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Catherine of Aragon in History and Drama:

Ribadeneyra's *Ecclesiastical History* and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*

Volha Kachava

Tutora: Dra. Ana Sáez-Hidalgo

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

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Volha Kachava

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Resumen

Catalina de Aragón, conocida como la primera de las seis esposas del rey Enrique VIII, quien se divorció de ella para poder casarse con Ana Bolena, encuentra diferentes avatares literarios según la agenda del autor. Este trabajo analiza y compara las representaciones de Catalina de Aragón realizadas por el jesuita español Pedro de Ribadeneyra y el dramaturgo inglés William Shakespeare con el fin de rastrear cómo los diferentes contextos sociopolíticos y religiosos de la escritura influyen en la imagen de la misma persona.

Palabras clave

Catalina de Aragón, Pedro de Ribadeneyra, William Shakespeare, *Historia Eclesiástica*, *Enrique VIII*, Edad Moderna, Ana Bolena

Abstract

Catherine of Aragon, widely known as the first of King Henry's six wives who divorced her to be able to marry Anne Boleyn, finds different literary avatars depending on the agenda of the author. This study analyzes and compares the portrayals of Catherine of Aragon made by Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra and English playwright William Shakespeare in order to trace how different socio-political and religious contexts of writing influence the image of the same person.

Keywords

Catherine of Aragon, Pedro de Ribadeneyra, William Shakespeare, *Ecclesiastical History*, *Henry VIII*, Early Modern Period, Anne Boleyn

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1. INTRODUCTION

Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) is one of the key figures in 16th-century English history that is, however, often overshadowed by her notorious second husband Henry VIII (1491-1547). A daughter of the Catholic Monarchs, she inherited from them her humanist education, religious zeal and pride. Her arrival in England for a dynastic marriage would change the history of the Western World forever. But prior to this, her nearly 24-year-long period of being Queen-consort would give her a public support as a virtuous and merciful queen.

As noted by Charlotte Bracchi, in literature “Perceptions of Katherine have changed over time with creators using her to bolster their own agendas” (20).¹ Indeed, for Catholic writers, she remained pious and noble woman of tragic fate, a victim of her husband and cruel circumstances. On the other hand, in Protestant discourses, her figure was mostly neglected, though not criticized openly. It is rather her legitimacy as a queen that was questioned, though not her moral qualities usually. As the 20th century “saw a blossoming interest in Catherine of Aragon” (Elston 32), numerous authors started to investigate different aspects of Catherine’s life with a research interest, comparing her to her contemporaries, tracing the role of Catherine’s marriages, queenship and diplomatic work for establishing Anglo-Spanish relations, as well as studying her literary avatar and its peculiarities in the works of different authors.

This Master’s dissertation is going to analyze the image of Catherine of Aragon as presented by Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra (1527-1611) in his *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* (1588) and compare it to Catherine on stage of William Shakespeare’s (1564-1616) *Henry VII (All is True)* (1613) with the help of comparative analysis and close reading. While research on Shakespeare’s portrayal of Catherine exists, it does not contrast it to Ribadeneyra’s strategies. I argue that the existence of such comparison would contribute to the understanding of the Anglo-Spanish complex relations in Early Modern Period in terms of history, literature and culture as it would explore the representation of the same historical figure through the lens of two authors of completely different cultural, political, literary backgrounds.

¹ This study will utilize a standard spelling of Catherine of Aragon’s name, while in the quotations it will appear in original

The dissertation is divided into the following chapters: introduction which presents the topic of research and its relevance; historical background which reviews major events connected to the topic and places the figures of Catherine of Aragon, Pedro de Ribadeneyra and William Shakespeare in the historical context. The section “Views on Catherine of Aragon” indicates the existing research on her so far, as well as early modern representations of the queen. The central chapter of the dissertation, the comparative analysis of Catherine of Aragon’s portrayals, explores and interprets Catherine’s representations in Ribadeneyra’s narration and Shakespeare’s play in four main roles: of Queen, wife, mother, and Catholic. Additionally, it includes a section on Catherine’s opposition to Anne Boleyn which provides another dimension of comparing and contrasting. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the research and presents its findings.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. The life of Catherine of Aragon

Catherine of Aragon (or Catalina, as she was christened in Spanish) was born on December 16, 1485, in Alcalá de Henares, Castile.² She was the youngest child of the Catholic Monarchs, King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452-1516) and Queen Isabella I of Castile (1451-1504) and her origins were deeply rooted in Catholic tradition, which shaped her worldview and determined many aspects of her future life.

Theresa Earenfight in her all-encompassing biography (2021) of Catherine immediately points out her significance: “Catherine was one of the great queens consort of England” (Earenfight 2). Catalina’s childhood, as the author notes, was immersed in the unique cultural and religious context of fifteenth-century Spain: “For Catherine, it was a memento of a childhood spent in a warmer climate eating figs and oranges and growing up in a society inhabited by Christians, Jews, and Muslims while witnessing the Inquisition and expulsion of Jews” (Earenfight 4). When she was 6 years old, one of the pivotal moments in the history of Spain happened – “the last Moorish king rode out of the Alhambra and Their Catholic Majesties entered its gates in triumph” (Mattingly 15), which marked the end of the Reconquista. At this point probably, Catherine “may have acquired a special affection for the most beautifully seated of Spanish cities” – Granada – even though she could not stay there

² The presented biography is based on *Catherine of Aragon: Infanta of Spain, Queen of England* by Theresa Earenfight (2021) and *Catherine of Aragon* by Garret Mattingly (1942).

for long as she had to accompany her parents during their constant travelling (Mattingly 16). Her affiliation for the city might have resulted in the choice of the pomegranate as her emblem. Witnessing the fall of Granada, triumphal victory of the Christian faith over Islam as “after more than seven hundred years Spain was again Christian from the mountains to the straits” (Mattingly 18-19) influenced deeply on the piety notable later in Catherine’s life. From the young age, Catherine noticed “the special favour God paid her family” (Mattingly 20).

Catherine’s Spanish roots shaped herself and her surrounding throughout her life: “. . . her late medieval Spanish sensibility and taste had a profound influence on the Tudor style, from her *chapines* and her *verdugados* to a taste for exotic tooled-leather book covers and the demand for Spanish silks, Spanish embroidery, and jewelry” (Earenfight 14). Not only did she embody her identity in appearance and clothing, but also in “an array of cosmopolitan customs and viewpoints that complicate notions of Spanish nation” (Earenfight 27).

Queen Isabella educated her daughters “as seriously as she educated [her son] Juan” (Mattingly 16). Due to this, not only was Catherine taught typical “feminine accomplishments” such as “dancing, drawing, music, sewing and embroidery” as well as weaving, spinning, and baking, but also “heraldry and genealogy and what passed for history . . . horsemanship and falconry”, among others (Mattingly 17). To get schooled in the classics, the best humanists of the time such as Antonio (1448/1449-1489) and Alessandro Geraldini (1455-1524) were invited to teach the young princess. This presented her as “a miracle of feminine learning” in the eyes of such prominent intellectuals as Erasmus (c.1466-1536) and Juan Vives (1493-1540) (Mattingly 17). Catherine’s education made her “fluent in Spanish, Latin, French, and English” (Earenfight 2), philosophy, and even natural sciences. The emphasis was also done on comprehending the “ideas on virtue, justice, and proper queenly behavior” (Earenfight 39) as she was raised to become a Queen-consort in a dynastic marriage to strengthen the power and influence of her parents.

Thus, her first husband was chosen to be Arthur, Prince of Wales (1486-1502), the eldest son of English King Henry VII (1457-1509). Mattingly specifies that Catherine “could not remember being called anything but Princess of Wales, destined for England...” (Mattingly 21) and later adds that “she had trained for marriage as an athlete trains for a race” (25). After a long voyage full of “the delays and terrors” (Mattingly 26), Catherine finally arrived in England in 1501. The marriage took place the same year. Catherine’s noble origin

and piety made her favorable among common English people and royalty. Henry VII believed that the Spanish princess as a descendant of John of Gaunt (1340-1399) would bring “the undoubted blood of kings” (Mattingly 31) to the Tudor dynasty. However, the marriage did not last long, as Arthur died a few months after the wedding, leaving Catherine a widow at the age of sixteen (Earenfight 2).

After Arthur's death, Catherine found herself in a difficult situation. She “waited silently for orders, passive, like a good soldier or a good child...” (Mattingly 48). In order to preserve the alliance between Spain and England, as well as to avoid returning the huge dowry, Ferdinand II and Henry VII decided to betroth Catherine to Arthur's younger brother, the future King Henry VIII. For this event, they needed a special permission, as “if Catherine had actually been Arthur's wife [in the consummated marriage]” it related her to Prince Henry “in the first degree of affinity...” (Mattingly 49). The dispensation was granted by Pope Julius II (1443-1513). In 1509, the second wedding took place.

