Representations of Kingship in Early Tudor Drama (1509–1547)

by

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Abstract

During Henry VIII's reign from 1509 to 1547, the concept of kingship underwent radical changes which reflected the wider reinterpretation of monarchical power in sixteenth-century Europe. Henry VIII's kingship in particular changed from a personal monarchy which relied on the subjects' consent to an absolutist kingship which gained control over the English Church through the Act of Royal Supremacy. Henrician literature offers insight into how intellectuals around Henry VIII's court perceived the king's changing authority in this transitional period. In particular, the *speculum principis* or mirror for princes genre, employed for political instruction by scholars, poets, and playwrights, demonstrates how intellectuals tried to influence Henry's actions by engaging in cultural propaganda directed at the governing elite and the king himself. Writers relied on the established conventions of courtly counsel according to which good kings were supposed to listen to the advice of their subjects and to allow debate about their kingships. For instance, John Skelton's (1463-1529)'s *Speculum Principis* (1501),Desiderius Erasmus's (1466-1536) *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1517), Thomas Elyot's (1490-1546) *The Boke Named a Governour* (1531) and Thomas Starkey's (1498-1538) *A Dialogue Between Pole and Lupset* (1529–1532) and *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* (1536), act as examples how writers "co-opted the authoritative voices and traditions of previous generations in order to speak truth to the increasingly irresponsible and unheeding power of Henry's 'imperial' sovereignty" (Walker, *Writing under Tyranny* 25). The concerns expressed in political theoretical works were echoed in a number of plays composed by playwrights associated with the Tudor court between 1519 and 1539. Tamara Atkin asserts that Renaissance dramatists had "extended the medieval practice of using drama to influence and shape public opinion," especially in regards to Henry VIII's kingship (9). In line with these developments,

Skelton's *Magnificence* (1519), John Heywood's (1497–1580) *The Play of the Weather* (1533), and John Bale's (1495–1563) *King Johan* (1538/9) demonstrate how playwrights dramatize the *speculum principis* genre to explore in detail different aspects of royal authority, the role of counsellors, the threat of tyranny, and the emergent concept of an English empire.

While scholars have extensively examined Henrician political interludes, no study has hitherto explored systematically the relationship between these early Tudor political interludes and the contemporary mirror for princes treatises associated with the Henrician court. Moreover, very few studies to date (Salter, Carlson) have analyzed Skelton's *Speculum Principis* or examined the influence of Erasmus's, Elyot's, and Starkey's political theories on Henrician drama and its definitions of ideal kingship (Dodds, Conrad, Mayer). Likewise, Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's plays have not been compared to each other in order to delineate the evolution of the concept of royal authority throughout the Henrician period. In this thesis, I will provide a comparative analysis of Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's plays in conjunction with contemporary mirror for princes treatises by Skelton, Erasmus, Elyot, and Starkey to explore how humanists, scholars, and playwrights associated with the Tudor court defined royal authority in relation to Henry VIII. I will argue that Skelton (*Magnificence*), Heywood (*The Play of the Weather*), and Bale (*King Johan*) each demonstrates how courtly scholars during Henry VIII's reign use the *speculum principis* genre and morality play structure to advise this English king on how to properly develop his kingship in their respective opinions, either defining, implicitly subverting, or confirming his royal authority over the commonwealth.

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Table of Contents **Page**

Title Page…………………………………………………………………………... 1

Abstract………………………………………………………………………….. 2

Acknowledgements…………………………………………………………….... 4

Table of Contents……………………………………………………………….... 5

Introduction……………………………………………………………………… 6

Chapter 1: The Virtue of *Magnificence*: John Skelton's Counselling of Henry VIII........ 30

Chapter 2: The Tyranny of Jupiter: John Heywood's Satire of Henry VIII……………... 56

Chapter 3: To Make Precedent for Monarchical Sovereignty: John Bale's Support of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy……………………………………………………….. 82

Conclusion……………………………………………………………………… 112

Bibliography…………………………………………………………………….. 115

Introduction

During Henry VIII's reign from 1509 to 1547, the concept of kingship underwent radical changes which reflected the wider reinterpretation of monarchical power in sixteenth-century Europe. In the Middle Ages, kingship was based on the complex relationship between lords and their vassals, in which, in theory, the "common good depend[ed] on princes and knights cultivating the true nobility of virtue rather than relying on their wealth or birth for pre-eminence" (Pollnitz 44). In *The Early Tudor Theory of Kingship*, Franklin L. Baumer argues that the "most conspicuous and revolutionary act in the creation of the strong monarchy during the Renaissance and Reformation was the absorption of powers by the secular ruler hitherto wielded by the *sacerdotium*" (22) or the clergy. Renaissance kings, as such, styled themselves as the ultimate secular and religious authority with the legal power to determine their realm's laws or dogma. Instead of relying on feudal obligations, Renaissance rulers emphasized their status as the source of all patronage and, on account of the supposed divine origin of their power, considered themselves as God's chosen arbiters in the mortal world.

Monarchs in the sixteenth century developed their kingships from understandings of feudal obligations to absolutist positions in response to the crisis of leadership experienced by their fifteenth-century predecessors that threatened to end their respective dynasties (Burns 5). As a result, monarchs such as Henry VIII confirmed their right to redefine the political understanding of justice, established in secular law and religious dogma, to ensure that their individual authority and family's influence continued to exist. J.H. Burns argues how:

> [t]o be the source, the one supreme source of all other forms of jurisdictional authority-was what mattered above all in the developing theory of monarchy, from which the modern theory of sovereignty was emerging in this period. That divine law, natural law,

> and fundamental constitutional law all imposed limits more rigorous than were acceptable in the fully developed juridical theory of sovereignty … (162)

Burns defines sovereignty according to how much control monarchies or other sources of authority, for example churches, had over the ideals of justice and its practicalities, specifically how the rule of law impacted the general populaces. In line with this theoretical definition, an absolute monarchy was "independent of any other power, save only that of God, "by whom kings reign" (160). For Burns, the absolutist theory of kingship was an important development in the political landscape of sixteenth-century Europe where rulers began to conceive of their own reigns as above all other earthly authorities, only being beholden to God's judgement, which gave them the right to determine what was lawful and fair within their realms.

Modern Tudor scholarship is centrally concerned with the notions of sovereignty, namely with monarchs' right to take political action on their own without the consent of their subjects. Henry VIII's initial acts as king, especially his military attack against France, established how he connected medieval and Renaissance understandings of rule to further empower his royal sovereignty. In 1512, Henry VIII declared war on France with what Michael A. R. Graves defines as the "twin objectives of regaining his 'inheritance' and asserting his legitimate claim to the French crown" (172). As such, Henry VIII used the ideals of medieval kingship to gain glory through military success and to show that the Tudor dynasty was a continuation of the previous Plantagenet dynasty. In 1515, Henry VIII again showed his desire for greater sovereignty when he responded to a political conflict between Parliament and the clergy, with the former accusing the latter of murdering Richard Hunne, a Lollard merchant, during an inquisition. To solve the matter, the English king organized a "formal disputation between canon lawyers for the two sides over which he presided" (Graves 108). The matter was eventually resolved when judicial judges declared that the clergy were guilty of claiming the English Church had more authority

than the monarchy, also known as *praemunire*. This incident prompted Henry VIII to "declare that he was England's king by 'the ordinance and sufferance of God' and that his royal predecessors had never had any 'superior but God alone'…. [i]t was a clear, early statement of his sovereignty, long before the divorce crisis" (Graves 147).

