19-21.

figures in sixteenth-century England.[45] There were other translators of Petrarch in England before Mary, though most worked from his *Canzoniere*, not his *Trionfi*.[46] Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, translated 'The Triumph of Love'.[47] As a young woman, Queen Elizabeth translated the first ninety lines of 'The Triumph of Divinity'.[48] Mary was the first person to master Petrarch's *terza rima* format and produce a text in that style keeping to the exact number of 100 lines from Petrarch's original.[49] Mary's translation is also notable because of the way it emphasised Laura's voice as a leading female character. The second chapter of 'The Triumph of Death' is a conversation between Death, who is portrayed as female, and Laura, and is written from Laura's perspective. Mary's translation resisted the traditional objectification of Laura as an example for all women, as merely a young, virtuous maiden.[50] As will be seen, she emphasised her power and wisdom as well. Mary's translation also inserted women into English Petrarchism.[51] Mary's emphasis on Laura as active rather than passive served as a comparison to her own efforts to produce literature in a male-dominated world. Through analysing and translating Petrarch, Mary was able to understand and comment on the role of women in her society. She used an Italian author, one of the most influential Italian humanists who essentially started the revival of appreciation for classical ideas which led to the establishment of classical education in England, to comment on her own society. This is important because it shows that intellectualism in Elizabethan England was partially shaped by an Italian lens, and that women, like Mary Sidney, were active participants in this.

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[45] M. Wyatt, 'Other Petrarchs in Early Modern England', in M. McLaughlin, L. Panizza, and P. Hainsworth (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 208-9.
[46] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 259.
[47] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 259.
[48] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 261.
[49] Hannay, 'Mary Sidney Herbert', *COPIA*.
[50] D. Clarke, "Lover's Songs Shall Turne to Holy Psalmes': Mary Sidney and the Transformation of Petrarch', *The Modern Language Review*, 92/2 (1997), p. 291.
[51] Hannay, 'Mary Sidney Herbert', *COPIA*.

The *Trionfi* includes five poems and follows Petrarch on his emotional journey of his decades-long love of Laura. Petrarch first saw Laura, whose real identity, if she was more than an allegory, is unknown, on 6 April 1327 at the Church of Saint Claire in Avignon.[52] He only ever saw Laura that one time, and never even spoke to her, but throughout his life he loved her from afar and wrote 366 poems, including his *Canzoniere*, inspired by this fantasy of love for her, which are now housed at the Vatican Library.[53] The six sections of the *Trionfi*, written over the course of three decades, depict Petrarch's deep love for Laura and his anguish and eventual acceptance of her death.[54] The *Trionfi* also examined human nature, sin, redemption, and the afterlife through the lens of Christianity and Senecan moral philosophy, and it was completed in the *terza rima* format of Dante's *Divina Commedia*.[55] The theme of processing death in 'The Triumph of Death' probably appealed to Mary because she was dealing with an immense amount of grief. As stated previously, most of her works stemmed from the grief of her brother, who died in October 1586, but she lost both of her parents in 1586 as well.[56] Her interest in Petrarch was probably not limited to his 'Triumph of Death'. She probably translated more, if not all, of the poems in the *Trionfi*. In his text about the life cycle of silkworms, Thomas Moffet, who dedicated the text to Mary as his patroness, implied that Mary worked extensively with Petrarch, which suggests that she translated more than just this part of

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[52] J. B. Trapp, 'Petrarch's Laura: The Portraiture of an Imaginary Beloved', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 64 (2001), p. 58. For scholarly and contemporary discussions of Laura's identity and existence, see also U. Falkeid, 'Petrarch's Laura and the Critics', *Modern Language Notes*, 127/1 (2012), pp. S64-S71; S. McHugh, *Petrarch and the Making of Gender in Renaissance Italy* (Amsterdam, 2023), pp. 51-3.
[53] McHugh, *Petrarch and the Making of Gender,* pp. 50, 56.
[54] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 255-6. For a modern critical edition of Petrarch's *Trionfi* in English, see A. Petrina (ed.), *Petrarch's 'Triumphi' in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 2020).
[55] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 256.
[56] Her father died of 'extreme cold' after being submerged in water in May 1586 and then her mother died of a long-term illness in August 1586. Her two-year-old daughter Katherine had also died in 1584. The shock from that sent her into labour and her fourth child Philip was born on the same day that Katherine died. Mary was no stranger to grief. See Hannay, *Philip's Phoenix*, p. 55.

the *Trionfi*.[57] Mary's translation of the first two chapters of 'The Triumph of Death' is simply the only part that survives. The only extant version of this text is a transcription of a collection of verses sent to Lucy Harrington, Countess of Bedford, by her cousin John Harrington dated 29 December 1600, currently housed at Inner Temple Library.[58] This collection also only contains three of the 107 psalms she translated, which furthers the idea that only a portion of the *Trionfi* she translated were included as well.[59]

Mary's translation of Petrarch fit into the wider pattern of translating foreign or ancient texts to comment on contemporary society.[60] Mary's translation, or rather adaptation, of Petrarch praised Queen Elizabeth indirectly.[61] Contemporary depictions of Queen Elizabeth sometimes included references and comparisons to Laura from 'The Triumph of Chastity' and 'The Triumph of Death'.[62] By choosing to produce adaptations of texts used by others to symbolise the Queen's power, Mary paid homage to her. Other scholars interpret Mary's work as an indirect criticism of contemporary discussions of the ageing of Queen Elizabeth. For example, Danielle Clarke asserts that translations of 'The Triumph of Chastity' were often used to comment on Queen Elizabeth's virtue by exalting her youth and beauty.[63] Clarke argues that Mary's depiction of Laura as a symbol of feminine power and dominance in 'The Triumph of Death', as opposed to typical depictions of her as a young beauty whose virtue is made evident through her chastity, subtly changed the rhetoric from condemnations of Elizabeth's ageing without a husband and heir to that of her everlasting moral piety and virtue.[64] In England the *Trionfi* was

[57] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 15.
[58] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 316.
[59] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 264.
[60] Schleiermacher, 'Different Methods', p. 42.
[61] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 264-5.
[62] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 264.
[63] Clarke, "Lover's Songs', p. 284.
[64] Clarke, "Lover's Songs', p. 284.

embraced by Protestants and used to promote their message.[65] It was also embraced by English humanists as an example of Christian, Senecan moral philosophy.[66] Not only was the text a way for Mary to establish her own voice and change English Petrarchan representations of women through her depiction of Laura, but it was also a way for her to engage with religious and humanistic discourse. Mary's proficiency and work in Italian shows that not only did she receive a classical education, but that she contributed to the English appreciation and adaptation of Italian culture as an adult.