It was during this turbulent period between the marriages when Catherine faced financial problems and ill-treatment from Henry VII which however did not prevent her from demonstrating her true intellect and diplomatic skills. She became the first female ambassador in Europe, representing the interests of Spain at the English court (Earenfight 87). This was an exceptional decision, indicating her political foresight, and the trust her father placed in her. Moreover, she corresponded effectively with Ferdinand II, demonstrating her political voice that “gradually became more mature and assertive...” (Earenfight 84). Giles Tremlett discusses how “with the earnest enthusiasm” she learnt the “tricks of the diplomatic trade” (Tremlett 142). Thus, for instance she spent days coding and decoding the letters (Tremlett 143). Tremlett describes her as an active “wily” diplomatic agent who strategically presents oneself as a “passive, dumb victim” (Tremlett 143). The appointment made her work as “seriously and energetically” as she could (Mattingly 75). She “sought independent sources of information, arranged for her own couriers . . . She collected every scrap she could of political gossip, and learned slowly to weigh men and events” which made her quite skilled in European diplomacy (Mattingly 76). One more instance of her role in the Anglo-Iberian politics, which is, however, rarely discussed, is her participation in the negotiations over the potential marriage between Henry VII and Catherine's sister Joanna (1479-1555) (Ballarin Audina 24).

The experience of ambassadorship became important in Catherine's second marriage as it made her "a valuable political asset to the inexperienced young king" (Earenfight 94). At the early stage of the marriage, their relationship may be described as loving and genuine (Earenfight 94). Henry appeared "the perfect courtly lover; Catherine was a beautiful, youthful wife and an audience for his chivalric posturing and his jousts" (Earenfight 94). Mattingly supposes that Catherine could be Henry's first love and the only person to whom he "could talk freely about kingcraft" (Mattingly 104). Their joint emblems – the pomegranate and the Tudor rose – referred to "sexuality, fertility, and bounty" and promised a "fruitful union" (Earenfight 92).

The question of fertility was crucial for dynastic marriages. Catherine's main duty as Queen was to give an heir to the throne. She was pregnant "at least six, perhaps, seven times" (Earenfight 105) but only twice she gave live birth: to "a son, Henry, who died shortly after his birth, and a daughter, Mary, who ruled as queen" (Earenfight 105). During one of the pregnancies she proved herself to be not only a consort, but also a successful Queen-regent as she organized the English troops to defeat the Scots at the Battle of Flodden in 1513 (Earenfight 44).

Catherine's attitude to the survived child Mary (1516-1558) was deeply tender. Earenfight comments on their high emotionality: Mary "was the center of her [Catherine's] emotional world ... the much-loved daughter she cared for and educated" (181). Catherine guided her daughter's moral upbringing and raised her as a true Catholic. As if modeling Isabella's approach to educating her daughters, Catherine cared for Mary's comprehensive curriculum, paying attention to her intellectual development besides "feminine accomplishments" (Mattingly 140).

Still, as years without a live male heir passed by, the tension over the marriage grew. Henry's pursuit of the divorce, known as "The King's Great Matter" became a source of personal and political tragedy for Catherine. Nevertheless, she stayed faithful to Henry even when "his attentions turned to other women and when he ultimately sought a divorce to marry Anne Boleyn" (c.1501 or 1507 – 1536) (Earenfight 3). As Mattingly notes, she did not blame Henry as such, but rather Cardinal Wolsey (1473-1530). For Henry, she invented excuses to clear him "of any shadow of blame for anything whatever..." (Mattingly 179). Henry, in his turn, believed that he was punished by God with the absence of heirs (regardless of Mary) as he married the previous wife of his late brother. Despite Catherine's fervent

resistance and defense based on the absence of consummation of her first marriage, Henry still insisted on the divorce. Catherine replied that “she would obey the King in all things not contrary to God’s laws, but she would not deny her marriage. If martyrdom was required of her, she was ready” (Mattingly 279). In June 1529 at the Blackfriars court, Catherine gave her famous speech asking for justice for her as a “poor woman, and a stranger . . . a true, humble, and obedient wife” (Mattingly 208). Mattingly called her speech “a secret trump” (209). As Henry stayed silent, Catherine was asked to come to another hearing later. Her reaction was unambiguous: “It matters not . . . This is no indifferent court for me” (Mattingly 209). Thus, she did not accept the legitimacy of the English court and requested the case to be considered in Rome. As Pope Clement VII (1478-1534) was basically captivated by the troops of Charles V (1500-1558), the nephew of Catherine, during the Sack of Rome, Henry realized that Pope would take Catherine’s side. Indeed, he firstly aimed to postpone the consideration of the case, but finally refused to grant the annulment of the marriage. Henry’s anger and frustration on this matter led him to rejection of Papal authority and proclaiming himself a head of a new church – the Church of England. This split from Rome is known as the English Schism.

In January 1533, Archbishop of Canterbury annulled the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon. She was deprived of the title of Queen of England and any formal authority. However, she did not remain passive even under the pressure of the court: “It is power, not passivity, that forms the dominant thread of all her actions after Blackfriars” (Earenfight 167). With her resistance shaped by “her intellect, experience, personal charisma, and network of loyal allies” (168) she aimed to regain legitimacy for herself and her daughter. Catherine “embodied and enacted Henry’s fears, and his fear is a clear sign of the power of her resistance” (Earenfight 169). He aimed to isolated Catherine putting her in exile of publicity, however her loyal friends, such as María de Salinas (c.1490-1539), still managed to contact her (Earenfight 183).

On January 7, 1536, Catherine died at Kimbolton Castle. Just before the death, she spent more than two hours praying “for her daughter, for the souls of all people of England, and especially for her husband” (Mattingly 308) which highlights her religious nature and generosity. She was buried “in a simple tomb in Peterborough Cathedral” (Earenfight 3). Henry forbid “major male dignitaries . . . members of the town council . . . foreign ambassadors” (Earenfight 184) to be present at her funeral in his another attempt to erase Catherine’s memory.

2.2. Pedro de Ribadeneyra's *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* (1558)

Pedro de Ribadeneyra, born on 1 November, 1526 in Toledo, “devoted his entire adult life (and a fair portion of his youth) to the Society of Jesus” (Ribadeneyra 58).³ As a defender and proponent of Catholic Faith, he was deeply preoccupied by the schism happening in England during the reign of Henry VIII. He became “the first Jesuit to reach England” (14) in 1558 and stayed there for 5 months. This visit made him feel “spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally invested in the kingdom’s religious destiny” (3). During his time in England, “two pillars of English Catholicism, Queen Mary and Cardinal Reginald Pole (1500-58) passed away” (14) and the throne was taken by Elizabeth I who began “to destroy all the progress made towards the restoration of Catholicism” (14). As Weinreich claims, this left the Jesuit traumatized and pushed him to rewriting Nicholas Sander’s (1530-1581) “legalistic attack on the legitimacy of English Reformation” (24) *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani* (1585) from Latin “in our Castilian tongue” (119). However, as argued by Fátima Cid Morgade (2014), *De origine ac progressu schismatis Anglicani* was not simply translated by Ribadeneyra, but partly reworked. Certain changes were made in structure, sources and content. Thus, for instance, some “historically dubious passages” were included during the translation with an intention to appeal to the Spanish public (Morgade 4). Freddy C. Domínguez (2016) notes that in “other circumstances a more original book might have been written” but the context of the impendent Anglo-Spanish War “required something quick and hard-hitting” (17).

Ribadeneyra dedicates his adaptation to Prince Don Philip (1578-1621), Infant of Spain at the time and future Philip III, to offer him the history of English Schism and to teach him righteous behavior through the anti-models of Henry VIII, Edward VI (1537-1553) and Elizabeth I (1533-1603) and the models to follow – one of them being Catherine of Aragon: “Your Highness ought . . . to hold before your eyes the exalted and regal virtues of the illustrious Queen Doña Catherine, daughter of your ancestors, the Catholic Kings, and of our lady Queen Doña Mary, her daughter, the paragons of Christian queens. And no less the zeal, wisdom, and valor with which our lord King Philip restored the Catholic faith in that kingdom” (114). Ribadeneyra’s narration nearly covers a hundred years’ period starting with the marriage of Catherine to Prince Arthur in 1501 and finishing with the execution of Mary,

³ The section on Pedro de Ribadeneyra’s life and work is based on the introduction to the edition and English translation *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* by Spencer J. Weinreich.

Queen of Scots (1542-1587). Consisting of two volumes, the first one retells the history of the King's Great Matter, its origins and consequences.