In the early years of his reign, Henry VIII's actions show a pattern of his developing his authority in tandem with his public image: the king wanted to ensure that not only did he appear as a great ruler but that his appearance reflected an unchallengeable authority. The declaration of war against France demonstrated how Henry VIII attempted to improve his popularity among the elites of English society who held some measure of political power. The Richard Hunne affair embodied Henry VIII's early desires to control secular and ecclesiastical laws as a means to broker peace between the competing claims of Parliament and the Church. This gradually evolving interpretation of royal authority was further advanced and significantly complicated by the political changes prompted by the King's Great Matter, Henry VIII's protracted divorce from his first queen, Katherine of Aragon, which lasted from 1527 to 1533. Henry VIII "always relished being the devout and loyal supporter of the Papacy," but when Clement VII defied Henry VIII's efforts to strengthen his personal monarchy, the relationship between these two institutions deteriorated (Wooding 138). In 1534, sanctioned by the Reformation Parliament and the Act of the Submission of the Clergy, the Act of Royal Supremacy gave Henry VIII the "power to perform ecclesiastical visitations to correct all errors and heresies" (Eppley 6). Parliament enabled the king to have full control of his divorce case and to fulfill his unrelenting desire to have a male heir to the throne, in addition to ratifying the Act of Royal Supremacy which granted Henry VIII the title of Supreme Head over the English Church. Henry's new authority allowed English kings to act on Church matters without any oversight from religious or

secular administration. The Act of Royal Supremacy and England's break with Rome marked a dramatic change in how Henry VIII defined his own sovereignty as a monarch. By the 1530s, Henry VIII convinced the nobility to legally acknowledge his sovereignty, essentially eliminating the need for the support of his subjects in order to maintain his authority. Henry VIII reconsidered the parameters of his sovereignty in response to the threat of papal interference as indicated by his shift from a personal kingship to an absolutist rule. Under these circumstances, Henry VIII again looked to the past to find historical precedent to support his new position as the Supreme Head of England to ensure the safety of his position on the throne and the continuance of the Tudor dynasty.

Henry VIII's increased political power resulted in the reinterpretation of his sovereignty and the monarchy as an institution fortified by historical argument. As John Guy contends, Henry VIII "argued, first, that the kings of England from the second century AD had enjoyed secular *imperium* and spiritual supremacy over their kingdom and national Church; and second, that the English Church was an autonomous province of the Catholic Church independent from Rome and the Papacy" (*The Tudor Monarchy* 83). *Imperium*, in this case, refers to Henry VIII's claim that his authority not as a king but as an English emperor was autonomous of any other authorities except for God. In this sense, Henry VIII argued that he was not adding to his existing authority but reclaiming political powers that had been lost over time or appropriated by the papacy. Henry VIII's new absolutist kingship was a reinvention of a theocratic model of rule in which his "*imperium* was ordained by God and embraced both 'temporal' and 'spiritual' government" (83). Henry VIII's actions and rhetoric pointed to his belief that the power of the state, both its political and religious institutions, had always been invested in the monarchy and that the Act of Royal Supremacy granted this king the rightful place as the Supreme Head of the

English Church. Similar to the Hunne affair, Henry VIII returned to his claims of absolute supremacy by arguing that Royal Supremacy could be applied across his reign, including before he adopted the title of Supreme Head of England.

However, despite Henry VIII's argument of his pre-existing supreme power, the king still relied on Parliament to provide him with the legal right to obtain this position. D.M. Loades argues that after "1535 the Tudor state was sovereign in the face of the outside world, but its internal order depended upon a *de facto* concordat or understanding between the monarch and the political nation, the latter referring to Parliament and members of the nobility" (6). Consequently, Henry VIII had to ask Parliament for permission to codify his status as the Supreme Head of England into law. Loades explains that there was a *de facto* understanding between the monarch and England's political nation as the two ruling powers agreed to give Henry VIII more sovereignty or legal authority to complete his monarchical duties. In this case, Henry VIII and Parliament had come together to combat what they viewed as foreign interference in an internal political matter by giving the monarchy greater power to determine justice within the realm. Henry VIII's break with Rome and his pronouncement as Supreme Head of the Church of England were received with mixed reactions: it displeased those who feared the erosion of religious traditions and papal authority but was welcomed by "evangelicals" who wanted to reform religious rites, restructure the Church, and curtail the influence of corrupt clergy.

As his political power increased, Henry VIII expressed his royal personage through grand displays of extravagance and fashioned himself as a magnificent patron who funded intellectual pursuits. Following Renaissance models, Henry VIII used his court to foster an academic community of humanist and courtly scholars, who in turn portrayed him as an intellectual ruler

associated with the arts. Lucy Wooding declares that Henry VIII was a "man shaped by his physical environment, his relationships, his palaces, books and possessions," a ruler who based his authority on his outward appearance (8). Likewise, Henry VIII also shaped the world around him through his material belongings, often using grand and extravagant building projects to display his kingly magnificence to his elite subjects. For example, the English king had a new library constructed in London during the 1520s that contained approximately 329 books to "maintain his reputation as an enthusiastic patron of scholarship" (Wooding 76). Henry VIII curated his appearance as a ruler who not only cared about the arts but also facilitated a culture of learning and education through various construction projects. Henry VIII created a public image as a "cultivated king … [whose] generous patronage attracted accomplished musicians from all over the Continent, but also poets, painters, architects, sculptors, gilders and carvers" (Graves 38). Using his court and his kingly wealth, Henry VIII was able to foster a network of artists and writers who were beholden to his personage based on personal patronage. Either through enacting grand architectural projects or funding artists, the second Tudor king was able to create the persona of a Renaissance monarch who helped garner support from humanist and courtly scholars.