It is not concretely known from which source Mary adapted this text, but given what is known about her other works of translation, she probably examined multiple versions of the *Trionfi* and worked from one or multiple of them.[67] It can be inferred that she used a text which derived from an edition compiled by Pietro Bembo, an important Italian humanist, published in 1501 titled *Le cose volgari de Messer Francesco Petrarca*, and another edition published in 1514 which was used by other sixteenth-century authors who translated Petrarch's works.[68] She also could have worked from *Il Petrarca con l'espositione* by Alessandro Vellutello in 1525, *Petrarca colla spositione* by Giovanni Gesualdo from 1533, and *Le rime del Petrarca brevemente* by Lodovico Castelvetro in 1582.[69] In their edited collection of Mary's works, Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan analyse Mary's adaptation against Vellutello's and Gesualdo's texts. For further analysis, this chapter compares her adaptation to the edition compiled by Bembo in 1501 to see how she used this Italian text, and the ideas and themes contained within it to mourn her brother and express her voice as a writer.[70]

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[65] S. Pugh, 'Sidney, Spenser, and Political Petrarchism', in M. McLaughlin, L. Panizza, and P. Hainsworth (eds.), *Petrarch in Britain: Interpreters, Imitators, and Translators over 700 Years* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 244, 250.
[66] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 265.
[67] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 316-7.
[68] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 316-7.
[69] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 257-8, 317.
[70] F. Petrarch, 'Del triompho della morte capitolo I', in P. Bembo (ed.), *Le cose volgari di Messer Francesco Petrarcha* (Venice, 1501), sig. xi^{v}; electronically found at <https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/PR-ALDI-20957/12>.

The passages which Mary chose to alter reveal much about how she used the text to express her own thoughts and feelings. In all his works about Laura, Petrarch glorified her. He praised her unimpeachable virtue as an earthly woman while simultaneously likening her to mythical beings. In 'The Triumph of Death', Laura's chastity, which death has overcome by taking her life, was the subject of his praise. In Chapter One, Petrarch wrote:

> *Virtu morta è, bellezza, et corteſia,*
> *Le belle donne intorno* ***al caſto letto***
> *Triſte diceano; homai di noi che fia?*
> *Chi uedra mai in donna atto perfetto?*
> *Chi udira'l parlar di ſaper pieno,*
> *E'l canto pien* ***d'angelico diletto****?*[71]

This passage presents the image of women sadly gathering around Laura's body on her '**chaste bed**' and admiring the perfection of her **angelic voice**. In Mary's adaptation, she completely omitted the phrase 'chaste bed' and she inserted 'Never lyke witt, shall we from woman heare'.[72] Mary changed it so that Laura's wit and intelligence were why the women mourned her loss, not her unattainable level of chastity portrayed by Petrarch. If this text was meant to condemn criticisms of Queen Elizabeth's ageing without giving birth to an heir, focusing on Laura's intelligence rather than her chastity makes sense. It also encouraged the praising of women for their intelligence rather than their virtue alone. In both cases, Mary used Petrarch's work to comment on how her own society viewed women.

Mary used Petrarch's work to comment on Elizbeth's wit combined with her virtue as well. Petrarch wrote:

> *Chi uedra mai in donna atto perfetto?*

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[71] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo I', sig. xi^{v}.
[72] M. Sidney, 'The Triumph of Death Translated out of Italian by the Countesse of Pembrooke', in ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 287^{v}. Mary may have been familiar with Henry Parker, Lord Morley's translation of the *Trionfi* published in 1554, in which 'chaste bed' was also omitted. See Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 269.

Chia udira'l parlar di ſaper pieno,
E'l canto pien d'angelico diletto?[73]

This translates to:
Who will ever [again] see a perfect act in a woman?
Who will hear the speech full of knowledge,
and the song full of angelic delight?[74]

Mary wrote:
Never againe such grace shall blesse our sight:
Never lyke witt shall we from woman heare.[75]

Mary's adaptation of Petrarch's lament transformed his idealised praise of Laura into a reflection on the intellectual and moral authority of women, resonating with contemporary perceptions of Elizabeth. By condensing Petrarch's rhetorical questions into declarative statements, Mary replaced lament with reverence and certitude. Her 'Never againe such grace shall blesse our sight' affirms the uniqueness of Elizabeth's virtue, while 'Never lyke witt shall we from woman heare' elevates Elizabeth's intellect as a rare and divine gift. These modifications shift the focus from private adoration to public celebration, echoing Elizabethan discourses that presented the Queen as the embodiment of wisdom, chastity, and grace.

Mary also highlighted Elizabeth's virginity and purity by making minor adjustments to some other passages. For example, in Chapter One Petrarch wrote:

E ra la lor uittorioſa inſegna
In campo uerde un candido armellino;
Ch'oro fino, et topati al collo tegna[76]

[73] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo I', sig. Xi$^{v.}$
[74] Translation is mine.
[75] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 287^{v}.
[76] 'Topati' is 'topazi', meaning 'topazes' in modern Italian. Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo I', sig. uvii^{r}.

This translates to:
It was their victorious sign
On a green field a white ermine;
What fine gold and topazes around the neck[77]

Mary wrote:
Borne in a greene field, a snowie Ermiline
Colored with topaces, sett in fine golde
Was this faire companies unfoyled signe.[78]

The passage means that in a battle, the sight of a white ermine adorned with fine jewels and gold was the sign of victory. Mary's version is roughly the same. The ermine is a metaphor for Elizabeth because ermine fur was a symbol of royalty. The topaz and gold also contribute to the image of luxury and monarchy. Mary's use of 'born in a green field' rather than the ermine simply being seen on a green field alludes to Elizabeth's natural predisposition to purity and virtue. She was born into it, according to Mary's version. Rather than using 'victorious' to describe the result of seeing the ermine, Mary chose to use 'unfoyled', which again alludes to Elizabeth's virginity.[79] Mary's version makes it seem like Elizabeth's purity was the reason for her success as a ruler.

Mary also discussed 'greenness' in relation to Elizabeth's virtue in a passage from Chapter Two. Petrarch's passage reads:

Et quand'io fui nel mio piu bello ſtato,
Nel'eta mia piu uerde, a te piu cara;
Ch'a dir, et a penſar a molti ha dato;[80]

This translates to:
And when I was in my most beautiful state,

[77] Translation is mine.
[78] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 286[r].
[79] Mary's translation clearly reads 'unfoyled', but she could have meant 'unsoiled', which would make more sense.
[80] Petrarch, 'Del triompho della morte capitolo II', sig. xiii[r].

In my greenest age, dearest to you
Who can say, and to think of many she gave[81]

Mary wrote:
And sure, when I, was in my fairest state,
My years most greene, my self to thee most deare,
Whence manie much did think, and much debate[82]

Petrarch's original said that many people thought of Laura when she was younger and perhaps naive or innocent, which is implied by 'green', and beautiful. While she may have stirred thoughts of the meaning of virtue within people, Petrarch did not say that Laura or her virtue were the subject of debate. Mary added that Laura was the subject of 'much debate' when she was younger, again using intentional language to liken Laura and perceptions of her to the experiences of Queen Elizabeth. Once again, she drew on Petrarch to analyse and critique contemporary political discourse, a skill cultivated through her humanistic and classical education.

Another example of Mary using Petrarch's text to discuss Elizabeth's virtue can be seen when Petrarch wrote:

Non con altr' arme, che co'l cor pudico,
Et d'un bel uifo, et di penſieri ſchivi;
D'un parlar ſaggio, et d'honeſtate amico.[83]

This translates to:
With no other weapons than a modest heart,
And a beautiful voice, and reserved thoughts;
With wise speech, and honest friendship.