The Spanish Catholic background of the author explains strong religio-political inclinations of the narration. Domínguez discusses how the book, despite certain neglect from scholarship due to its propagandistic nature and clear “status as an anti-Elizabethan diatribe, or a cloying statement of Catholic orthodoxy” (15), may also contain critics to the Habsburg regime – namely, to the greediness of King Philip II (1527-1598) and his “involvement in ecclesiastical affairs” (30). Not only does the book describe the horrors of heresy in England, “somewhere out there” (32) but also could give a “prognostication for the effects of home-grown evils” (32). Domínguez fairly notes that Ribadeneyra's time of living was “of profound insecurity” (31) when “even Catholic kingdoms were afflicted by vices” (31). It is no surprise that he was preoccupied for his homeland Spain's firm and stable orthodoxy. Ribadeneyra also questioned Philip's orientation on the political gain primarily, instead of keeping “God's honour” (31) and indeed *being* pious (25). In such a context, the true models to follow which reflected “princely virtue” (22) for Ribadeneyra were “a queenly trifecta: Catherine of Aragon, Mary Tudor and Mary Stuart” (23). Their focus on the religion, not political success, allowed Ribadeneyra to stay out of the “turbid *realpolitik* waters” (25) when demonstrating princely virtues. Their “Christian spirit” (25) and readiness for martyrdom to combat heresy create the foundation of an ideal ruler in Jesuit's paradigm. Thus, one of the purposes for publishing *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* was to present Prince Philip and Spanish audience to the model of a truly Christian monarch who places God above earthly power.

Even though *Ecclesiastical History* was not completely trustworthy in terms of historical accuracy and it does not directly focus on the figure of Catherine of Aragon, it still offers a valuable insight onto the way she was seen through the eyes of the Spanish Jesuit.

2.3. William Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*

William Shakespeare (baptized 26 April 1564 – died 23 April 1616), as a celebrated English poet and playwright, probably needs no extensive introduction. However, it is important to consider several aspects of his life that may matter in regards of his portrayal of Catherine of Aragon. Catherine appears as one of the characters in *Henry VIII* (the full title:

The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth; also known as *All is True*) – the play written in collaboration with John Fletcher and dealing primarily with the key events of the English Reformation: the divorce of Catherine and Henry, his new marriage to Anne Boleyn, and the birth of their child Elizabeth. Although the exact date of composing the play is not clear, it was “undoubtedly acted as ‘a new play’ on June 29th, 1613” This date is notorious due to the Globe Theatre destruction by fire during the performance. “Internal evidence” suggests that the play was likely to be written in 1612 (Shakespeare 3). As it is a history play, it is based on *Holinshed’s Chronicles* (1577). However, it adds certain changes to the historical account, the major of which is Catherine’s vision of the spirits in white. Its implications will be discussed below. He also changes the chronological order of the events and compresses the time. Thus, the death of Catherine (1536) is presented before the birth of Elizabeth (1533).

The play is in many ways ambiguous. For instance, its generally favorable portrayal of Catherine and the praising of newly born Elizabeth who promises “a thousand thousand blessings” (Shakespeare 5.1.26) to England seem not complementary. Written in the Protestant country under the reign of James I, it follows the king’s (who also was Shakespeare’s patron) “reading of history”. It stated that the Reformation was “a result of royal decree”, not the “grassroots movement” (Appleford 157). King James, son of a Catholic devotee Mary Stuart, was a Protestant monarch who, however, “hoped to find a place in his church for moderates of all stripes” until the Gunpowder Plot occurred in 1605 which led to the suppression of Catholics (Gilbert and Barr). In spite of this, he strategically aimed to catholicize the past as his connection to the late mother helped him “in consolidation of his dynastic claims” (Appleford 166). Shakespeare, then appeared in a situation where he could not clearly support one side or another. The playwright’s unclear personal religious affiliations only contribute to the ambiguous presentation. The scarcity of information in this regard causes numerous speculations. The research by Burton Raffel for instance presents some evidence from Shakespeare’s works and family’s attitude to faith that may imply his secret adherence to Catholicism (Raffel 36). What is more important, the political and historical context of the play indicated certain limitations on what could be staged: “The drama, once so closely affiliated with Catholic belief and ritual, is perforce shaken by the schism” and thus “is subjected to the constraints of censorship” (Grazia 17). In these circumstances, Shakespeare could not openly stage any Catholicism-related ideas even if he

had such a desire. In any way, in *Henry VIII*, he presents a figure of Catherine of Aragon as a truly devoted and pious queen. The implications of this choice are going to be analyzed.

3. VIEWS ON CATHERINE OF ARAGON: SCHOLARLY AND EARLY MODERN

3.1. Scholarly studies on Catherine of Aragon

In the scope of modern scholarly literature on Catherine of Aragon, her biographies stand out. They aim to reconstruct the life of a historical figure from birth to death, usually with the method of analyzing and commenting on the primary sources. Among some of the well-established biographies, the one by Garret Mattingly (1941) is prominent. He intends to trace Catherine's outstanding but often neglected role in diplomacy and politics, presenting her in way "her contemporaries saw" (7). The profile of Catherine he focuses on is mainly diplomatic. Amy Licence's biography (2016) utilizes another approach to the figure of Catherine: it centers around woman's personal life and experience going beyond the political stance. Some biographies narrate the life events in a rather unconventional way, such as Theresa Earenfight's *Catherine of Aragon* (2021). As Earenfight progresses through the life of Catherine, she is examining the material culture which encompassed firstly Infanta and then Queen, such as her peculiar shoes, or Mary's baby blanket. The focus is not on the possessions *per se* but on their capacity to transmit messages about their owner. This biography is interested in what objects might reveal about the individual, such as their origin, tastes, significant objects, "personal experience and identity" (37). At the same time, Earenfight does not present Catherine as a material girl in the negative sense of this notion but rather highlights how the inventory of her possessions may tell a story of her life. As a subgroup of biographies, a number of sources using the "Henry's Six Wives" approach emerge where Catherine just goes in line with other five wives of Henry VIII as the first one and the divorced one. The examples include biographies by Alison Weir, Antonia Fraser, Martin Hume, David Starkey, etc. However, as Earenfigh argues, placing Catherine among the other wives may lead to "the fruitless game of comparing women by Henry's scale of worth" (94).

As a part of the Early Modern Anglo-Spanish relations, Catherine of Aragon, possessing both an identity of a Spaniard and an Englishwoman also found her place in some

researches. Thus, Constance M Knepp-Holt in her project study (2019) examines written materials of both countries to trace the interactions between them. Catherine of Aragon does not take a central place of the research but contributes to the general understanding of the Anglo-Spanish complexities at the time. Another example of a study where Catherine's double identity matters is "Raising Infanta Catalina De Aragon to be Catherine, Queen of England" (2016) by Earenfight. With the feminist reading, Earenfight explores the transformation of the Spanish Princess to the English Queen through practices provided by "trusted women at court" of the Spanish household (417).

Some researchers preferred to perform the comparative analysis when taking into account not only Catherine's activity but her juxtaposition to other historical figures. In the examples there may be a study of Early Modern queenship performed by Catherine of Aragon and Margaret Tudor by Michelle L. Beer (2018); comparing to Margaret Pole and some other historical personalities by John E. Paul (1966) and of course to Anne Boleyn as Catherine's classical foil by W.H. Dixon (1873).

Others focused on a particular aspect of Catherine's life: diplomacy ("Between Kings and Emperors: Catherine of Aragon as Counsellor and Mediator" (2018) by Michelle L. Beer); motherhood ("Transformation or Continuity?" (2003) by TG Elston; "'By Your Loving Mother': Lessons of Queenship from Catherine of Aragon to Her Daughter, Mary" (2022) by Theresa Earenfight which explores the maternity of Catherine through her letters to Mary).

Catherine's letters as the primary sources also became the material of analytical work "Catherine of Aragon's Letters, English Popular Memory, and Male Authorial Fantasies" (2021) by Maria Teresa Micaela Prendergast. She aimed to trace the differences between Queen's historic self and her created avatar in posthumous literary works created by male authors (207).

The portrayal of Catherine in literature became a subject of studies for a number of researches. Thus, Amy Appleford, Courtney Herber and Mira Assaf Kafantaris, among others, investigated the image of Catherine of Aragon in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII (All is True)*. Courtney Herber additionally explores the representation of Catherine in Calderon's *La Cisma Inglaterra* (1627) to compare the plays in this regard.

In this way, modern scholarly researches focus on Catherine's life independently and in connections with all Henry's wives, study her Anglo-Spanish identity, diplomacy, motherhood, Queenship, among others factors. Some of them present the comparative studies of Catherine in relation to other historical figures, and a number of authors investigate the literary avatar of Catherine. However, no research provides the comparison of Catherine's portrayals in Pedro de Ribadeneyra's historic account and William Shakespeare's play.

3.2. Early modern representations of Catherine of Aragon

As well noted by Timothy G. Elston in his dissertation, the representation of Catherine of Aragon in English chronicles was greatly limited by the "political and religious climate" of the author's day. Indeed, the materials produced under the reign of Henry VIII after the annulment of his marriage, as well as during a short reign of his son Edward VI, could not include any favorable or sympathetic mentions of Catherine. At the same time, during Mary I's years on the English throne, the depiction of her mother could, expectedly, be only positive (Elston 19).