In fact, Henrician literature was an indicator of public and private opinions at the royal court, especially of those intellectuals associated with Henry VIII and his personal counsellors. Greg Walker claims that Henrician writers, "when confronted with the unprecedented demands that accompanied Henry's Reformation, reacted to them initially at least in time-honoured ways" (*Writing under Tyranny* 25). Writers relied on the established conventions of courtly counsel according to which good kings were supposed to listen to the advice of their subjects and to allow debate about their kingships. Furthermore, they "co-opted the authoritative voices and

traditions of previous generations in order to speak truth to the increasingly irresponsible and unheeding power of Henry's 'imperial' sovereignty" (25). Authors referred to and often employed the voices of classical or biblical authorities on royal authority to bolster their positions. Consequently, these writers "tried to reassert the collective values of their class, and exercised the learned traditions of their humanist training in the attempt to bridle and correct a tyrannical ruler" (*Writing under Tyranny* 26) who was changing the relationship between the monarchy and its subjects. Most importantly, Walker highlights "how quickly a sense that Henry was falling into potentially tyrannical behavior becomes evident in the literature of the period" (*Writing under Tyranny* 419). Henrician counsel literature consisted of more than opinion pieces on Henry VIII's rule; their authors were "actively involved … in those issues and sought to influence their outcome through that involvement" (*Plays of Persuasion* 2). For Walker, this involvement meant that early modern drama was defined "as a branch of rhetoric; as essentially a persuasive rather than a meditative exercise" (*Plays of Persuasion* 8). Guy furthermore contends that Henrician courtiers, courtly scholars, and Henry VIII's subjects in general believed that "*imperium* and *consilium* were symbiotic [which] sustained the role of 'counsel' as an 'inspirational myth'" ("The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England" 292). For Henry VIII and his court, this meant that the king's sovereignty expressed as his innate power as the head of the state, also known as his *imperium* or imperial status, was intrinsically tied to his ability to receive and accept his subjects' opinions on his leadership. The term counsel, thus, "covered not only the assumptions, but also some of the most important practices and political structures of the Tudor and early-Stuart polity" (292).

The belief that the English nation during the Henrician period was founded on a relationship in which the monarch received counsel from its subjects originated in the "contract

theory … [in which] the process of feudal enfeoffment made the king and his tenants-in-chief parties to a contract" (Guy, "The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England" 297). From a traditional standpoint, the nobility viewed counselling the king as their legal right since both the leadership and its subjects were bound by their respective oaths to one another to allow political discourse, as stated in the Magna Carta of 1215 (297–298). However, the newly emerging class of humanist advisors argued that the "appointment of royal counsellors was a matter for the king alone" ("The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England" (298), which went against the previously established conventions that only nobles should act as advisors to the king. The differing opinions of the nobility and England's intellectual elite illustrate the shift from the contractual relationship of the politics of feudalism towards the centralization of the monarchy as the main source of governmental power. As such, counselling the king became a matter of political rhetoric, where courtly scholars and the nobility attempted to compete with Henry VIII's own opinions and that of his Privy Council to influence how England as a nation developed. Guy claims that "'counsel' was neither a neutral concept nor even one suited intrinsically to the orderly conduct of politics … [as it] subsumed competing moral and political values which stimulated at best intellectual debate, at worst political ideology" (293). The counselling of the king was therefore a rhetorical act in that diverse parties wanted to partake in the monarchy's *imperium* by influencing how the head of the state governed society. While Henry VIII's *imperium* was never questioned in these instances of counsel, humanists did probe the king's ability to follow the right advice. Jacqueline Rose adds a third category of kingly advice that spanned a number of different genres and existed in either oral or textual forms. She points to the role of the Church and ecclesiastical authorities whose advice differed from political treatises: "While ecclesiastical counsel was a distinct political language, it did not reside in a

specific textual genre … [since it could] be found in sermons to kings, sermons about kings, defences of Royal Supremacy, and wider reflections on the nature of the English church and monarchy" (48).

The different ways Henry VIII's subjects tried to influence his reign suggest that Royal Supremacy was not all encompassing in its purview over limiting speech. The nobility and courtiers viewed kings as "self-limiting, conceding powers to parliaments and common law ... [but] these privileges were rooted in royal grace, and the combination of this with the core of absolutism (non-resistance) precluded challenges to royal authority" (Rose 52). Those who believed in Henry VIII's absolute rule held the position that his kingship could not be disputed, but that the monarch could be educated in the proper virtues, such as magnificence, the virtue of moderation, to prevent him from making irresponsible decisions or listening to the wrong advisors. Rose argues that "theorists of counsel recognized the inability of kings to rule alone" (67), as monarchs relied on their ministers and advisors to inform them of the status of the disparate parts of the realm. Counsel became more important for Henry VIII, since humanists viewed his reign as the beginning of a new form of Renaissance monarchy. As such, treatises now focused on the counsellors themselves, advising the advisors on how to properly guide kings towards virtue and ethical governance of the commonwealth. Whether it was "ecclesiastical, parliamentary, … [or] humanist," counsellors who supported Henry VIII's absolutist rule believed that "advice aided, not impugned, sovereignty" (Rose 69).

Significantly, Henrician literature offers insight into how writers who acted as counsellors at Henry VIII's court perceived the king's changing authority in this transitional period. In particular, the *speculum principis* or mirror for princes genre, employed for political instruction by scholars, poets, and playwrights, demonstrates how intellectuals tried to influence

Henry VIII's actions by engaging in cultural propaganda directed at the governing elite and the king himself. In Geoffrey Koziol's definition, *speculum principis* refers to "treatises written to advise rulers on the principles of good and bad governances … presenting a distillation of scriptural and patristic teachings on virtue and vice and good and bad rulership that might serve as a 'mirror' in which a king could examine himself and the quality of his actions" (183–184). Originating in late antiquity, the mirror for princes genre was first adapted by Irish writers in the seventh and by the Carolingian dynasty in the eighth century, and enjoyed popularity throughout the Middle Ages (Koziol 184–185). By the early sixteenth century, humanists adopted this genre to advocate an educational program using classical and biblical examples of good governance to guide monarchs towards the betterment of their commonwealth. In England, humanists' treatises were particularly concerned with public discourse centred on Henry VIII's efforts to further establish himself as the heart of political and religious authority within England.

Responding to Henry VIII's ascension to the throne, John Skelton (1463–1529), a poet, dramatist, and royal tutor to Henry VIII, and the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus (1466–1536), who had close personal ties to the English court, expressed the hope many English intellectuals held that this future king would create a new age of virtuous rule for England. Skelton's *Speculum Principis* (located in *The Latin Writings of John Skelton*, edited by Carlson) (1501), the first mirror for princes treatise composed during the Tudor period, emphasizes that "virtue and learning … are more important to princes than lineage or power or wealth" (Scattergood 58), and suggested that Henry VIII could become a proficient ruler by studying the correct examples of governance. It was Skelton who introduced his royal pupil Henry VIII to Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince* (1517), which argued that the "one idea which should concern a prince in ruling, should likewise concern the people in selecting their prince:

the public weal, free from all private interests" (140). Erasmus describes the ideal king as someone invested in bringing peace to the world:

> complete in all the virtues; born for the common good … who has more than a paternal spirit toward everyone; who holds the life of each individual dearer than his own; who works and strives night and day for just one end—to be the best he can for everyone; with whom rewards are ready for all good men and pardon for the wicked, if only they will reform. (162)

Skelton's and Erasmus's works illustrate not only how humanists used their treatises to promote greater education about good governance but also how their authors advertised their skills to gain patronage at court.