[81] This probably means something closer to 'thoughts she gave to many', or that Laura aroused many thoughts in other people. Translation is my own.
[82] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 288[r].
[83] Petrarch, 'Del triompho della morte capitolo I', sig. Uvii.[r].

Mary wrote:

And foyl'd him, not with sword, with speare or bone.
But with chaste heart, faire visage, upright thought,
Wise speache.[84]

Mary's subtle revisions to Petrarch's lines reorient the poem's moral and political implications within the context of Elizabethan England. By replacing Petrarch's 'modest heart' with 'chaste heart' and omitting references to 'honest friendship', Mary amplified the virtues most prized in representations of Queen Elizabeth. Chastity becomes not only a moral attribute but also a symbol of sovereign integrity, aligning the female subject with the rhetoric of the Virgin Queen. Mary's 'foyl'd him' further introduces a tone of agency, suggesting active moral triumph rather than passive virtue. Through these nuanced alterations, Mary transformed Petrarch's devotional love poetry into a vehicle for reflecting contemporary debates about female power and virtue. Her adaptation reframed Laura's idealised restraint as an emblem of Elizabeth's political authority, merging humanist poetics with the gendered and ideological concerns of late sixteenth-century England.

Mary continuously used Petrarch's work to comment on Elizabeth's power and authority. Petrarch wrote:

Stelle chiare pareano in mezzo un sole;
Che tutte ornava, et non togliea lor viſta;
Di roſe incoronate, et di viole:[85]

This translates to:

Bright stars appeared in the middle of a sun;
Which adorned everything, and did not take away their sight;
Crowned with roses and violets:[86]

[84] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 286[r].
[85] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo I', sigs. Uvii[r-v].
[86] Translation is mine.

Mary wrote:

Cleave starr's they send, which did a Sunne unclose
Who hyding none, yett all did beautifie
With Coronets deckt with violet and rose:[87]

Mary's reworking of Petrarch's imagery transformed his vision of harmonious celestial beauty into a distinctly Elizabethan expression of divine illumination and regal authority. Her depiction of stars that 'send' and 'unclose' the sun suggests revelation and active enlightenment, shifting Petrarch's passive admiration into an image of radiant power. Her 'Coronets deckt with violet and rose' introduces distinctly regal symbolism, invoking both sovereignty and virtue. These subtle yet deliberate shifts reframe Petrarch's celestial metaphors to echo Elizabeth's iconography as the Virgin Queen, whose chastity and wisdom were central to her political identity.

Mary also made some slight changes to highlight the connection between whiteness and purity associated with Elizabeth. At the end of Chapter One, Petrarch wrote:

Pallida no; ma piu che neue bianca,
Che ſenza uento in un bel colle fiocchi;
Parea poſar, come perſona ſtanca.
Quaſi un dolce dormir ne ſuoi begliocchi
Eſſendo'l ſpirito gia da lei diuiſo
Era quel; che morir chiaman gli ſciocchi.
Morte bella parea nel ſuo bel uiſo.[88]

This translates to:

Pale no; but more than white snow,
That without wind on a beautiful hill flakes;
He seemed to pose, like a tired person.
Almost a sweet sleep in his beautiful eyes

[87] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 286^{r}.
[88] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo I', sigs. xi^{v}-xii^{r}.

Since the spirit is already divided from her
It was that; which fools call dying.
Death seemed beautiful in his beautiful face.[89]

Mary wrote:
Pale? no, but whitelie; and more whitelie pure,
Than snowe on wyndless hill, that flaking falles:
As one whom labor did not rest to allure.
And when that heavanlie guest those mortall walles
Had leaft; it nought but sweetlie sleeping was
In hir faire eyes: what follie dying calles
Death faire did seem to be in hir faire face.[90]

Petrarch's reference to a dying body losing its colour is quite simple, yet Mary emphasised the whiteness of the body more than he did. She also connected the whiteness of the snow to purity, which Petrarch's original did not mention, to highlight Elizabeth's laudable purity and virtue. Her change from 'the spirit is already divided from her' to 'that heavenly guest those moral walls had left' emphasises the idea of the divine right of kings and the monarch's two bodies.[91] Elizabeth ruled, and was able to refuse marriage, on the principal that inside of her physical, mortal body existed the immortal spirit of the monarch created by God. Mary's change in her version here is clearly a reference to this idea. Death for Elizabeth would not be a true death because her legacy would live on forever.

Mary also commented on Elizabethan conceptions of virtue more broadly. Petrarch wrote:

Ma'l tempo è breve, et noſtra voglia è lunga:
Pero t' aviſa; e'l tuo dir ſtringi et frena,

[89] Translation is mine.
[90] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 288^{v}.
[91] For more on how Elizabeth I employed the ideas of the divine right of kings and the monarch's body politic, see Richards, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 41, 46. For more foundational works on these ideas in general, see E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton, NJ, 1957); M. Axton, *The Queen's Two Bodies: Drama and the Elizabethan Succession* (London, 1977).

Anzi che'l giorno gia vicin n'aggiunga.[92]

This translates to:
But time is short, and our desire is long
But I tell you; tighten and restrain your words
In fact the day is already approaching.[93]

Mary wrote:
Short is our time to live, and long our will:
Then lett with heede, thy deedes, and speaches goe.
Eve that approaching tevme his course fullfill.[94]

Mary's slight alterations here reflect Elizabethan ideals of restraint and virtue. By rephrasing the call to 'restrain your words' as an appeal to proceed cautiously with 'deeds and speeches', she broadened the focus to include measured action. Her phrasing of 'short is our time to live' introduces a collective awareness of mortality, replacing Petrarch's introspection with a reflection on human duty. These subtle yet deliberate shifts align the poem with contemporary portrayals of Elizabeth, whose authority was strengthened by public perception of her wisdom, moral self-control, and eloquent restraint. Through these changes, Mary transformed Petrarch's private meditation on time into a distinctly Elizabethan statement of morality and virtuous governance.

Mary also made changes to Petrarch's original to discuss the grief of loved ones left behind after death in ways that were more personal to her. For example, in the second chapter Petrarch wrote:

O miſero colui; ch'e giorni conta,
Et pargli l'un mill'anni, e'n darno[95] *vive,*
Et ſeco in terra mai non ſi raffronta;[96]

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[92] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo II', sig. Xii.v.
[93] Translation is mine.
[94] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 287^{v}.
[95] 'e'n darno' has been translated to 'invano' meaning 'in vain'.
[96] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo II', sig. xiii^{r}.

This translates to:
Oh miserable one; [who] counts days
And he speaks to him [her, meaning Laura] for a thousand years, he lives in vain,
And it never compares to [being] with him [again, her] on earth[97]

Mary wrote:
Oh hapless he; who counting times and days
Think eache a thousand years, and lives in vayne
No more to meet hir while on earth he stays.[98]

Mary made three important changes in her adaptation of this passage. Her use of 'hapless' instead of 'miserable' tied in more functionally with the later use of the description of the griever's efforts to feel as close to his loved one as he did while she was still alive as 'in vayne'. Secondly, she added that the griever thinks, or feels, like each day is a thousand years, rather than literally translating the passage as the griever speaks for a thousand years, which was meant to be taken metaphorically. This intensified the depth of longing the griever feels. Finally, Petrarch's passage meant that the feeling of speaking to a loved one who has died never compared with speaking to them while they were still alive. This certainly evoked feelings of pain and loss, but Mary's inclusion of the painstaking injustice of the bereaved having to remain on earth without their loved one evoked even deeper feelings of loneliness and loss brought by grief. Petrarch's version implied that some satisfaction can still be felt by speaking to a lost loved one, but Mary's version did not. Petrarch's original message essentially remained the same, but Mary's word changes feel specific and intentional. These changes demonstrated how Mary perceived her

[97] Translation is mine.
[98] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 288[r].

own grief over the loss of her family. She used Petrarch's text to process her grief, and through adapting his work she committed her feelings to paper and communicated them to the world.