Thus, in 1545 when Henry VIII still had two years to reign, Richard Grafton (c. 1513-1573), a Tudor author, published his chronicle with hardly any mentions of Catherine and her marriage to the king. As Elston comments on it, Catherine's invisibility was not due to Grafton's ignorance on the former queen's history, but motivated by "Henry having forbidden the linking of her with him" (Elston 20). Another example to Catherine's neglect was provided by Edward Hall's chronicle in 1548, during the reign of Edward VI. This one, however, refers to Catherine in some cases, though only as to a wronged wife to the king who lived with him in a sinful marriage and "contributed nothing to England" (Elston 22) – for instance her regency at Henry's absence in 1513 was completely ignored. Moreover, as observed by Earenfight, the period of Catherine's diplomatic activity between her marriages (1502-1509) was also faded by English chroniclers (5), probably because she was perceived as staying in a political limbo.

The situation changes with Mary I on the throne. For example, *A treatise on the Pretended Divorce between Henry VIII and Katharine of Aragon* (1878) by Nicholas Harpsfield (1519-1575) defends Catherine and presents her in a rather idealized manner especially as a mother to the current-reigning Queen Mary I – "the most honourable and

lawful issue of King Henry the Eight and Queen Katherine” (Harpfield 13). Harpfield himself was a theologian and defender of Catholicism whose writings became one of the sources for Sanders’s and Ribadeneyra’s chronicles. Even the title itself says a lot on the political charge of the author, as the divorce is called “pretended”. To argue even more effectively on this matter, in the letter to readers, a rhetoric tool of “a lying dame”/”damsel”/”Dame Untruth” is introduced by the writer. While personified falsehood aims to deceive the public about the necessity and validity of the divorce, Harpfield is sure to defeat it and all the other enemies of the noble Queen with his convincing treatise (14).

In the seventeenth century, a recusant Catholic account *The Life of Jane Dormer, Duchess of Feria* (written in 1643) by Henry Clifford stands out. Besides narrating “an interesting sketch of the life of Jane Dormer” (v) – a lady-in-waiting for Queen Mary who helped English Catholics in exile after Elizabeth ascended the throne – the biography also features the deep Catholic devotion of Catherine – “a mirror of goodness” (74) – and criticizes Henry’s decision to break “the lawful marriage with his good and virtuous wife Catharine” (9). Even though, Catherine is not the central figure of Clifford’s chronicle, the result of this work presents her “early modern hagiography”. The choice of hagiography – a genre describing a life of a saint – plays an important role in presenting Catherine as holy. (Elston 26).

On the other side of religious debate, Protestant authors provided their primarily positive perspective on the divorce, thus questioning Catherine’s legitimacy. Gilbert Burnet’s *History* (1689) is one of the examples. In his chronicle, he supports justification of the king for the marriage to be annulled and concludes that Pope could only dispense the law of Church but not of God since as God and Church are not equal in authority. Thus, the dispensation given to Henry and Catherine by Julius II was not a valid reason to marry so the divorce was required (69). Burnet justifies leaving Catherine outside of the English monarchy. Just the next year, however, Joachim Le Grand, a Catholic polemicist published *The History of the Divorce of Henry VIII and Katharine of Arragon with the Defence of Sanders, the Refutation of the Two First Books of the History of the Reformation of Dr. Burnett* (1690) with an aim to refute and confront the arguments of Burnet, providing the base on the validity of the marriage and consequently Catherine’s legitimate position on the English throne.

Thus, it gets evident that the image of Catherine of Aragon deeply depended on the ideological and religious background of the author. While Catholic authors or those writing in the period of reigning of Mary defended and praised Catherine as queen and mother, Protestants accounts rather erase her as ordered by Henry VIII after the divorce.

4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CATHERINE: RIBADENEYRA AND SHAKESPEARE

This chapter is going to analyze the representation of Catherine of Aragon in Ribadeneyra's *Ecclesiastical History* and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. The analysis is divided in categories according to the roles Catherine is attributed: Queen, Wife, Mother, and Catholic. The fifth category is going to present Catherine not in a specific role but in a comparison to her typical foil – Anne Boleyn.

4.1. Catherine as Queen

Catherine of Aragon is one of the central figures in the first volume of Ribadeneyra's book. This section discusses her role as Queen in Early Modern England through Pedro de Ribadeneyra's eyes.

Ribadeneyra builds the political image of Catherine primarily through her position of a Queen-consort to King. In the text, she does not possess much of political agency on her own. For instance, it is never mentioned that she was left regent in 1513 when Henry fought against the French, in the same manner, her years as an ambassador and diplomatic skills are neglected. Ribadeneyra's Catherine is rather politically inactive as Queen, even though historical Catherine carried out a number of "important practices of queenship" (Beer iii). As argued by Domínguez, Jesuit's religious agenda conditioned his focus on the Christian virtues of the monarch, not the political ambitions. Catherine, presented politically passive, perfectly fits this paradigm (23-24). Her lack of political authority does not prevent Ribadeneyra from referring to Catherine as "the mirror of Christian princesses and queens" (120). Conversely, it makes him even more secure that she is an ideal of the queen, "the model for all princesses and queens of how they ought to behave" (120).

Despite the divorce and the related unqueening, Ribadeneyra still presents Catherine as a lawful queen of England. To reinforce it, as well as to demonstrate popular support, he notes how much she was favored in public: “the virtues of Queen Doña Catherine were well known and well loved in his [Henry’s] kingdom, and that she had won the hearts of all good people, their fervent goodwill and admiration” (162). As if protesting, once Henry “commanded, under the gravest penalties, that thenceforth none should call Doña Catherine ‘queen’” (216), Ribadeneyra continues to refer to her no other but “Queen Doña Catherine” demonstrating in this way his political affiliations and condemning of the schism.

Ribadeneyra’s firm stance on legitimacy of Catherine as Queen of England is also evidenced as he focuses on her refusal to leave the country no matter what: “Being cast out of the palace, abused, and persecuted by the king and his ministers, she never consented to flee England and to escape to Spain or Flanders, as her nephew the emperor begged her, where she would have been highly honored and fittingly attended” (259). With this passage, Ribadeneyra presents some of the most fundamental characteristics of Catherine as Queen: her loyalty to England (though originally foreign to her), devotion and resilience. She keeps her mission of a good Queen – to stay with people – even once rejected by Henry. The implications behind her decision lead the reader towards perception of Catherine as a martyr who is ready to sacrifice her comfort and eventually life for queenly duties.

In this way, Catherine of Aragon is presented as a legitimate, morally right, and loyal to the kingdom Queen. Ribadeneyra’s admiration in her role of Queen may be explained by the fact that he was a man of his time and a Jesuit. He valued moral and spiritual values in women, their “extraordinary, unparalleled virtues” (120) rather than their political power. No active participation in the politics of the country was expected from Catherine. Instead, what she was to do as a perfect queen was exactly what she did, according to Ribadeneyra.

Shakespeare also manages to succinctly portray Catherine of Aragon in several aspects and roles, although she does not prevail as a protagonist in *Henry VIII*. At the same time, she remains perhaps the noblest character in the play. Her image is full of dignity and strength of spirit. Despite her shaky position on the English throne, Shakespeare, as well as Ribadeneyra, manages to portray Catherine of Aragon as a true queen of her people.

In the play, Catherine is presented as queen-mediatrix who aims to convey commoners’ laments to the king. The second scene of the first act pictures her talking about the people in the kingdom who are unable to pay high taxes:

I am solicited, not by a few,
And those of true condition, that your subjects
Are in great grievance. (Shakespeare 1.2.21-23)

Significant enough, as indicated in the annotated edition of the play, the episode of Catherine's appeal is "unhistorical and seems invented by Shakespeare to arouse sympathy at once for the Queen" (Halio 87). The same is stated in the 1901 edition of the play by the University Society: the scene "is unwarranted by history" (165). On the other hand, historian Mrs. Jameson finds it to be "true to history" (365). One way or another, the decision to include this episode immediately shows Catherine's nobility and moral authority that Shakespeare wanted to convey. It might present his idea that Queen was "invested with all her conjugal rights and influence, and royal state" (Jameson 365), thus had the political power of an advisor.

Another brushstroke in Catherine's portrayal as the queen is her strong desire to speak English which she expresses in the conversation with Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius:

O, good my lord, no Latin!
I am not such a truant since my coming
As not to know the language I have lived in.
A strange tongue makes my cause more strange,
suspicious.
Pray speak in English. (Shakespeare 3.1.47-52)

This act presents Queen's desire not to appear foreign, "strange, suspicious" to anyone as she believes her years in England, as a wife, a widow, an ambassador and a wife again gave her enough knowledge and a right to be treated fair. With this request, not only she underscores her commitment and effort in learning a foreign language, but also presents herself as an *English* subject and *English* Queen, being at the right place. She feels the need to defend her Englishness as it is something questioned by others in an attempt to detach her from the political scene. Thus, she rebels against her forced alienation from England.