Similarly, Thomas Elyot (1490–1546), a clerk of the King's Council appointed by Henry VIII's influential royal minister Cardinal Wolsey, and Thomas Starkey (1498–1538), the humanist scholar and royal clerk patronized by Wolsey's successor Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540), also wrote mirror for princes treatises that elaborate on the boundaries of kings' sovereignty as a response to Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy. Following Skelton's and Erasmus's examples, Elyot published *The Boke Named the Governour* (alternatively titled *The Boke, Named the Governour Devised by Sir Thomas Elyot*) (1531) in an effort to win Henry VIII's favour following Wolsey's imprisonment and fall from power in 1530 (Robert Sullivan and Arthur Walzer 13). Isabelle Bore points out that Elyot's *Governour* teaches royal adherents that, "unlike the tyrant who favoured his own personal desire, the good king put the common good above his own personal desires" (114). Elyot regarded the monarchy as a sacrosanct institution that must be defended at all costs to prevent societal disorder. At the same time, he cautioned that counsellors must be on guard to prevent their ruler from delving into tyrannical practices. Likewise Starkey advocates in his political writings *A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* (1529–1532) and *Kynges Hyghnes*, also named *An Exhortation to the People Instructing Them to Unity*

and Obedience (1536) that the English monarchy needed to share its power with the nobility to prevent tyranny. Starkey was first patronized by the influential diplomat and churchman Reginald Pole and later by Cromwell, Henry VIII's chief minister between 1535 and 1540. In *A Dialogue*, Starkey stresses that, as head of the kingdom, the ruler is responsible for the health of the body politic and delineates a "system of interlocking councils designed to check royal (and papal) power" (Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* 2). While Skelton's, Erasmus's, and Elyot's treatises recommend educational reforms to improve the institution of kingship, Starkey suggests the radical idea of a constitutional monarchy where the king shares his power with other jurisdictional arms of the government.

As a result of Henry VIII's break with Rome and Royal Supremacy, Walker argues, "the years between 1509 and 1547 saw the continuation, and in some cases the growth, of a wide range of dramatic and quasi-dramatic activities … [in which] drama reached into every corner of the realm and involved a wide cross-section of the population, whether as patrons, performers or spectators" (*Plays of Persuasion* 6–7). Whereas the *speculum principis* treatises were largely reserved for the elite of Henrician society, political morality plays reached a more diverse audience and offered unique opportunities for playwrights to express their opinions on Henry VIII's kingship publicly and to counsel the monarch openly. The concerns expressed in political theoretical works were echoed in a number of plays composed by playwrights associated with the Tudor court between 1519 and 1539. Tamara Atkin asserts that Renaissance dramatists had "extended the medieval practice of using drama to influence and shape public opinion," especially in regards to Henry VIII's kingship (9). Henrician plays have a special place in dramatic history because of their overt discussion of political issues within the framework of the traditional morality play structure, presented as the temptation, fall, and restitution of the

protagonist through a cosmic *psychomachia* between good and evil previously used primarily for religious instruction (Happé, "Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII" 283). Walker points out that Henry VIII controlled public discourse and limited what people could say about his authority by threat of imprisonment or death, as illustrated by the tragic fate of his Lord Chancellors Wolsey, More, and Cromwell (*Persuasive Fictions* 16). Nevertheless, there were "cultural conventions which enabled … artists, poets, playwrights and prose-writers, to express opinions at certain times and in certain places, on issues intimately concerned with the King's policies and personal conduct" (Walker, *Persuasive Fictions* 21). Dramatists composed interludes that seemingly praised established power, yet also "engaged with it in complex and genuine negotiations over the use of that authority" (Walker, *The Politics of Performance* 51–52). Playwrights also exploited the patronage system to their advantage by challenging certain aspects of England's political system, while also supporting their patrons' beliefs as a means to keep their living. Walker, furthermore, contends that plays acted more as a "branch of rhetoric, essentially a persuasive rather than a meditative exercise" (*Plays of Persuasion* 8). Playwrights often applied the allegorical devices inherited from the medieval dramatic tradition to advise the king on proper governance, trying to persuade, educate, cajole, criticize, and shape him into what they considered an ideal monarch. Their plays were political by nature not only because of their subject matter but also because they were constructed with the intent to influence the course of Henry VIII's political leadership. Peter Happé asserts that the "presence of King Henry is critical to the significance and function of the revels … [as they] were devised for his pleasure" ("Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII" 273), meaning that all and any type of courtly entertainment that occurred was always made with the king's spectatorship or participation in mind. Henry VIII took advantage of this notion by having certain plays performed or

entertainments arranged to fit the persona that he wished to display. For example, Henry VIII partook in a "solemn joust … [which was] held in honour of Queen Katherine at Westminster" in 1511 to display his chivalry and promote himself as a military king to gain favour from the nobility to begin a war against France (Happé "Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII" 274). Courtly entertainment could be used for more than displays of extravagance; it could also be used for rhetorical purposes. While Happé argues that Henry VIII was the first to politicize courtly entertainment ("Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII" 286), Anne Lancanshire points out that prior monarchs such as Richard III and Henry VII used coronation celebrations and royal entry pageants to display their power (135–136). Thus, playwrights during Henry VIII's reign were building upon theatrical precedents and used dramatic performances to comment on the politics of the English monarchy. Happé argues that:

> [the] individual playwrights [John Skelton, John Heywood, John Rastell and John Bale] saw in the drama various ways of exploiting its potential for commenting upon and perhaps influencing royal affairs. If Wolsey and then the King had come to exploit a political dimension for the revels, it is also likely that others had come to see that much could be achieved provided that the King was treated with careful respect. ("Dramatic Genre and the Court of Henry VIII" 286)

Thus, new conventions were established through the dramatic rhetoric of counsel according to which morality plays could be used for political purposes. As such, in the Henrician period English drama entered the spheres of public discourse on Henry VIII's supremacy and nature of governance.

In line with these developments, Skelton's *Magnificence* (1519), John Heywood's (1497–1580) *The Play of the Weather* (1533), and John Bale's (1495–1563) *King Johan* (1538/9) explore in detail different aspects of royal authority, the role of counsellors, the threat of tyranny, and the emergent concept of an English empire. Skelton took inspiration from his own *Speculum*

Principis and Erasmus's *The Education* to dramatize in *Magnificence* the topics of the appropriate conduct of advisors, the nature of England's patronage system, and the potential consequences of kings' abuse of power. Additionally, as Alysha Pollintz declares, the poet laureate Skelton used his prose treatises and his single play for self-fashioning and self-promotion at the Tudor court. In particular, Skelton "craved the approval of the learned *Graecistes*" or England's leading intellectuals at the time (46). Wooding furthermore emphasizes that when "Henry's tutor, John Skelton, compared the young king to Alexander the Great, it had the fortunate corollary of turning Skelton himself into a second Aristotle" (22). Although Skelton evidently used his literary works to garner attention and to gain potential patronage, some scholars assert that he wrote *Magnificence* to slander Wolsey for abusing his position as Henry VIII's main counsellor to negatively influence the king. In fact, as in the introduction to her edition of *Magnificence*, Paula Neuss argues, "once the audience had seen qualities of Wolsey in the hero [Magnificence] … because there were frequent complaints about the cardinal's 'magnificence,' or simply because he was the obvious choice when a proud prince was in question, then they would see the Vices as representing (on one level) aspects of his personality" (qtd. in *Magnificence, John Skelton* 37). This assumption is based on Skelton's satirical poems, such as "Why Come Ye Nat to Court?," which openly criticized Wolsey's pride and ambition.