Finally, in a passage from the conclusion of Chapter Two, Petrarch wrote:

In tutte le altre coſe aſſai beata,
In un ſola a me ſteſſa diſpiacqui;
Che'n troppo humil terren mi trouai nata.
Duolmi anchor ueramente, ch'io non nacqui
Almen piu preſſo al tuo fiorito nido:
Ma aſſai fu bel paeſe, ond'io ti piacqui:[99]

This translates to:
In all other things very blessed,
In one thing I displeased myself;
I found myself born into a world [or land] too humble.
I still truly regret that I was not born
At least closer to your flowery nest
But it was a very beautiful country, [so] you liked me:[100]

Mary wrote:
In all things fullie blest, and pleased well,
Onelie in this I did my-self displease;
Borne in too-base a toune for me to dwell:
And much I grieved, that for thy greater ease,
At leaste, it stood not neere thy flowerie nest,
Els farre-enough, from whence I did thee please.[101]

This passage addresses Laura's being born into circumstances which she perceived as humble, including her land or country, which would have been France. The change from the word from 'land'

[99] Petrarch, 'triompho della morte capitolo II', sigs. xiv^{v}-xv^{r}.
[100] Translation is mine.
[101] ITL, Petyt MS. 538.43, fol. 289^{r}.

(meaning country) to 'toune' (town) suggests that she knew this work would be considered as a commentary on contemporary England under Elizabeth and that she did not wish to insult the Queen. The use of 'town' also limited the perceived restricted circumstances to Laura's more immediate, personal vicinity, much like the limitations Mary personally experienced as a woman author. Replacing 'humble' with 'too-base' highlighted the inequity between her state and the state of the man who is grieving her. In the original text, Laura was the departed discussing leaving Petrarch behind on earth, but in Mary's version she seemed to be commenting on her own lower status in society compared to her deceased brother. In Petrarch's original, Laura wished she simply could have been physically closer to him, but Mary added that she wished this at the very least for his greater convenience and pleasure. This could have been Mary expressing that she wished she had spent more time with her brother while he was alive, but also that she wished they had been more equal in station for his benefit as well as her own. Here Mary used Petrarch's text to draw a parallel between Laura's discussion of the humble physical circumstances of her birth and the inequity of her own place and power in society compared to her brother Philip's. She used an Italian text to express her grief and comment on the place of women in her society, when she could have used any number of English texts. Petrarch was significant in England for his poetic style and sonnets, which became the model for English poetry established by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard and later adapted by Shakespeare.[102] Beyond style, Petrarch's themes and ideas were relevant to English audiences and frequently translated and adapted for an English context.[103] Mary, like her male

[102] S. Guy-Bray, 'Petrarch, Wyatt, and Surrey: Sonnets, Teleology, and Sexuality', *Textual Practice*, 33/8 (2019), p. 1300. A. D. Cousins, 'Refiguring the Donna Angelica and Rewriting Petrarch in Shakespeare's Sonnets', *English Studies*, 9/3 (2018), p. 255.
[103] See J. Glaser, 'Wyatt, Petrarch, and the Uses of Mistranslation', *College Literature*, 11/3 (1984), pp. 214-22; A. Petrina, 'The Humanist Petrarch in Medieval and Early Modern England', *Journal of Anglo-Italian Studies*, 12 (2013), pp. 45-62; D. Sokolov, 'Love under Law: Rewriting Petrarch's Canzone 360 in Early Modern England', *Philological Quarterly*, 96/4, (2017), pp. 425-51.

contemporaries, also drew on Petrarch's style and ideas, and used them to intellectualise political events and gender dynamics of her time.

Mary Sidney's 'A Dialogue between two shepheards': a result of her classical education

By 1599, more than a decade after the death of her brother and the beginning of her writing career, Mary's children were entering adulthood. Her ageing husband Henry was in poor health. Mary was concerned that her eldest son and heir to the Pembroke estate, William, would not reach the age of twenty-one before his father died, and that Mary and her children would be left at the mercy of the Court of Wards.[104] In preparation, Mary wrote a number of works praising Queen Elizabeth, seeking her favour so that her son would be granted a position at court.[105] One of these works was an original poem titled 'A Dialogue between two shepheards, *Thenot* and *Piers*, in praise of *Astrea*'. It was written sometime around 1599 when Queen Elizabeth planned to visit Mary's home, Wilton House.[106] The visit never happened, but the poem survives in a collection of poetry published by Francis Davison in 1602 titled *A poetical rapsody*.[107] Mary was given full credit, both in the title of the poem written by Davison and in her signature at the end.

The poem in tail rhyme form is a debate about the Greek goddess Astrea between a shepherd named Thenot, who exuberantly praises Astrea for her wisdom, virtue, and goodness, and a shepherd named Piers, who is doubtful of Thenot's views of her. Piers was a reference to the title character from William Langland's fourteenth-century poem *Piers Plowman*, who was typically invoked for satirical

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[104] Which she was right to do since Henry ended up dying only a few months before William's twenty-first birthday. Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 18.
[105] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 81.
[106] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 81. For scholarly debate on when the poem was written, see p. 82.
[107] M. Sidney, 'Dialogue betweene two shepheards, Thenot and Piers', in F. Davison (ed.), *A poetical rapsody containing, diuerse sonnets, odes, elegies, madrigalls, and other poesies, both in rime, and measured verse* (London, 1602), sigs. B5^{v}-B6^{v}.

commentary on corruption within the Church.[108] The goddess Astrea was meant to symbolise Queen Elizabeth, and the conversation between the two shepherds was meant to demonstrate the range of views her subjects held of her throughout her reign.[109] Elizabeth was often likened to Astrea by Elizabethan poets, who compared Astrea's return of spring to Elizabeth ushering in the Golden Age of England.[110] Queen Elizabeth was reaching the end of her life when Mary wrote this, so Mary's reviewing and glorifying the changes that had occurred in England throughout her reign makes sense.

Rather than employing classical rhetorical strategies, like Margaret Roper and Anne Bacon, this poem is a more direct example how figures and ideas from the classical era informed Mary's thinking, and how she used them to insert herself into the literary discussion of the success of the reign of Queen Elizabeth and Protestant reform. Mary was exposed to these classical concepts via her classical education, which she received as part of the Italian classical inheritance in England. Astrea is the central figure of perfection and power in this poem. All matters are weighed against her example, as a goddess and important ancient figure. The Greek astronomer Aratus (c. 315-240 BC) first connected Astrea to virginity and justice, and she became the constellation Virgo, who rises in August according to astrology.[111] Numerous Elizabethan authors linked the Queen to Astrea, Virgo, and the month of August.[112] August 1599 also happened to be when the Queen was supposed to be visiting Mary at Wilton House.[113] Mary's decision to portray Elizabeth as a goddess from antiquity instead of a biblical woman or fictional European queen is further evidence of how Mary used classical ideas to discuss contemporary politics.