Mostly, it is Cardinal Wolsey who is presented as the main enemy and moral opposite to Catherine. Unlike Ribadeneyra's narration, where Henry mainly took the position of Catherine's opposite, Shakespeare utilizes Wolsey's figure for this. He is Machiavellian,

concerning about materiality and power, while Catherine is not. Moreover, the play hints that it could be Wolsey who originated the idea of the divorce:

Either the Cardinal,
Or some about him near, have, out of malice
To the good queen, possessed him with a scruple
That will undo her. (Shakespeare 2.1.182-185)

While historically it is still speculated who was the author of the divorce plan, there is not “much probability that it was Wolsey who had turned his master’s thought in this direction” (Thurston 57). The reason Shakespeare blames Wolsey and not Henry for instance, may lie in the historical context of writing the play, bearing in mind that Henry was a father of a recently passed away Queen, Shakespeare could not openly criticize him.

In any way, in the clashes with her main antagonist Wolsey, Catherine aims to defend not only her royal place on the English throne by marriage, but also her Infanta position by birth which even better underlines her legitimate royal identity:

I am about to weep; but thinking that
We are a queen, or long have dreamed so, certain
The daughter of a king, my drops of tears
I’ll turn to sparks of fire. (Shakespeare 2.4.78-81)

Not all the people of the kingdom, however, reveal hostility towards Catherine. As the rumors on the possible divorce start spreading, it is revealed that people rather feel sympathy to their queen and her upcoming tragedy. This may signify people’s support of Catherine as “every true heart weeps” for the divorce (Shakespeare 2.2.45).

Shakespeare skillfully portrays Catherine as wise and does not allow her to fall out of grace in the eyes of the people even after her divorce with the king. Having suffered betrayal and public humiliation, she still remains a true queen, who does not lose respect for herself. Thus, she refuses to submit to the court that she does not accept as lawful:

What need you note it? Pray you, keep your way.
When you are called, return. Now, the Lord help!
They vex me past my patience. Pray you, pass on.
I will not tarry; no, nor ever more

Upon this business my appearance make
In any of their courts. (Shakespeare 2.4.143-148)

Regardless of the fact that the king's attitude towards Catherine gets rather cold as the divorce actions proceed, he continues to see her as a role model of a good queen:

The queen of earthly queens. She's noble born,
And like her true nobility she has
Carried herself towards me. (Shakespeare 2.4.149-159)

However, as the plot unfolds with more and more tragedy for the “queen of earthly queens”, Catherine herself realizes that the role of the Queen of England probably cost too much for her:

Come, reverend fathers,
Bestow your counsels on me. She now begs
That little thought, when she set footing here,
She should have bought her dignities so dear. (Shakespeare 3.1.200-203)

The high price of the title led her to humiliation, separation and erasure she appeared in. In this passage, when referring to herself as “she”, Catherine may even further express her emotional restraint and pain of being detached.

Nevertheless, even on the deathbed, she still communicates as a queen who concerns about others which reflects her beautiful inner world and unwavering kindness:

As you wish Christian peace to souls departed,
Stand these poor people's friend, and urge the King
To do me this last right. (Shakespeare 4.2.177-179)

Both authors portray Catherine as a kind and wise queen, a true queen of her people, who, when even being deprived of political power, stays preoccupied over the kingdom. Both demonstrate her popular support and loyalty to England. Shakespeare's account additionally portrays Catherine as a political counselor to King. Thus, Shakespeare's heroine seems more politically agentive while Ribadeneyra's stays rather passive.

4.2. Catherine as Wife

At the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Ribadeneyra aims to trace back the origins of the schism. For this reason he briefly narrates the historical events regarding Catherine's two marriages.

Henry's elder brother, Arthur, took as his wife Lady Catherine, the daughter of the Catholic Kings of Spain, Don Ferdinand and Doña Isabella of glorious memory, but shortly thereafter he died without issue. What is more, on account of his tender years, feeble health, and sudden death, he left the princess his wife untouched, just as he had found her. With the dispensation of the supreme pontiff, Henry married his sister-in-law, in order to preserve the peace between the Spanish and English. Having taken her as his lawful wife, lived with her for twenty years, and fathered children with her (whom he recognized as his heirs), he rejected her. He divorced her, under the pretext that she who had been his brother's wife could not be his. (Ribadeneyra 123)

In this summary, a number of aspects relevant for this section stand out: Arthur and Catherine did not consummate their marriage; thus, her second marriage to Henry was legitimate; it was originally due to political reasons; it was consistent and produces heirs; the divorce was requested with a contrived reason ("pretext"). These facts effectively portray the kind of marriage Catherine and Henry were in: dynastic, legitimate, destroyed by husband, and leaving wife as a victim.

Throughout the first volume, some of these aspects find further reinforcement. Mostly, Ribadeneyra focuses readers' attention on the legal status of the second marriage, as in this passage: "when the greatest scholars of theology and canon law in both kingdoms had been consulted, to scrutinize and examine at length whether such a marriage could legally and morally be contracted, it appeared to all that it could" (131). It is noteworthy that he presents the opinion of both English and Spanish sides, not only Spanish one as it could have appeared biased. As both kingdoms agree on the matter of legitimacy, Ribadeneyra's claim seems even more convincing. He highlights numerous that the annulment was invalid, thus Catherine's position of Queen is perfectly lawful as she is "the legitimate wife of King Henry VIII of England" (120) approved by the Pope's "dispensation and authority of the Apostolic See" (182). Her marital status then is confirmed and cannot be changed.

Due to the indicated legitimacy, the royal couple's separation is condemned and not accepted by the author. However, he also notices problems within this marriage. Thus, he states that the spouses were very different:

There was a striking contrast between the behavior and habits of Queen Catherine and King Henry, which gave him the occasion and the urge to pursue other women. For although the queen was no more than five years older than the king, in her life and customs she seemed to have a thousand years on him (Ribadeneyra 141).

In a way, this passage highlights Catherine's moral superiority over Henry, as she is presented not only as biologically older, but also morally more mature and wiser. Henry's infidelity is paid attention to, but not justified. Conversely, his actions and nature are shown to cause the separation. Later, the supporting comment can be found: "a wild heart like Henry's could never be at peace with a princess so reserved and so pious as his wife" (142). With this judgment, Ribadeneyra juxtaposes Catherine's righteous nature to Henry's reckless passion, attributing the blame of separation to King with his "wild heart". Henry's attempts to justify the divorce through "pangs and scruples of his conscience" (171) get exposed as Ribadeneyra underscores that the real motivation was king's "sheer wickedness and the desire to satisfy his own lust" (174).

The separation was clearly seen as a catastrophe for the Catholic world as it went against God's Will and could cause the Schism of England. Through John Fisher, bishop of Rochester and Catherine's great supporter, Ribadeneyra lists the negative political and religious consequences the divorce could provoke: "hatred between King Henry and Emperor Charles, division among the princes who followed them, cruel wars at home and abroad, and, most importantly, dissension in matters of the faith, schisms, heresies, and innumerable sects" (181). It is also notable that according to Weinreich's analysis on the adaptation from *De origine ac progressu* to *History*, Ribadeneyra does not include "Sander's painstaking elaboration of the *pro* and *contra* arguments at Henry and Catherine's divorce trial" (23). I would argue that the elimination is not full as something similar to the list of *contra* arguments is presented in a way with Fisher as seen above (181). However, it is true that the list of arguments for the divorce never appears as it was out of Ribadeneyra's Catholic agenda, which mainly focused on the criticizing of the separation as a leading cause of the schism.

Catherine, with her private and public rights being violated by the divorce, also aimed to cease the trials. As wife, she takes a more active position of defense than as Queen as discussed in the previous section. For instance, to the Campeggio's advice to join a convent "With supreme constancy and fervor, she replied that she was determined to defend with her life a marriage lawfully sanctioned by the Roman Church" (170). She sharply reacts to this kind of manipulation and reveals certain strength and resistance in this way. In another episode, as two cardinals approach Queen to "examine the validity of Her Majesty's marriage" (172), she interrupts them challenging their cardinal authority and gaining the control over the discourse to claim that the topic of the talk makes no sense:

You wish to discuss a matter already addressed, and addressed not only in the councils of two of the wisest monarchs, but also in the consistory at Rome; determined by Pope Julius; established by twenty years of cohabitation; confirmed by the succession and our children; and accepted and approved by the world's assent (Ribadeneyra 172).

In this way she manages to counter-attack the cardinals with a significant list of valid arguments against the divorce.

In the same scene it also becomes evident that Catherine does not blame her husband for the divorce. Instead, she directly accuses one of the cardinals – Wolsey – of her "misfortunes and miseries" (172). As for Henry, Catherine is rather shown as a forgiving wife of his. This is especially apparent in her final letter to King just before her death:

My lord, my king, and my loving husband, the deep love I have for you prompts me to write to you at this hour and in the anguish of my death: to admonish and charge you to have a care for the eternal health of your soul, more than for all the ephemeral things of this life and all the pleasures and delights of your flesh—for the sake of which you have given me so many sufferings and burden, and entered a labyrinth, an ocean of cares and troubles. With a willing heart I forgive all you have done to me, and I beg our Lord that he too pardon you. (Ribadeneyra 260).