In opposition to Neuss's interpretation, Nicoletta Caputo asserts that the "situation at Court in 1519 gave the play great relevance: the interlude allegorically portrays the rise and fall of the so-called king's 'minions,' an episode which had a great resonance at Court, in the country and abroad" (10). In particular, Henry VIII had been disgraced by his favourite courtiers, young noblemen he considered companions, who went on a public display of debauchery with the French king in Paris. Following the advice of his senior ministers, Henry VIII reorganized his

court to include experienced and serious knights to act as his ministers, while also expelling the minions from their positions. Walker contends that the "government actively promoted [the expulsion of the Minions] … as evidence that Henry was, after a brief lapse, once more a King in command of his vocation" (*Plays of Persuasion* 70). Relying more on historical records than the similarities between Skelton's literary allusions and contemporary political figures, Caputo explores how Skelton wished to redeem Henry's image from the shame of his courtiers' actions in France. Accordingly, Skelton argued that while Henry VIII was still king during this event, it was not entirely his fault, as it was the poor advice provided by inexperienced and rash advisors that had led him astray. At the same time, the dramatist was also publicly chastising the king for neglecting his self-discipline. The result is, as Walker contends, a "vehicle for praise for the King, rather than criticism" (*Plays of Persuasion* 76). The play thus traced the process of how Henry VIII had matured as a ruler and attained true magnificence. For this thesis, I will argue that Skelton conceived *Magnificence* as an attack on courtly behaviour in general, particularly on the ambitions of courtiers who wished to manipulate Henry VIII's power. By doing so, both Neuss's and Caputo's approach can be applied to Skelton's theory of kingship, according to which Henry VIII needed to adopt a balanced view of the virtue of magnificence, both in a liberal (Aristotelian) and a religious sense (following Thomas Aquinas's interpretation) to safeguard his authority and the commonwealth.

While Skelton's *Magnificence* deals with the internal characteristics of rulers, Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* and Bale's *King Johan* each examine the effects of the king's political decisions on the commonwealth. A royal servant and court entertainer, Heywood was a member of the *grex poetarum* (Happé, "Heywood, John" 1), a humanist circle that included his uncle Thomas More (1478–1535), the prominent English humanist and Lord Chancellor of England

after Wolsey's fall in 1530 (House, "More, Sir Thomas" 1). Heywood composed his play at the height of Henry VIII's Great Matter, between 1529 and his appointment as the Supreme Head in 1534. In his satire, Heywood evokes the figure of Jupiter, who acquires control of the weather from the Parliament of the gods, and he interviews his subjects about how best to use his newfound power. Following a series of comic dialogues, modelled on medieval debate literature, Jupiter concludes that the weather (a conventional metaphor for governance) should remain as it is, ensuring that all of the petitioners are given what they demanded. Through a carefully calibrated satirical representation of Jupiter, Heywood comments on Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, which, in his view, is "neither fully magnificent nor purely pragmatic … but at the same time disingenuously self-serving, vainglorious, and not a little preposterous" (Walker, "Complaining about the Weather" 125). Jupiter's decision to maintain the status quo corresponds to that of Henry VIII, in that both the fictional god's and the real king's inaction holds the implicit threat of turning their kingships into tyranny. Walker argues that Heywood and More both believed that the religious traditions established by Rome needed protection from the reformist changes proposed by Henry VIII and his advisors during the critical years prior to the English Reformation ("Complaining about the Weather" 114).

Heywood's religious conservative views and intellectual connections influence his plays, especially those composed during Henry VIII's establishment of Royal Supremacy from 1529 to 1534. Pamela M. King argues that "Heywood uses Jupiter as a mouthpiece for more than flattery, presenting a political philosophy that affirms the mysterious and non-negotiable nature of kingship … urging Henry to fulfill the obligations inherent in his vocation as a personal monarch" (217). Most notably, some scholars concur that Heywood saw Henry VIII as a potential defender of Catholic beliefs against religious reformers who wanted to overturn Church

traditions and convert England into a Protestant state. Happé agrees that Heywood is "trying to prompt … [Henry VIII] towards asserting his authority in preserving the traditional relationship between church and state" ("'Rejoice Ye In Us With Joy Most Joyfully'"4). According to this interpretation, Heywood's portrayal of Jupiter as keeping the weather the same and ignoring his subjects' concerns reveals the playwright's own desire that Henry should disregard his advisors who favour reform and maintain the status quo for the English Church. However, this reading does not consider the strongly satirical tone of Heywood's play, particularly the implicit critical characterization of Jupiter and his actions. Candace Lines makes the case that, instead of supporting Henry's absolutist tendencies, Heywood is satirizing the king's attempt to become the secular and religious head of England. Lines posits that Heywood's use of debate literature and literary allusion "is not a coded evasion of censorship, comprehensible only to a few, but a political rhetoric which fosters in readers an anti-absolutist hermeneutic" (406). This thesis makes a similar argument, asserting that Heywood's religious conservatism and More's traditionalist perspective in theological matters influences the subtly satirical portrayal of Henry VIII, and, instead of supporting Henry's absolutism, offers a covert warning against tyranny.

In contrast to Heywood's satire of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, Bale's *King Johan* explicitly supports the king's ascension to an absolutist monarchy. Bale, a former Carmelite monk who converted to Protestantism, was patronized by Cromwell after the latter became Lord Chancellor following More's execution in 1535. Composed during the final stages of the controversial and at times violent dissolution of the monasteries, Bale's theatrical company performed *King Johan* in the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer's palace in 1538/9 (MacCulloch 420). As opposed to Heywood's dramas composed in defence of religious traditions, Bale's plays contain anti-Catholic rhetoric and promote reform within the state and the

English Church (White, Cavanagh, Gerhardt). Bale earned the nickname "bilious" for his hatred of the papacy, drawing the attention of Cromwell, who hired him to write propagandistic dramas against the Roman Church (White 12–13). Just as with Heywood's plays, critics apply Bale's biography to *King Johan*, drawing parallels between the plot's political message and the playwright's own experiences as a former Carmelite monk. Dermot Cavanagh argues that this play is a "powerful instance of ideological critique, for it deciphers how the vested interests of the medieval church obstruct a just estimation of the truth and recovers persecuted voices that have attempted to promote a fuller vision of human community" ("The Paradox of Sedition in John Bale's *King Johan*" 172). Cavanagh furthermore claims that Bale's drama reveals the connection between nascent English nationalism and Protestant ideology.