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[108] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 84. For more on *Piers Plowman* and its significance and adaptations, see A. Cole and A. Galloway, *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman* (Cambridge, 2014).
[109] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 82.
[110] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 83.
[111] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 82.
[112] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 82-3.
[113] M. G. Brennan, 'The Queen's Proposed Visit to Wilton House in 1599 and the 'Sidney Psalms'', *Sidney Journal*, 20/1 (2002), p. 27.

The poem opens with Thenot's prayer to the goddess Astraea, whom Mary presented as a symbolic representation of Queen Elizabeth.[114] By invoking Astraea, Mary immediately situated her work within a classical framework, using mythological imagery to elevate Elizabeth's moral and intellectual stature. The association of the Queen with Astraea, the goddess of justice and purity, reflects not only the reverence shown to Elizabeth by contemporary writers but also Mary's deep engagement with humanist ideals derived from classical and Italian sources. In aligning Elizabeth with a figure emblematic of divine virtue, Mary employed the Italian humanist strategy of using classical figures to comment on contemporary rulers. This approach situates her within the broader intellectual movement that transmitted classical thought from Italy into England, where it was reshaped to serve national and religious purposes. Through this allusion, Mary demonstrated how classical forms and figures could be reinterpreted to celebrate Elizabeth's reign while affirming England's participation in the wider humanist inheritance of Europe.

Invoking another Greek deity, Thenot claims, 'she is so good, so faire, VVith all the earth she may compare, Nor Momus selfe denying'.[115] Momus, the Greek god of censure, mockery, and blame, was often invoked in Elizabethan literature to characterise those inclined toward excessive criticism or satire.[116] By referring to Momus, Mary employed a classical figure to emphasise that even the most fault-finding observer could find no imperfection in Queen Elizabeth. This allusion not only exalts Elizabeth's moral and political virtues but also demonstrates Mary's command of classical symbolism and her ability to adapt ancient models for contemporary praise. The invocation of Momus reflects the influence of Italian humanism, through which classical mythology was revived as a rhetorical means

[114] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bv^{r}.
[115] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.
[116] For more on Momus in Elizabethan culture, see J. Navitsky, 'Epithet and Esteem: The Reception of Momus in Early Modern English Culture', *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 27/4 (2020), pp. 531-53.

of expressing political and ethical ideals. Through her classical references, Mary situates Elizabeth within a lineage of virtuous rulers celebrated in antiquity, thereby affirming England's engagement with the Italian-mediated classical inheritance.

Then the debate about her nature begins with the popular topic of Elizabeth's wisdom and virtue. Thenot said 'Astrea sees with Wisedom's sight, Astrea works by Vertue's might, and jointly both do stay in her', to which Piers replied, 'Nay take from them, her hand, her minde, The one is lame, the other blinde.'[117] Thenot's praising of Astrea's wisdom and virtue is an obvious cover for Mary's praising of those qualities in Elizabeth. By invoking Astrea, Mary used classical mythology to frame Elizabeth within a tradition of virtuous, divinely guided rulers celebrated in humanist thought, reflecting the Italian classical inheritance in England. Piers's assertions, on the other hand, alluded to the more negative opinions about Elizabeth held by her subjects. Arguing that her hand is lame referred to people who believed Elizabeth was not a strong enough military leader. Aside from the belief that as a woman she was not fit to rule, one example of an area in which some doubted her skill and strength as a military leader was in foreign relations with Spain. Piers's second accusation that Astrea's 'minde' is 'blinde' referred to the widely held belief that women were not intelligent, especially in comparison to men. Elizabeth I was the most highly educated woman of her time, and she was very intellectually accomplished.[118] This was a baseless criticism that would always follow Elizabeth as a woman, and Mary was simply highlighting that this idea existed in the discourse on Elizabeth.

The second topic debated is Elizabeth's good nature. Thenot said, 'Soone as ASTREA shewes her face, Strait euery ill auoides the place, And euery good aboundeth', to which Piers replied, 'Nay long before her face doth showe, The last doth come, the first doth goe,

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[117] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.
[118] On the intellectual achievements of Elizabeth I, see L. Shenk, *Learned Queen: The Image of Elizabeth I in Politics and Poetry* (New York, 2010); J. Mueller and J. Scodel (eds.), *Elizabeth I: Translations, 1544-1589* (Chicago, IL, 2009).

How lowde this lie resoundeth!'[119] Throughout her reign, there were many who opposed Elizabeth, questioning her goodness and fitness to rule. Some Catholics, for example, wanted to replace her with Mary Queen of Scots and planned attacks against her, like the Ridolfi Plot in 1571, the Throckmorton Plot in 1583, and the Babington Plot in 1586. Even some Protestants increasingly opposed her rule as she refused to marry and produce an heir.[120] For instance, after losing her favour, Robert Devereaux, Earl of Essex, and one of Elizabeth's favourites, plotted to overthrow her in 1601, for which he was executed.[121] This is to say nothing of foreign enemies like King Philip II of Spain, who supported all of the aforementioned plots to replace Elizabeth with Mary Queen of Scots.[122] By using the classical figure of Astrea to embody Elizabeth's virtue and divine justice, Mary employed the humanist strategy of drawing on the moral and political symbolism of ancient literature. By plotting against her, Elizabeth's foes called her goodness and competency as queen into question, and here Mary used the debate of Astrea's good nature to discuss this.

When Mary then used Thenot to describe Elizabeth as England's 'chiefest wealth' and 'treasure', she evoked the material and imperial wealth of the Age of Exploration, a period in which England's growing global ventures brought new resources, trade routes, and a sense of national ascendancy.[123] By aligning Elizabeth with the notion of 'treasure', Mary intertwined the Queen's moral authority with the expanding material fortunes of her realm, suggesting that both spiritual and worldly prosperity flow from her governance. This association recalls the classical ideal of the ruler as the embodiment of a nation's moral and civic riches, an idea often revived by and disseminated through humanism. Mary's language reflects how Italian humanism framed political virtue through classical imagery while simultaneously

[119] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.
[120] For more on this, see A. McLaren, 'The Quest for a King: Gender, Marriage, and Succession in Elizabethan England', *Journal of British Studies*, 41/3 (2002), pp. 263-4; Richards, *Elizabeth I*, pp. 111-4.
[121] P. E. Hammer, 'Devereux, Robert, second earl of Essex', *ODNB*.
[122] C. Martin, G. Parker, *The Spanish Armada* (New York, 1988), pp. 88, 99.
[123] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.

accommodating contemporary concerns like commerce, discovery, and empire. Her poetic elevation of Elizabeth situated the Queen at the intersection of classical virtue and modern expansion, presenting her as both the guardian of England's moral integrity and the symbolic source of its wealth during a transformative age of exploration.