The letter, however is likely to be fiction, as Weinreich argues (260). Nevertheless, it is notable that it appears in the Ribadeneyra's adaptation, as it contributes to the Catholic agenda presenting the divorce as something immoral and despicable. On the other hand, it serves to demonstrate forgiving and unwavering love of a wife.

At the trial, the identity of Catherine as wife is further shaped:

When the king had finished, the queen demanded that the judges allow the appeal she had lodged; as they yet hesitated, she rose from her place and crossed to where the king was seated beneath his cloth of state. Upon her knees, she begged him that, as His Majesty was in his own kingdom, while she was a stranger there, he should permit the course of justice to unfold in Rome before the common father of all Christians, the universal judge (Ribadeneyra 179).

She is presented here at the moment of emotional despair which probably motivates her to challenge the protocol and approach the king without permission of judges. This act of crossing boundaries is mitigated by the following act of kneeling which restores her public image of a submissive wife. Not only kneeling appears as a sign of subordination, but also as a rhetorical appeal of pathos together with the speech of Catherine that follows on her being a stranger in England. Her emphasis on this status not only refers to her foreign origin but also reveals her vulnerability and appeal for a just unbiased court. Her emotionality caused the witnesses' attention and even tears. The King also was moved by the scene as he "stood gazing at her with tender, loving eyes, and answered that he gave her the consent she sought with the greatest willingness" (179). Later, she is presented reflecting: "Today is the first time that I have not obeyed my lord the king for the sake of my own interests. When I see him, I shall beg his pardon upon my knees" (179) which reveals her sustained respect towards husband no matter what. Ribadeneyra's voice emerges to proclaim Catherine a "sainted lady" who is "worthy of a better husband!" as he clearly takes her side and presents her dramatic fate as "this cross and this new sort of persecution to purify and perfect her, so that she would receive a more illustrious crown of glory" (179). Thus, he refers to her marital self-sacrifice.

From Shakespeare's perspective, Catherine of Aragon is also portrayed as a wife who is incredibly devoted to her husband and does not blame him for the entire burden that has fallen upon her like a dozen of trials. Before the divorce, Catherine is shown as a wise wife-adviser. As noted by Amy Appleford, Catherine was "the last English queen to inhabit this role of 'wifely advocacy'" once she solicits her husband for taxation regulations (158). However, as the divorce is requested, the relationship between the spouses deteriorates. At the very beginning of the divorce trial scene, the reader can see how Shakespeare slowly separates Catherine from Henry. As "The Queen takes place some distance from the King" (95), the reader immediately senses the coldness between them and their unequal statuses at court.

In the same scene Catherine gives her famous speech of honor and courage to ultimately protect herself and her marriage:

Heaven witness
I have been to you a true and humble wife,
At all times to your will conformable,
Ever in fear to kindle your dislike,
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry
As I saw it inclined. When was the hour
I ever contradicted your desire,
Or made it not mine too? (Shakespeare 2.4.25-32)

She does not simply surrender under external pressure but keeps defending the legitimacy of her position as wife to King Henry:

My lord, I dare not make myself so guilty
To give up willingly that noble title
Your master wed me to. Nothing but death
Shall e'er divorce my dignities. (Shakespeare 3.1.154-157)

The scenes after the divorce reveal Catherine as a very upset and confused woman. For her, this is a real grief that has devastated her, taken away her strength, and started her countdown: “My soul grows sad with troubles” (Shakespeare 3.1.1).

Even on her deathbed, she continues to speak well of her husband and to express her loyalty to him. She retains her greatness, shows humility, generosity and love of a good wife. This reflects her inner beauty and magnificence, which Shakespeare was trying to portray. He literally gives Catherine certain saintliness, as he portrays her as a martyr-like wife faithful to her husband until the end.

I thank you, honest lord. Remember me
In all humility unto his Highness.
Say his long trouble now is passing
Out of this world. Tell him in death I blessed him,
For so I will. (Shakespeare 4.2.182-186)

This idealization and “obvious investment” (Appleford 150) in the figure of Catherine despite her being “on the wrong or losing side of history” (150) is closely examined by Appleford. She suggests that the play might be a Catholic answer to the tradition of Protestant histories praising Protestant figures (such as Thomas Heywood’s 1605 *If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* which glorifies Elizabeth). With it, Shakespeare could aim to rehabilitate “the so-called conforming or residual Catholicism”, the rites and traditions of many Catholic Englishmen before the Reformation (165). *The Riverside Shakespeare*’s editors mention Shakespeare’s tolerance “to enter into spirit of both faith with that ‘wonderful philosophic impartiality’” (6) which could serve as another interpretation to the reason for the play’s favorable portrayal of Catherine.

In this way, both authors portray Catherine as an extremely loyal wife to her husband, who will not blame him for any kind of ill-treatment. Additionally, in both sources Catherine actively aims to protect the legitimacy of her marriage and one of the most powerful tool for it – Catherine’s speech at Blackfriars – is presented by both Ribadeneyra and Shakespeare. Ribadeneyra, for his part, demonstrates completely different lifestyles of Catherine and Henry. In this opposition, he clearly takes Catherine’s side while condemning Henry. Shakespeare, by contrast, does not clearly oppose Catherine to her husband, nor explicitly criticizes Henry. Hermann Ulrici suggests an explanation for this: it “is only what we should look for from a national poet who lived in the reign of Henry’s daughter – the all-beloved Elizabeth” (418). Thus, the origin of the author and the political context of the production remain significant factors when analyzing the play.

4.3. Catherine as Mother

Even though the chronicle does not contain many references to Catherine’s role of mother (compared to for example her role of a Catholic which will be discussed further), still it is seen as one of the main parts of her complex image. First of all, Catherine being a mother to an heir is entwined with her position of a Queen as it is one of the crucial components in raising her political legitimacy. As she herself mentions in the talk to Campeggio and Wolsey, her marriage and status is “confirmed by the succession and our children” (172). Despite the fact that out of “children” mentioned only one survived and not a son but a daughter, it is enough for Ribadeneyra to consider Catherine as a mother to a legitimate heir

to the throne who managed to ensure dynastic succession. Moreover, Ribadeneyra mentions only once that Catherine had other children but as they were miscarried or stillborn or died in infancy, he does not focus on them nor discusses probably depressed state of Catherine as mother.

As for the surviving child, King Henry originally accepts Princess Mary as an heir and starts looking for a good match for her. The idea that the marriage to Princess was desirable for European princes additionally highlights Catherine's legitimate and high position of a mother to an heir: "This is clear proof of how firmly the hearts of all the princes of Christendom believed that the marriage between King Henry and Queen Catherine was legitimate and above suspicion, given how many kings and princes desired and sought to marry the daughter thereof" (136). As it would be Mary I who would bring Catholicism back to England during her reign (Ribadeneyra partly devotes his second volume to description of these events), the Jesuit finds certain relief in the figure of Princess from her very birth since it proves that Catherine's life full of "miseries" was not in vain as it produced a great fighter to heresy.

Catherine is further portrayed as an exemplary, loving and devoted mother as she is deeply affected by Mary's loss of title and the isolation from her daughter. She was relocated to Kimbolton left with few people of her household. From the day she found out that Mary was "excluded as illegitimate", Catherine's health declined greatly. This suggests the deep preoccupation over her daughter's fate and the influence of her inner turmoil. At the same time, Ribadeneyra expresses a clear stance of condemnation to Henry on the matter of his orders: for him, Henry is an "unnatural father" (216) who "would turn against his own daughter" (217). Catherine, as opposed to him, is presented a heartily natural mother as even in isolation approaching her death, she is thinking about her daughter. In the already-mentioned deathbed letter to Henry, she writes the following lines: "What I beg of you is that you look after our daughter Mary, whom I commend to you, asking that you deal with her as befits a father" (260). Instead of expressing probably expected bitterness for separating mother and daughter, she is aiming to reach father's conscience with a sincere final wish to take care of Mary.

When describing the mother-daughter relationship, Ribadeneyra portrays not only biological but also spiritual connection between the two which gets manifested in their shared religious identity and values as well as in love and support. Catherine aims to raise her

daughter with her own example. Thus, in the second volume Mary is shown as “imitating the faith and steadfastness of her saintly mother, Doña Catherine” (343). It is clear that she inherits her mother’s virtues. With the presentation of the letter from Catherine to Mary, Catherine’s role of a moral guide to her daughter becomes evident. She instructs Mary on how to behave, how always remain faithful and act with dignity. She also concludes her letter with the promise to find Mary which again highlights their profound connection.

It is worth noting that the role of Catherine of Aragon as a mother in the play *Henry VIII* is not central, but Shakespeare still notices her deep attachment to her child and the pain of the devaluation of her motherhood. In the court scene, Catherine tries to reach the king, telling about their long marriage and she points at a fact that she blessed him with a descendant – a girl, the blood of his family:

Sir, call to mind
That I have been your wife in this obedience
Upward of twenty years, and have been blessed
With many children by you. If, in the course
And process of this time, you can report,
And prove it too, against mine honor aught,
My bond to wedlock or my love and duty
Against your sacred person, in God’s name. (Shakespeare 2.4.37-44).