As Paul Whitfield White asserts, "Bale was caught up in the vortex of the public relations campaign masterminded by Thomas Cromwell during the 1530s and designed to popularize Royal Supremacy and especially to discredit papal authority" within England by substantially revising King John's history (13). Bale believes that papal historians had turned the twelfth-century King John into a villain because of his attempts to regain England's religious independence from the papacy. Carole Levin contends that Cromwell and other Reformation propagandists saw an opportunity to use King John's "struggle with his pope … as a useful precedent to Henry's, making it seem less irreverent of tradition, so long as certain inconveniences were expunged from the record" (24). Bale adapts King John's history to prove that Henry VIII's actions were not tyrannical, but that he was justly acting on behalf of the commonwealth. Moreover, *King Johan* not only advocates Henry VIII's arguments for Royal Supremacy but also introduces the idea of an English empire (free from the Roman Church's corruption) through the allegorical figure of Imperial Majesty, whose appearance concludes the

play. Imperial Majesty, a representation of Henry VIII, takes up John's mantle and returns England to its natural order by introducing a new concept of independent royal authority. Ernst Gerhardt also considers how Bale accomplishes this task by transforming King John from a villainous ruler (as represented in the medieval chronical tradition) to a defender of England's religious independence. Gerhardt makes the case that the widow Ynglond in the play "recapitulates the revisionist history that the preceding action of the play has staged" and "memorializes Johan as a godly king who suffered martyrdom for his resistance to the Roman Church's authority" (50). Bale recast King John as a precursor to Henry VIII, where the latter is invited to take up John's cause for England's religious independence. In Happé's view, "[w]hile Johan is fallible, a victim of circumstances and the unfortunate result of his own good will, Imperial Majesty is invincible and divinely inspired" ("A Reassessment of John Bale's Rhetoric" 262). The extant literature on Bale suggests that he consciously connects his desire for religious reforms to emerging English nationalism through the allegorization of Henry VIII's imperial majesty at the end of the play. Bale hoped that Henry would continue John's fight against the Roman Church and fulfill his role as a Protestant king/emperor. This thesis will adopt the interpretation that the representation of royal authority in *King Johan* was shaped by Bale's anti-papal beliefs and his desire for England's independence from papal interference. In particular, this playwright wants the English commonwealth to freely practice its own legal and religious system without any influence from the papacy, not only by adapting reformed doctrinal beliefs but also by promoting Henry VIII's and, by extension, England's imperial status.

Yet, while scholars have extensively examined Henrician political interludes, no study has hitherto explored systematically the relationship between these early Tudor political interludes and the contemporary mirror for princes treatises associated with the Henrician court.

Moreover, very few studies to date (Salter, Carlson) have analyzed Skelton's *Speculum Principis* or examined the influence of Erasmus's, Elyot's, and Starkey's political theories on Henrician drama and its definitions of ideal kingship (Dodds, Conrad, Mayer). Likewise, Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's plays have not been compared to each other in order to delineate the evolution of the concept of royal authority throughout the Henrician period. In this thesis, Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's political plays will therefore be discussed within the broader context of the mirror for princes literary tradition. The present study on Henrician political drama and its relation to the evolving concepts of kingship is placed theoretically within the frameworks of Renaissance literary, historical, and cultural studies. I will adopt Kevin Sharpe's representational approach to the study of Henrician interludes and the related mirror for princes treatises and his definition of power, authority, legitimation, and cultural memory. Sharpe warns that "we should not commit the idealizing (or Foucauldian) error of assuming authority's control of meaning, in other words ideological hegemony, nor should we conceive of opposition as necessarily destructive of, or even free of, official scripts and emblems" (26). Sharpe posits that power, the "effective means by which a ruler could enforce his will," and authority, a "cultural construction: a set of codes and norms" that provided rulers the legal right to use their power, cannot be characterized simply as kings having ultimate power over their subjects (8–9). Instead, power and authority, as enacted by the Tudor dynasty, can be defined as a series of complex negotiations between monarchs and their subjects (Sharpe 9). These negotiations were not always one-sided, nor were they always equal, but existed on a circumstantial basis. Furthermore, Sharpe notes that this power dynamic between ruler and ruled is manifested in the way monarchs attempted to control their public and personal image, in which the "representation of the royal body was essential to rule" (10). He also points out, however, that "the mechanisms

and practicalities of representing authority at least complicate the notion of totalizing control or indeed of an unmediated relation between royal representations and subjects and citizens" (Sharpe 20). Monarchs required a certain image of themselves and of their dynasty to make their rule legitimate, that is, to conform to "the laws or the rulers and traditions of the polity" (Sharpe 11). As such, monarchs used the representation of their image as a negotiating tactic to justify their ideology of kingship to their subjects. Likewise, the subjects used their respective interpretations of their rulers and their own representations of these leaders to influence the political system.

I will also consider the propagandistic elements particularly in Heywood's and Bale's plays by applying Levin's more nuanced use of the word *propaganda* in her survey of the representation of King John during the Reformation and by sharing Sharpe's view that "acts of representation were mediated and multiple, rather than the work of a sovereign author—or authority" (21). Similarly, I will explore the doubleness of representation, which David Kastan associates with theatrical representation, as it "offers an inherent challenge to the fundamental categories of a culture that would organise itself hierarchically and present that organization as inevitable" (464). I will examine to what extent these Henrician playwrights engage in political subversion and employ persuasive rhetoric in the guise of flattery and political conformity in order to counsel or criticize their ruler.

My argument will be further informed by the studies of Baumer and Burns, who focus on Renaissance political theories to trace the evolving ideology of kingship and empire in England in the first half of the sixteenth century. Both Baumer and Burns look to medieval practices to help contextualize Tudor theories of kingship. Baumer argues that Henrician writers "employed medieval phraseology to elucidate the new point of view ... [and] their attitude towards other

problems of kingship was, for the most part, entirely in the medieval tradition" (viii). Burns suggests that there is a "common language and methodology for the discussion of critical issues in regard to monarchy" and medieval and Renaissance writers were of the opinion that rulers were morally obliged and held responsible to act in the interest of the commonwealth, despite their unlimited power and legal rights to exert their own will (7). Baumer and Burns assert that intellectuals constituted a political presence that could question emergent absolutist monarchs by offering moral lessons to their audiences. Yet, these courtly scholars remained true to the traditions of prior writers from whom they took inspiration to meet new political, religious and societal challenges.

I will also follow Stewart Mottram's and Cathy Shrank's analysis of Tudor politics, who both state that Henrician literature, including drama, reveals a shared sense of nationhood. Mottram applies Benedict Anderson's theory of imagined communities ("the notion that people within the same political boundaries were aware of their shared identities through connected media") to his discussion of a common patriotic identity (2). Mottram defines patriotism as an "unthinking allegiance to the reigning monarch, arguing that the movement between patriotism and nationalism charts a redistribution of power, from its embodiment in the person of the king to its existence in the consciousness of the people" (3). For Mottram, Tudor theories of kingship (particularly after the break with Rome) advanced an imperial identity, in which the English nation was superior and separate from other states. This thesis follows Mottram's discussion of the growth of imperial thought in England and its ramifications on the emerging idea of sovereignty within the period.