To this claim of Astrea as 'wealth' and 'treasure', Piers replied, 'VVhere chiefest are, there others be', acknowledging that other nations may have possessed greater material wealth or have achieved more through exploration.[124] Here Mary demonstrated her awareness of competing discourses about England's global position while employing classical allusion as a rhetorical shield to maintain decorum and avoid direct political critique. The reference to mythic and symbolic language allowed her to navigate sensitive commentary with sophistication, aligning her method with Italian humanist strategies that balanced moral inquiry and political prudence. By using classical figures and ideals to frame Elizabeth's reign within a discourse of virtue rather than conquest, Mary contributed to the adaptation of continental humanist thought in England. Her nuanced engagement with both praise and critique exemplifies how classical ideas and Italianate humanism shaped English literary expressions of monarchy, power, and national identity.

Mary also highlighted opinions regarding Elizabeth's virginity, which was spoken about in much more cloaked language than were her virtue, wisdom, and goodness. Thenot said, 'ASTREA rightly terme I may, A manly Palme, a Maiden Bay, Her verdure neuer dying.'[125] She is described as a fresh, green maiden who is also masculine due to how she ruled and because of her mental resolve to remain chaste for so long, which as seen in Chapter Two was viewed as a masculine trait. Unmarried, Elizabeth had symbolically vowed chastity, and especially

[124] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.
[125] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{r}.

in the first decades of her reign this promoted her to the status of the Virgin Mary in many eyes.[126]

To Thenot, Piers replied, 'Palme oft is crooked, Bay is lowe, Shee still vpright, still high doth growe, Good Thenot leaue thy lying.'[127] Here Mary was referring to the doubts about Elizabeth's virginity. During the sixteenth century, Elizabeth was rumoured to be extremely lustful.[128] Some of these rumours were baseless, and simply started to deligitimise her, but some of them were more credible. One such example is her relationship with Robert Dudley, with whom people believed she had even given birth to illegitimate children.[129] Some of these rumours were seen as ridiculous, but others, like that regarding Dudley, stayed with Elizabeth throughout her reign and after. People who could not understand her desire to be married to England rather than a man even hypothesised that there was something mentally or physically wrong with her, like infertility or a menstrual blockage, which prevented her from having sexual intercourse and could have been the reason she never wanted to marry.[130] Mary used flowery metaphorical language about Astrea to comment on this discreetly. Once again, she used the classical figure of Astrea to characterise Elizabeth's chastity and steadfastness, further contributing to the humanist tradition of using classical examples to describe the present.

Mary also highlighted comparisons of Elizabeth to spring and the sun, referencing the Golden Age she ushered in. Thenot said, 'ASTREA may be iustly sayd, A field in flowry Roabe arrayd, In Season freshly springing.'[131] Again, Mary referred to the image of

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[126] J. N. King, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations of the Virgin Queen', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 43/1 (1990), pp. 30-1.
[127] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi[r].
[128] Elizabeth's close relationships with male courtiers fuelled rumours of secret affairs, leading some critics to depict her as a lustful or overly passionate woman despite the lack of evidence. Catholic opponents, especially after the 1580s, used these rumours to undermine her legitimacy, portraying her either as an unnatural, unfeminine virgin or as a hypocritical ruler hiding illicit desires. K. L. Peterson, 'Elizabeth I's Virginity and the Body of Evidence: Jonson's Notorious Crux', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 68/3 (2015), p. 843.
[129] Peterson, 'Elizabeth I's Virginity', p. 843.
[130] Peterson, 'Elizabeth I's Virginity', p. 851.
[131] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi[v].

Elizabeth as fresh, flowering, and virginal, but also brought in the comparison of her reign to spring.[132] It was an active decision on the part of Elizabeth and her advisors that she be depicted as radiating eternal youth and beauty and that the eternal glory of England be symbolised by this radiance.[133] This also tied into the idea of Elizabeth's Golden Age. Thenot said, 'As heauenly light that guides the day, Right so doth thine each louely Ray, That from Astrea flyeth', comparing her to the golden, eternal sun.[134] For Mary and other Protestants, Elizabeth had created a reformed, Golden Age.[135] It was also considered a golden age for culture, in which poetry, literature, and music flourished. By using Astrea and imagery of the Golden Age, Mary drew upon classical mythology to frame Elizabeth's reign within a narrative of renewal, virtue, and divine order, a strategy grounded in humanist literary traditions.

To this, Piers replied, 'Nay, darknes oft that light enclowdes, Astreas beames no darknes shrowdes; How lowdly Thenot lyeth!'[136] This partially referred to the perspective of the Catholics, who were oppressed by Elizabeth's Protestant Church of England. There were also many in England who were discontented by the economy, which suffered due to war with Spain and Ireland and high food prices caused by many failed harvests.[137] Members of Parliament also often

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[132] King, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations', p. 59.
[133] King, 'Queen Elizabeth I: Representations', p. 43.
[134] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{v}.
[135] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, pp. 83-4. Elizabeth's 'Golden Age', promoted by the Queen and her advisors, blended Protestant ideals with loyalty to the monarchy. While fostering economic growth and the arts, it masked widespread poverty, inequality, and religious unrest, especially for non-elites and non-Protestants. For further discussion, see C. Haigh, *Elizabeth I* (London, 2003), pp. 12-3.
[136] Sidney, 'Dialogue', sig. Bvi^{r}.
[137] Moore, "The Cult of Gloriana', p. 62. The last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, often called her 'second reign', saw significant political and cultural shifts. The 1588 Spanish Armada and subsequent naval arms race, along with the costly Nine Years' War in Ireland, strained resources. Domestic instability grew, fuelled by the death of key advisors, political strife, and religious tensions, particularly following the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots. Catholic plots and Elizabeth's refusal to name a successor exacerbated uncertainty. Despite these challenges, England advanced in global exploration and saw a flourishing of the arts, especially drama, during this period. For further discussion, see J. Guy, 'The 1590s: the second reign of Elizabeth I?', in J. Guy (ed.), *The Reign of Elizabeth I: Court and Culture in the Last Decade* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 1-19.

disagreed with her over her lack of marriage, religion, and policies, like the introduction of royal monopolies.[138]

Mary used her knowledge of ancient figures to show that she understood the range of contemporary discussions and opinions of Queen Elizabeth, and to profess her own high opinion of the queen. As discussed in previous chapters, the practice of using classical figures and ideas to inform or support contemporary ideas emerged from late medieval Italy and spread throughout Europe. Mary's use of Astrea as an allegory for Elizabeth to comment on contemporary politics shows that she was an active participant in the intellectual trend that started in Italy and took hold in England. This work is more than a clever commentary on Elizabethan politics; it is an example of how Mary Sidney participated in the broader acceptance and promotion of Italian ideas in England.