Her words show not only resentment over the ruined marriage, unfair trial and public humiliation of her as a queen, but also to some extent anxiety for the future of her child, whose legitimacy is under threat. Shakespeare does not depict Mary on stage as the character of the play, but through Catherine’s language one can feel her anxious maternal heart - full of pain, but at the same time unbreakable. Thus, the image of Catherine as a mother complements her overall moral greatness, which Shakespeare so skillfully tries to portray: she appears not only as an offended wife, but also as a woman who worthily bears the burden of humiliation and fear for the fate of her child in the storm of political changes.

In both narratives, Catherine is presented as a mother of a legitimate heir to the English throne as well as preoccupied over the fate of her child. However, Ribadeneyra’s account focuses much deeper on the spiritual connection between mother and daughter and on Catherine as a model to behave for Mary.

4.4. Catherine as Catholic

Through the eyes of Ribadeneyra, Catherine's role as a devoted Catholic is probably a leading one. Her holiness is constantly underscored and praised. Despite her royal position (before the annulment), she keeps an ascetic way of life: "whenever she could, she arose in the middle of the night and attended the clerics' Matins. She dressed and readied herself at five in the morning—although she used to say that the only time she thought wasted was that spent beautifying herself" (141). She complied with all the religious demands and traditions without any concessions. Having said this, it appears as if she was already a nun, not the Queen, that secluded and obedient her life was. However, it is notable that once she was advised (if not to say pressed) to join the monastery, she firmly declined. Paradoxically, this may be explained exactly by her religious devotion. Being strongly assured that her marriage was legal and lawful in front of God, she could not agree to the divorce as it would make her a sinner. So despite the internal inclination towards a monastic kind of life and external pressure from the legates – she remained the lawful wife of her husband.

Ribadeneyra also puts it clearly that Catherine is a model and a symbol of the righteous life for those "who looked only to God and the truth, without respect for anything else" (162). Despite the fact that it was Henry who got the title of Defender of the Faith from Rome, Catherine is presented as a better candidate to this role.

Catherine's catholic image is evident throughout *Henry VIII*. One of the examples is the court scene. There Catherine emphasizes several times that she feels like a stranger, so she has absolutely no support or anyone to stand by her side to protect her, so she cannot expect a fair trial, maintenance, or honesty towards her. Her origin weakens her position, and as she does not trust any judge, she asks for the Pope's support, which reflects her as a devoted Catholic: "Before you all, appeal unto the Pope / To bring my whole cause 'fore his Holiness, / And to be judged by him" (Shakespeare 2.4.132-134).

Throughout Shakespeare's work, Catherine appears as a truly believing woman and a convinced Catholic, for whom faith is not just words, but an inner conviction and source of strength. Her Catholicism can be observed in many appeals to God in the certainty that the true court can only be the divine one: "Heaven is above all yet; there sits a judge / That no king can corrupt" (Shakespeare 3.1.113-114).

In Shakespeare's play, she does not recognize Henry's decision to annul the marriage, considering herself the only legitimate wife according to the laws of the Church. For Catherine, it is not just a personal tragedy – it is a deep conviction that marriage is sacred and indissoluble. Her refusal to accept the new order established by the king reflects her loyalty to Catholic doctrine and at the same time demonstrates her moral greatness: she does not compromise with her conscience even under pressure from the court. Her strong religious position makes Catherine a symbol of loyalty not only to her husband, the king, but also to the highest law – the law of God.

Despite the strong Catholic zeal of Catherine, there is a supposition that she could have actually been “crypto-Protestant” (Appleford 159) as when “at key moments in the play, she appears in the character of a critic of the very church to which she belongs” (158). However, it is rather an overgeneralization as she attacks not the whole church but only its specific representatives: Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius. Another supposition of Catherine's non-Catholicism that is the refusal to speak Latin with Wolsey. As it is generally known, Latin was a language of Catholicism, while Protestants preferred English. Catherine's choice of English signified for some her possible secret Protestant affiliations. However, Appleford contends that the rejection of Latin is simply “to emphasize her [Catherine's] commitment to her adopted country” (159) so it does not challenge her Catholic character. Moreover, as discussed above, with the favorable depiction of Catherine, Shakespeare could aim to revive pre-Reformation Catholic traditions (Appleford 165).

Ultimately, a scene with Catherine's vision close to the end of the play draws readers' attention by its unexpectedness. As she anticipates her death, she sees a vision of six figures in white. They hold and pass the garland over the queen's head, dance and “make reverent curtsies”. As the wonder of this episode “breaks the power of history itself”, it finds no prototype in any chronicles, suggesting that Shakespeare created the scene himself (Appleford 151). In this way, the meaning of it bears great importance for the discussion. Appleford offers a number of possible allusions Shakespeare may have made with this “masquelike dying vision” (155). First, it may fall into the theory of a Catholic response to Protestant plays of praising Reformation discussed above, as the vision “has clear dramatic parallels with the mimed scene in which angels protect the sleeping Elizabeth's life” (155). It also proposes its audience “a visionary secret outside historical time and representation” (152) connecting England's recent Catholic past to its Protestant present and proposing the

“possibility of a revitalized, resilient, and continuous Catholic tradition” (152). Finally, it may refer to another prominent Catholic figure and mother of James I – Mary Stuart – whose body was exhumed from Peterborough Cathedral to be brought to Westminster Abbey in 1612. The new tomb’s decorations of “angles . . . each holding a wreathed crown and a palm branch” (166) strongly resemble Catherine’s dying vision.

Besides, the scene reflects the Queen’s high spirituality and connection to God. The white robes of the spirits create the visual allusions to purity, while the act of holding the garland over Catherine’s head may proclaim her crowning for her piety, chastity and martyrdom. Thus, Shakespeare may allude to the reward of the virtues, if not in this world, then beyond. Ruth Vanita argues that this scene also may refer to the Marian mythology and align Catherine with the figure of Virgin Mary at her “coronation as Queen of Heaven after her death” (329). Furthermore, Catherine’s first appearance in the play pleading King for justice for commoners also connects her to Virgin Mary who is “represented in paintings and statuary, as mediatrix” (327). The fact that both Catherine and Mary kneel in their appeals only enhances the similarity.

Thus, Shakespeare, like Ribadeneyra, despite their different views and backgrounds, portrays Catherine of Aragon as a servant of the Catholic Church and God. They, although to some extent differently, depict aspects of the queen’s life that convey her deep devotion to the Church and her deep inner faith. Shakespeare’s employment of the vision scene causes a variety of interpretations, mainly connected to his attempt to revive and rehabilitate English “residual” Catholicism (Appleford 165).

4.5. Catherine VS Anne

To better portray Catherine as a character of greatest morale virtues, Ribadeneyra contrasts her to a true figure of evil, full of “sins and faithfulness” – Anne Boleyn. Anne is presented as a total opposite to the pious and lawful Queen Catherine. Their religious affiliations are one of the aspects that make the women so contrastive. While Catherine, as discussed above, appears as a perfect Catholic – humble, ascetic, and loyal – Protestant (which equals to “heretical” to Ribadeneyra) Anne embraces the opposite characteristics: she is seductive, passionate and disloyal. Moreover, Anne is hypocritical in her religion: “she followed the Lutheran sect, although she did not cease to hear Mass as though she were

Catholic—for since the king was one, she deemed it advantageous for her scheming ambitions” (155). The Jesuit employs the figure of Anne to instruct readers on how not to behave. He also urges readers to “learn to beware of their passions, to take themselves in hand, and to keep a tight rein on their pleasures and appetites” (116) as if not – a catastrophe like the schism may happen. Anne Boleyn as “the germ of this lamentable tragedy, the source and root of such grievous disasters” (120) is a deeply fallen woman in Ribadeneyra’s eyes. When marrying Henry, Anne commits one of the greatest sins, incest, as her father is Henry himself (as believed by Ribadeneyra and by the author of his immediate source *De origine ac progressu* – Sander (124). Later then Anne is accused of another incest – “a hateful intercourse with her own brother!” (124). Neither of the accusations are proved, however. Ribadeneyra’s references to them make a lot of sense as they contribute to the general evil image of a heretic. Same as he fabricated some letters from Catherine to present her better, he explores possible falsifications regarding Anne’s life, though to the opposite effect.

The Jesuit also focuses his attention on the appearance of Anne. He claims that she was not beautiful, “one of her upper teeth protruded... She had six fingers on her right hand and a growth like a goiter”. The description matters as the outer was believed to mirror the inner. Ribadeneyra thus underscores Anne’s corruption and sinfulness even further. The historical veracity of Anne’s ugliness is, however, dubious. It is true that she “never was described as a great beauty, but even those who loathed her admitted that she had a great allure” with “especially striking” black eyes (Buka 109). Ribadeneyra does not provide any references to the appearance of Catherine, however. This may be due to the fact that her moral virtues – faith, legitimacy, loyalty and others – mattered much more for the author.