In this thesis, I will provide a comparative analysis of Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's plays in conjunction with contemporary mirror for princes treatises by Skelton, Erasmus, Elyot,

and Starkey to explore how humanists, scholars, and playwrights associated with the Tudor court defined royal authority in relation to Henry VIII. How were the complex negotiations that legitimized or questioned the king's changing authority represented in these politically charged plays? To what extent were Skelton's, Heywood's, and Bale's plays influenced by or deviate from contemporary political treatises and how did they serve as a mirror for princes directed at the Tudor court elites and their own patrons? By discussing these Henrician political interludes in relation to contemporary theoretical works, I will explore the rhetorical strategies these playwrights employ to convey their ideas of kingship and survey the changing interpretation of power and royal authority within the context of the complex intellectual and personals networks and multifaceted negotiations at the court of Henry VIII. I will argue that Skelton (*Magnificence*), Heywood (*The Play of the Weather*), and Bale (*King Johan*) each demonstrates how courtly scholars during Henry VIII's reign use the *speculum principis* genre and morality play structure to advise this English king on how to properly develop his kingship in their respective opinions, either defining, implicitly subverting, or confirming his royal authority over the commonwealth.

Chapter 1: The Virtue of *Magnificence*:

John Skelton's Counselling of Henry VIII

Both Skelton, in the *Speculum Principis* and the drama *Magnificence*, and Erasmus, in *The Education of a Christian Prince*, demonstrate how humanists during the early reign of Henry VIII from 1509 to 1520 were concerned with the moral health of the king. In this chapter, I will explore how Skelton and Erasmus, as examples of early Henrician humanists, are indicative of courtly scholars' opinions on the importance of education in creating virtuous rulers who dedicate themselves to the economic and spiritual betterment of their subjects. The *Speculum Principis* and *The Education of a Christian Prince* show how these two writers consider magnificence, as an Aristotelian term and a Christian ideal of moderation, a significant virtue for rulers so that they can maintain their moral health. Skelton would later dramatize the lessons inherent in these mirror for princes treatises to further establish how the health of the commonwealth is inextricably tied to the well-being of the monarch. Following the medieval morality play structure, Skelton uses Magnificence's court to represent the virtues and vices that are tied to leading the realm. In particular, this playwright focuses on the conflict between reason, the ability to act rationally, and will, the desire to act on one's emotional desires. The result is a dramatic representation of Liberty's dual nature as a virtue of personal freedom to act for the betterment of oneself and others or the vice of waywardness that often leads people to choose a life full of sin, as shown by the corruptions that visit Magnificence's court. The finale of *Speculum Principis* illustrates how the virtue of magnificence can be achieved only by relying on God's guidance, while also strengthening one's resolve through pagan ideas on virtue, such as

Aristotle's arguments. Skelton and Erasmus equally argue that magnificence can only be achieved by kings when they overcome their sinful desires by relying on reason and God, allowing rulers to remain dedicated to seeking the best outcomes for their commonwealths despite their personal wants.

Skelton's political message about kingship in *Magnificence* is tied to the larger discussion on the ethics of absolutist monarchy. Baumer argues that early Tudor political writers "insisted … that the king, by the very nature of his office, is *morally* responsible to rule for the good of society as a whole" (192). Henrician political theorists were concerned that if rulers indulged in vices it might lead to a tyrannical government. It was not enough that rulers maintained their physical health, but they also needed to ensure that they remained morally obligated to maintain the good of the state. Similarly in *Magnificence*, Skelton argues that the moral health of the monarch is related to the health of the commonwealth, as Magnificence's court mirrors the inner struggles of the ruler and of society. The plot of *Magnificence* takes place within Magnificence's court, representing a microcosm of different political entities. In the opening scene, Felicity, a personification of fortune, and Liberty, a representation of freedom, argue about who is more virtuous. Magnificence resolves their conflict by declaring that Measure, the epitome of balance between two extremes, should govern Felicity and Liberty in order to bring out the best aspects of these virtues. However, the vices, led by Fancy, throw Magnificence and his court into imbalance by persuading the fictional king to give in to his baser desires of greed and tyrannical authority, which Magnificence demonstrates by banishing Measure from the court. Subsequently, Magnificence loses everything—his wealth and political position—and is tormented by Poverty, Adversity, and Despair. The Christian virtues of Good Hope, Redress, and

Circumspection rescue Magnificence, saving him from despair by restoring him to his original glory and imparting him with knowledge to live virtuously.

As the heads of their respective royal households, Henry VIII and Magnificence were expected to have firm control over their courts. The king exerted his power through patronage, using his favour and wealth to economically support his servants who would best serve the realm. Walker argues that the "royal household was considered in many ways the testing ground of a regime … [the king] who could govern his own household suggested that he could govern the nation" (*Plays of Persuasion* 84). Monarchs were seen as the patriarchs or matriarchs of the realm, offering their subjects parental protection and guidance towards a mutual betterment of the realm. When rulers failed to keep their courts in order, it appeared as if they were unfit to govern the kingdom. *Magnificence* dramatizes this theory of kingship, as the play's ruler learns about the intricacies of courtly politics. Skelton thus presents Magnificence's imaginary court as a dual symbol of the character's internal journey to understand the virtue of moderation, the capability to use one's reason for self-discipline, and his ability to use this virtue to help run the realm.

The characters in *Magnificence* are concerned with educating the audience on the qualities of a moral ruler. Skelton accomplishes this task by adopting the *psychomachia* or morality play structure, which is "formed from the Greek words for 'soul' and for 'warfare,' … [detailing] the ongoing warfare between the forces of good and evil for the soul of an individual" (Cook 1). Jay Ruud expands on this definition to point out that "medieval morality plays dealt with one of three themes: the *psychomachia* in which Virtues and Vices vie for man's soul; the summoning of Death, wherein the Mankind figure is summoned to his judgement …; and the debate by the daughters of God, Mercy and Peace, against Justice and Truth—over the salvation

of the deceased" (1). Medieval plays such as *The Castle of Perseverance* (1405–1425), *Wisdom* (1460–1470), *Mankind* (1470) and *Everyman* (1510) were all religious dramas that used the conventions proposed by Ruud to educate audiences on how to properly live as a good Christian. Each of these plays act as good cases of early plays that set the dramatic precedents and archetypes that later playwrights would follow to publicly discuss their political opinions on kingship. For example, *Mankind* follows the journey of the titular protagonist, Mankind, who falls from God's grace by following the example of Mischief, New-Guise and Titivillus (personifications of sin). Mankind is later saved by Mercy, who guides the protagonist back to God's favour by teaching him the errors of his ways and how to redeem his soul through confession (*The Broadview Anthology of Tudor Drama* 1–24).