Conclusion

Mary's efforts to acquire Queen Elizabeth's favour ended up being in vain. In 1599, her son William impregnated one of the Queen's Maids of Honour, Lady Mary Fitton.[139] He acknowledged the unborn child, who did not live past infancy, but refused to marry Lady Mary, and he was thrown into Fleet Prison and then banished to Wilton House for his disrespect.[140] When King James I came to power, William was eventually given a place at court, but Mary's relationship with him remained estranged.[141] When Mary died of smallpox in 1621, the estate was passed to her second son, Philip.[142] In her later years, she kept a house in London and was given land by the king to build Houghton House in Bedfordshire, where she welcomed friends, poets, and

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[138] Moore, "The Cult of Gloriana', p. 63. In the 1590s, Elizabeth granted monopolies on goods such as wine, soap, and coal, generating revenue for the crown. These monopolies incited public outrage, particularly among merchants and consumers, who saw them as exploitative, leading to tensions between Elizabeth and Parliament. For further discussion, see S. Adams, 'The Patronage of the Crown in Elizabethan Politics: The 1590s in Perspective', in Guy (ed.), *Reign of Elizabeth,* pp. 31-44.
[139] V. Stater, 'Herbert, William, third earl of Pembroke', *ODNB*.
[140] Stater, 'Herbert, William', *ODNB*.
[141] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 18.
[142] Hannay, 'Herbert, Mary', *ODNB*.

intellectuals as she had done at Wilton House.[143] She was rumoured to have taken up a romance with the physician Mathew Lister.[144] Though she was no longer writing and attended court less frequently than she had in her youth, she still remained a highly esteemed noblewoman. In 1619 she was one of the women selected to walk in Queen Anne's funeral procession.[145] King James visited Houghton House in July 1621, just two months before she died.[146] She was and remains remembered for her impressive works of translation and original poetry. While the manner in which she fit into early modern literary patterns has been examined by scholars for decades, Mary's life and works can also be considered as representative of how educated and elite sixteenth-century English women used a classical inheritance to contribute to the English acceptance and adoption of Italian ideas. Of the three case studies in this thesis, Mary's life and works can be examined as the most direct evidence that elite women were directly affected by the promotion of classical education, which emerged from late medieval Italy, in England. They also show that elite women, like Mary, were not only the beneficiaries of the influence of Italian ideas in England through education, but that they used their Italianate educations to contribute to intellectual discourses and literature. Thus, these areas and women's participation within them cannot be labelled as solely English in nature, but, to a degree, Italian as well.

[143] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 20.
[144] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 20. John Aubrey even said they were married, which shows that her relationship with Lister was remembered well after her death. Aubrey, 'Brief Lives', p. 312.
[145] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 20.
[146] Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, *Collected Works, Volume I*, p. 20.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored how English women in the sixteenth century benefitted from or participated in the spread and adoption of Italian ideas in England. It has established that humanism and the classical education paradigm that developed from it were two of the most important ideas adopted in England having been spearheaded in Florence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An example of this is the expression of ideas about women based on classical examples, which gained momentum in Italian texts in the fourteenth century and continued in English texts in the sixteenth. This study has demonstrated that classical education—rooted in the Italian revival of the *studia humanitatis*—was a powerful instrument through which some elite women engaged in political discourse, advanced religious reform, and produced literature that commanded intellectual respect and cultural authority. Through her mastery of Latin and classical poetry, philosophy, and rhetoric, Margaret Roper became one of the most lauded women in early sixteenth-century England as well as her father's chosen representative while he was imprisoned in the 1530s. The connection between Italian ideas and Margaret's life lies in her classical education, and is relevant, but rather indirect. As humanism became more prominent in England, and coincidentally more women began receiving classical education, evidence of the effect of Italian ideas on women's lives becomes more direct and transitioned from male-led to increasingly female-led. Anne Bacon used her classical education to promote religious reform by translating the sermons of the Italian Protestant preacher Bernardino Ochino and Bishop John Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* into English. Anne's translation of Jewel became one of the most widely read books in the reformed Church of England even into the seventeenth century and was one of the Crown's most powerful tools for making Protestantism accessible to the masses.[1] Mary Sidney also used her classical education to

[1] D. Spring, *Mistress of Gorhambury: Lady Anne Bacon, Tudor Courtier and Scholar* (St Albans and Hertfordshire, 2021), p. 23.

translate Italian, opting for the *Trionfi* by Petrarch, who is recognised as the father of humanism and a pillar of Italian Renaissance intellectualism.[2] Mary also used her understanding of classical figures and history to comment on contemporary political discourses regarding Queen Elizabeth I. Though they were not able to travel and engage with Italian culture in the same ways as their male counterparts, these women serve as examples of Italianate Englishwoman of the sixteenth century.

Chapter One explored the substantial presence of Italians in England and the various ways in which English individuals encountered Italian ideas and culture. Some Englishmen travelled to Italy, often to pursue the *studia humanitatis* at Italian universities, while others immersed themselves more deeply in Italian culture, returning as so-called Italianate Englishmen. Even those who did not journey abroad could engage with Italian ideas, language, and culture through educational institutions and literary works within England. The adoption of the classical education model was the primary channel through which Italian intellectual traditions contributed to English society.

Chapter Two examined how this classical inheritance influenced English discourses on women through a comparative analysis of six Italian and six English works authored by men. The use of classical female figures and narratives to prescribe behaviour for contemporary women—a practice that gained prominence among Italian writers in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—was adopted and adapted by English authors in the sixteenth century. This chapter demonstrated how male writers employed humanist ideals to influence and regulate women's lives. Chapters Three, Four, and Five shifted focus to elite women, revealing how some of them engaged with humanism to advance their own political, religious, and intellectual interests, becoming Italianate Englishwomen in their own right.

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[2] A. A. MacDonald, Z. R. W. M. von Martels, and J. Veenstra, *Christian Humanism: Essays in Honour of Arjo Vanderjagt* (Leiden, 2009), p. 3.

By examining how humanism influenced early modern women's lives, historians can move beyond the limitations of local and temporal contexts. This is a powerful tool for understanding the experiences of women. Humanism provided these women with the intellectual resources to engage with broader cultural movements, participate in the discourses of their time, and contribute to the shifting attitudes toward women's education and roles in society. While their personal circumstances, social positions, and individual actions varied, the shared humanistic framework offers a lens through which historians can better understand the broader patterns of their lives. This approach enables a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how women were both empowered and constrained by the intellectual currents of the time. The transnational nature of humanism meant that these women could draw from a collective body of knowledge, yet they were also subject to the limitations of their societies. By acknowledging both the empowering and constraining forces at play, historians gain a richer and more detailed view of women's roles in history.

Examining Italian humanist influences on women's education in sixteenth-century England also offers another important implication for historical understanding. Whether they were aware of the debt they owed to late medieval Italian humanists or not, these women became highly respected in their society because of how they put their classical education to use. When choosing to look at the geographical origin of the education these women received, the implication is that their success was not only a product of their immediate English environment, but more indirectly of an Italian influence as well. This is crucial because it allows historians to understand these women, who have been studied thoroughly by scholars, in a new, more expansive light. It enables historians to see that both men and women were affected by the acceptance and promotion of Italian ideas in England. More broadly, when piecing together the puzzle of how European countries and peoples interacted with each other during the early modern period, it gives women a place in that. The fact that Margaret

Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney were educated in the *studia humanitatis* is not new information presented by this thesis. This thesis considers how their educations were informed by Italian ideas and how this made these women part of broader Anglo-Italian cultural collaboration, and in doing so introduces a new framework within which to consider these women, and hopefully many other early modern women in the future. It is crucial that the exploration of women's lives and contributions to their society does not stop once it appears that all of the facts have been established. Historians must find new lenses through which to examine them, which this thesis has accomplished.