As the question on virginity appeared crucial for Catherine, Ribadeneyra also pays readers’ attention to the assumption (presented as a fact, though) that Anne had sexual relationship before marriage to Henry. However, she lied to him on this regards manipulating him and raising his interest in this way: “And so, the harder the king pressed her, the more she resisted, swearing that none but her husband should pluck the flower of her virginity” (155). With deception, she makes Henry believe that it is she who is “virtuous and pious” (155) and should be his wife instead of genuinely virtuous and pious Catherine. Ribadeneyra thus again condemns Henry who as “a savage beast” (140) becomes so easily dazed if not to say bewitched by “loose and brazen” (264) Anne. Moreover, in his account, Ribadeneyra presents Anne’s numerous lovers (264). Historically, however, “there is no evidence that she engaged in sex with anyone but her husband” (Buka 109). With this kind of discourse,

Ribadeneyra constructs a highly negative portrayal of Anne Bolleyn as an immoral, sinful and lustful figure whose actions caused the “lamentable and horrible” schism (Ribadeneyra 371).

In *Henry VIII*, the portrayal of Catherine's attitude towards Anne further reveals the character, as Shakespeare again presents Catherine as a merciful woman who is above hatred to the person who deprived her of throne and husband. As noted above, Catherine rather sees Wolsey not Anne as the seed of evil. Anne then is not seen as a complete opposite or foil that the author employs to describe Catherine.

Conversely to Ribadeneyra’s presentation of Anne, Shakespeare pays lots of attention to her beauty:

She is a gallant creature and complete
In mind and feature. I persuade me, from her
Will fall some blessing to this land which shall
In it be memorized. (Shakespeare 3.2.64-67)

As Chamberlain concludes:

Beauty and honor in her are so mingled
That they have caught the King. (Shakespeare 2.3.93-94)

King himself, upon his first encounter with Anne, notices her “fairest hand” and kisses her:

By heaven, she is a dainty one.—Sweetheart,
I were unmannerly to take you out
And not to kiss you. (Shakespeare 1.4.126-128)

Not only her beauty stands out, however. At the same time, Anne embodies a complex and contradictory character which is the best evident in the third scene of the second act. As she converses with Old Lady, she underlines numerously that she would prefer rather a poor life:

I swear, ’tis better to be lowly born
And range with humble livers in content
Than to be perked up in a glist’ring grief
And wear a golden sorrow. (Shakespeare 2.3.23-26)

However, once Chamberlain brings the news on Anne's unexpected awarding of the title of Marchioness of Pembroke, she accepts it quite fast, which gives Old Lady a reason to ironize and probably reveal a bit of Anne's nature:

This forced fortune!—have your mouth filled up
Before you open it. (Shakespeare 2.3.105-106).

Despite the expected rivalry between Anne and Catherine, in Shakespeare's play neither of them shows it. Anne does not display any sign of anger or annoyance towards Catherine. On the opposite, throughout the same scene, she recognizes her as a good person and expresses sympathy to her tragic fate:

Not for that neither. Here's the pang that pinches:
His Highness having lived so long with her, and she
So good a lady that no tongue could ever
Pronounce dishonor of her—by my life,
She never knew harm-doing! (Shakespeare 2.3.1-5).

Mrs. Jameson finds this complimenting engaging: "How nobly has Shakespeare done justice to the two women, and heightened our interest in both..." (367) As it is overt here, Anne does not see herself as the cause of the divorce:

Yet if that quarrel, Fortune, do divorce
It from the bearer, 'tis a sufferance panging
As soul and body's severing. (Shakespeare 2.3.16-18).

Instead, it is simply "Fortune" or fate, the uncontrolled force of circumstances that are to be condemned.

Thus, figure of Anne works as a foil to Catherine in Ribadeneyra's narration better than in case of Shakespeare. Ribadeneyra clearly and zealously presents Anne as an immoral antipode to pious and virtuous Queen. To undermine Anne's reputation, he makes emphasis on her ugliness and lustfulness, which, however, does not find clear historical proofs. Shakespeare, in his turn, does not place Anne in the opposition to Catherine that much, instead he rather portrays a complex character of Anne who is quite compassionate toward Catherine, yet ambitious. As an English playwright, Shakespeare could not present any open

disapproval towards the mother of a recently deceased queen. Due to the same reasons, no references to Anne's execution were done.

5. CONCLUSIONS

With the analysis conducted, it gets clear that it is possible to find both similarities and differences in the way Ribadeneyra and Shakespeare portray Catherine. The interpretations of the observations show that as Queen, Catherine is rather passive for the Jesuit but active for Shakespeare. As Ribadeneyra praised Catholic nature in a ruler, not political aspirations, it gets clear that his portrayal is genuinely complimenting. Shakespeare's play presents a Queen with a greater political power as she advises the king on the governmental issues such as taxation. However, none of the authors manage to present a true-to-life Catherine in terms of political power: her regency, diplomatic skills and ambassadorship, among others, get neglected.

As wife, Catherine appears loyal, loving and forgiving in both accounts, despite the hardships and ill-treatment. This presentation intertwines with her deep religious values. She believes that the marriage, once confirmed by Pope, cannot be broken and thus she refuses for a divorce no matter what.

With no doubt, different genres and thus lengths of the texts matter greatly. As the play spans for a period of about twenty-four years, but only takes 7 days at the time of narration, it rushes over or excludes many things which find their place in Ribadeneyra's lengthy account. Thus, for example the role of Catherine as mother is better presented by Ribadeneyra, at least because he captures Mary as a character. However, in both texts, Catherine is still preoccupied over her daughter's fate and legitimacy,

As a Catholic, Catherine finds her presentation as a moral beacon and a model of righteous behavior in Ribadeneyra's paradigm. Her completely pious life is praised as well as her readiness for martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Having dissemination of the Catholic faith as one of his goals, Ribadeneyra knew that martyrdom stories of "heroic virtues should more easily spread throughout the entire world" (Ribadeneyra 141). Thus, his personal inclinations, origin and ideology resulted in such a presentation and complete admiration over the figure of Catherine. Shakespeare's Catherine is also Catholic and in some ways even resembles Virgin

Mary or another figure of Catholic martyrdom Mary Stuart. As Reformation put restrictions on the playwrights, Shakespeare could not overtly stage what he wanted. Everything had to pass over censorship of the Protestant Crown. Nevertheless, he manages to allude to the Catholic awe with his scene of the vision. Catherine's heroine is the one chosen to see the vision, to feel its celestial peace and to finally get rewarded for all her sufferings. In this way, Shakespeare might have expressed his sympathy towards Catherine as a pious figure and simply "good woman". We cannot know whether Shakespeare was Catholic at heart, however, his favorable portrayal of Catherine, produced in a Protestant country, opens the door to discussion and exploring the dramatic purpose of such a presentation.

Finally, in terms of juxtaposing Catherine to Anne Boleyn, it is mainly *Ecclesiastical History* that utilizes Anne as a clear foil and opponent to Catherine, evoking in this way dichotomies of good/evil, moral/immoral and innocent/erotic. With a contrast of Anne, Catherine's virtues shine even brighter. Shakespeare does not collide Catherine and Anne, nor is he generally that critical over the figure of Anne which gets clear bearing in mind the context of writing. Overt and harsh criticism to the mother of Elizabeth might have undermined the status of Elizabeth's successor and current ruler James I.

While Ribadeneyra's ideological, religious and political context, as well as Spanish audience that he targeted, clearly explain all his motivation for describing Catherine the way he did, the case of Shakespeare is more confusing and sensitive. The play is ambiguous in many ways as it is not clear what side the playwright takes. On the one hand, he had to follow the censorship norms and not provoke the king's anger, but on the other he invested a lot in the heroine of another faith and from another country just recently hostile to England. If to accept that he was a secret recusant and staged the play for other English Catholics, it starts to make more sense.

Furthermore, the analysis shows the evolution of the Anglo-Spanish complex relations. Written during the acute period of the Anglo-Spanish War and on the eve of its climax Spanish Armada (1588), *Ecclesiastical History* clearly works as a piece of political and religious anti-English propaganda which aimed to delegitimize Reformation. While evidently opposing pious Spanish Catherine to evil English Henry and Anne, Ribadeneyra gains popular support from Spanish audience and sets the scene for the coming invasion to England. His presentations of Catherine was purposed to teach Spaniards (including Spanish monarchy) the moral behavior and pious values. Ribadeneyra's account also demonstrates,

that even in the atmosphere of hostility between the countries, information could be transmitted from England to Spain. On the other hand, written after the Treaty of London (1604) which concluded the war, *Henry VII* could not be that distinct at labeling good and evil. Shakespeare avoids anti-Spanish rhetoric. Instead, he remains diplomatic, cautious and not polemic when portraying Catherine. His attempts to raise sympathy towards Catherine from the English audience may be explained not only by his possible crypto-Catholicism, but also by the wish to mitigate the Anglo-Spanish relations.

Thus, despite completely different backgrounds of Pedro de Ribadeneyra and William Shakespeare, their representations of Catherine of Aragon are in many ways similarly favorable, though with the different purposes.

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