This, of course, is not a simple task. One of the main limitations of a study like this is that many of the connections between English and Italian intellectual traditions can only be labelled as 'indirect'. The tracing of ideas across time and space is inherently difficult, especially when dealing with early modern women whose intellectual contributions were often overlooked or under-documented. Unlike male scholars who frequently cited their influences, women writers and translators might not have explicitly stated where their inspiration came from, making it challenging to determine the extent of Italian influence on their work. Clearly, women like Anne Bacon and Mary Sidney, who translated the works of Italian authors, were influenced by or at least interested in Italian thought. However, without explicit primary sources confirming their engagement with specific Italian texts, the degree to which these women were conscious of their intellectual inheritance remains uncertain. Were they aware that the educational frameworks they encountered were informed by Renaissance humanist ideas originating in Italy centuries before they were born? Did they recognise the Italian roots of the philosophies and literary forms they engaged with? These questions are difficult to answer definitively.

The lack of direct acknowledgment does not diminish the reality or importance of these connections. Intellectual and cultural exchanges often take place subtly, through translated works, shared

educational traditions, and the transmission of ideas across generations. Just because these women may not have explicitly stated their influences does not mean those influences were insignificant. Being able to discern and assess the significance of connections that may initially appear tenuous is crucial. Examining the political, religious, and personal contexts in which these women lived and worked can help scholars uncover deeper links and reconstruct a more complete picture of their intellectual world.

Another significant limitation for a study like this is the necessity of multilingual proficiency. Scholarship on connections between Italy and England during the early modern period remains limited, not because such connections do not exist, but because scholars investigating them must navigate multiple linguistic and historical challenges. Researchers trained primarily in English history must also be fluent in Italian to engage with primary sources, correspondence, literary works, and official documents from the period. Proficiency in Latin is often required, as many texts from this era—particularly scholarly, religious, and diplomatic writings—were composed in Latin rather than the vernacular. Without a strong command of these languages, scholars may struggle to access or fully interpret key materials. Beyond language skills, expertise in palaeography is also essential. Many historical documents are written in challenging scripts requiring specialised training to decipher them accurately. The ability to read and interpret medieval and early modern manuscripts is crucial for uncovering new evidence and reassessing existing interpretations. Without this skill set, valuable sources may remain misunderstood or ignored.

Studies of transnational cultural exchange—whether focusing on women in England, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, or other regions—demand a unique combination of linguistic, historical, and analytical expertise. Researchers must be able to cross disciplinary boundaries, integrating knowledge from history, literature, art history, translation studies, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary approach, while rewarding, can also be a barrier to entry, potentially

explaining why studies of this nature remain relatively scarce. Encouraging collaboration among scholars with different linguistic and disciplinary backgrounds could help overcome these challenges and foster more comprehensive research on early modern women's roles in transnational cultural networks.

Nevertheless, studies that explore women's roles in early modern transnational cultural exchange are both valuable and necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of historical interactions between different societies. Women have often been overlooked in discussions of cultural exchange, despite their significant contributions as writers, artists, patrons, translators, and intermediaries. Examining their roles can provide a richer and more nuanced perspective on transnational networks, intellectual discourse, and artistic collaboration. Future research in this field should focus on uncovering the diverse ways in which women in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century England participated in Anglo-Italian cultural exchanges. This includes well-known and lesser-studied women whose contributions have been marginalised in historical records, like Bess of Hardwick, Lucy Hutchinson, Margaret Cavendish, and Mary Wortley Montagu. By broadening the scope of study, scholars can illuminate the hidden networks of correspondence, patronage, and intellectual engagement that contributed to cultural interactions between England and Italy.

Research should also investigate the role of women as patrons and collectors of Italian art, literature, and music. Many aristocratic and noblewomen supported the arts, commissioning works from Italian artists and fostering literary exchanges. Understanding their influence can shed light on how cultural tastes and artistic movements were shaped across borders. Similarly, exploring women's contributions as translators of Italian texts—whether literary, philosophical, or scientific—can reveal how knowledge was transmitted and adapted across linguistic and national boundaries. Another promising avenue of research involves examining women's participation in diplomatic and intellectual circles that facilitated Anglo-Italian connections. Some

women acted as cultural brokers, facilitating exchanges between English and Italian scholars, poets, and philosophers. Their involvement in salons, letter-writing networks, and political negotiations deserves further study, as these spaces were crucial for fostering intellectual and artistic dialogues. Scholars should also consider the ways in which women engaged with travel and mobility. While male travellers and Grand Tourists have been extensively studied, less attention has been paid to women who travelled to Italy for education, religious purposes, or artistic inspiration, like Alethea Talbot, Mary Wortley Montagu, and Elizabeth Montagu. Investigating their experiences can provide insight into gendered perspectives on travel, cultural adaptation, and the exchange of knowledge.

To explore these themes fully, interdisciplinary approaches that incorporate history, literature, art history, and gender studies will be essential. Future studies should also encourage collaboration among scholars with expertise in different languages, particularly those who can analyse primary sources in English and Italian. Archival research, digital humanities projects, and comparative analyses of texts will be particularly useful in expanding this field. Ultimately, by broadening the study of women's roles in transnational cultural exchange, researchers can contribute to a more inclusive and accurate historical narrative. Encouraging further scholarship in this area will help uncover the rich and often underappreciated contributions of women to early modern cultural history.

This thesis has explored the impact of Italian humanism on elite women in sixteenth-century England, specifically examining the ways in which English women like Margaret Roper, Anne Bacon, and Mary Sidney participated in the intellectual and cultural movements in England that had origins in Italy. Margaret, Anne, and Mary received formal education in Latin and classical literature, positioning them to participate more directly in the intellectual, political, and religious discourses of their time. It has shown that by using their classical educations, these women became influential figures in politics, religion, and literature, contributing significantly to the intellectual

climate of their time. This study also calls for further exploration of the cultural connections between England and Italy, while concluding that the influence of Italian humanist thought on the development of women's education in England was largely one-directional in nature.

This thesis also emphasises the importance of understanding these women within the context of humanism as a transnational intellectual movement. Humanism not only affected their education but also provided a framework through which they could exert influence within their patriarchal societies, even as they adhered to societal expectations of virtue and domestic roles. The transnational nature of humanism thus allowed these women to access a shared intellectual heritage, which enabled them to contribute meaningfully to their respective societies despite the limitations imposed by gender. This study also acknowledges the limitations inherent in tracing the influence of Italian humanism on these women, particularly given the indirect nature of these intellectual connections and the challenges of working with multilingual and historically complex primary sources. Despite these challenges, this thesis stresses the importance of exploring the subtle, often unacknowledged connections that shaped intellectual and cultural encounters between England and Italy, and the role of women in this process.

Finally, this thesis calls for further research into the contributions of women to early modern cultural transmission, particularly in the context of Anglo-Italian interactions. Future studies should focus on uncovering the diverse ways in which women engaged with Italian culture, including their roles as patrons, translators, and cultural brokers. This approach will contribute to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of early modern intellectual and cultural history, shedding light on the often-overlooked contributions of women to the transnational diffusion and adaptation of ideas.

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