Renaissance humanists adapted this medieval dramaturgy to examine a "new sense of the conditions and limits of human knowledge, as well as a sense of possibilities and problems of understanding the external world, the human mind, and the nature of God in relation to each other" (Cartwright 6). Skelton applies each of these themes to the elucidation of magnificent rule and virtuous governance. Medieval playwrights communicated the intended lessons of their plays to their audiences by having their titular characters be manipulated by the vice characters, fall from God's grace, and find redemption with the help of personified Christian virtues. In a similar vein, Skelton's *Magnificence* is a dramatic representation of the spiritual journey that every Christian must experience to cleanse their souls of their sins. However, Skelton changes the conventional morality structure and turns his play into a political drama on governance. Both the fictional and the real king would delegate much of their political tasks, and consequently their authority, to courtly advisors who would advise them on how to use their monarchical power.

The protagonist Magnificence acts as a stand-in for the wider concept of monarchical rule. However, as Jane Griffiths points out, "Skelton's play strikingly exploits the ambiguity in the meaning of the term [magnificence], using it as the device that sets in motion the plot against the prince" (68). In fact, *Magnificence* can be divided into two acts. Reflecting on Aristotle's interpretation, the first half deals with the prince suffering the consequences of his excessive spending, while the second part echoes Aquinas's definition as the prince overcomes his failures through Christian enlightenment. Magnificence as a virtue of discipline and moderation holds a long tradition in humanist thought. Skelton discusses virtues associated with ethically responsible kingship by drawing from classical sources. The Renaissance concept of magnificence originated from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BCE), according to which, in Matthias Roick's words:

> Magnificence … is a fitting expenditure involving largeness of scale.… The man who in small or middling things spends according to the merits of the case is not called magnificent, but only the man who does so in great things. For the magnificent man is liberal, but the liberal man is not necessarily magnificent. The deficiency of this state of character is called niggardliness, the excess of vulgarity, lack of taste, and the like, which do not go to excess in the amount spent on right objects, but by showy expenditure in the wrong circumstances and the wrong manner. (2–3)

For Aristotle, magnificence refers to the moral and aesthetic application or the creation of artistic endeavours for the benefit of the community by generating wealth for everyone. Magnificent individuals do not simply spend their wealth or share it with others freely but choose the right occasions to use it for the maximum benefit for the greater good of the community. Nafsika Athanassoulis declares that the "virtue of magnificence is concerned with the giving of large amounts of money, usually for projects that benefit a large number of people in the form of the state" (781). Magnificence is thus characterized as acts of greatness that involve using wealth to enact social and political change. As such, Aristotle argues that this virtue is reserved for the elite

of society who hold the wealth necessary to influence the development of society on a large scale.

Medieval religious scholars, however, Christianized this Aristotelian virtue when the *Ethics* was first reintroduced to European thought during the thirteenth century (Roick 22) by Dominican scholars who translated, revised, and edited Aristotle's works with commentaries. The most influential scholar to comment on magnificence was Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Fernández-Santos claims that Aquinas "refuted Aristotle's conception of magnificence as discriminatory, arguing instead that the poor—among whom they included Christ himself—were capable of exercising the *habitus* of magnificence by means of imaginary acts" (44). In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas links the virtue of liberal spending to magnanimity or fortitude of spirit, claiming that people become magnificent when they withstand adversity. Magnificence's connection to fortitude thus includes personal acts of resisting the temptations of sin and acts of solidarity that benefitted the common good of a community, such as charity. Aquinas further contends that magnificence is associated with God's grace, as people could not withstand the struggles and adversity of the material world without the help of their creator. It was crucial that Christians remained faithful by placing their trust in God to save them from hardships that derived either from their own failures to resist vice or the unfortunate consequences of misfortune. While for religious scholars magnificence represented the Christian virtue of fortitude, for the ruling classes it meant the demonstration of their social power through extravagant shows of opulence. Rees Davies argue that if a "lord was to earn the 'worship' of followers and dependants he must do so recurrently by displaying his pre-eminence and by parading his largesse, and by doing so publicly" (58). Displays of wealth were important politically for the nobility, since it was "self-referential, in that their purpose was to … [portray]

and confirm the exalted status of the greater aristocracy" (Davies 77). Members of the nobility, including the king, continually reaffirmed their high positions in society by using their wealth as a moniker of their greatness.

Early modern scholars rediscovered Aristotle's definition of moderation, or the good mean, detailed in the *Ethics* and applied it for political purposes to monarchical governance by associating it with magnificence. According to Aristotle, moderation is defined as balancing two opposing excesses against one another to produce a harmonious virtue. Cavanagh claims that for Aristotle it is the "pleasures of the body that are the concern of temperance" ("Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and Tragic Drama" 55) or moderation, in which people who let their excesses run out of control could desire something harmful. A moderate "man does not enjoy pleasures violently nor is he distressed by their absence … [instead he] desires moderately that which is conducive to health and within his means" (Cavanagh, "Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and Tragic Drama" 56). Ethically, moderation is based on people acting in their best interests through their own self-discipline or restraining their emotions.

Accordingly, humanists expected monarchs to govern their passions through their reason in order to resist the temptations of fortune and misfortune to remain in control of their personal and monarchical governance. Humanists believed that Aristotle's notion of moderation consisted of the conflict of reason (logical discipline) and will (passions and emotions). They argued that it was important for rulers to use their reason to control their will in order to become great leaders. William Harris points out that the "psychological presuppositions embodying the reason-will relationship permeated the culture of medieval and renaissance Europe" (49), and this dichotomy between self-discipline and emotional freedom was an important facet of intellectual thought. Koziol furthermore notes that the mirror for princes genre was founded on this ideal, in which

writers advocated for self-reflection of the individual to improve society (183–184). Mirror for princes treatises were "embedded in an ideology that is thoroughly hierarchical … [in that] reason should rule over passions as kings should rule over the subordinate members of his household, husbands over wives, fathers over children, leaders over subjects, and God over the universe" (184). Renaissance political theorists interpreted the Aristotelian concept of moderation as a symbol of the proper hierarchy of society, in which the king as the head of the state should rule over the passions of his subjects. Ethan H. Shagan claims that, in accordance with "Renaissance mentality that presumed interconnections and dependencies between human beings and their environments, *moderation meant government* with no clear boundary between inward and outward" (8). If rulers wanted to accomplish this balance, however, they first needed to be governed by their own reason and wisely moderate their excesses, transforming them into a life of virtue. Hence, magnificence was intricately connected to the effective rule of the realm: it was not enough that monarchs were self-disciplined to resist the temptation of tyranny but they also needed to be able to act in the best interest of the commonwealth.

Both Skelton and Erasmus advocate that monarchs require an education in governance and virtue so that they could determine whom they should listen to as their courtly advisors. As a tutor to the young prince Henry VIII between 1496 and 1502, Skelton composed the *Speculum Principis* to teach his royal pupil about the ethics of good kingship and to convince Henry VII to extend his patronage. Skelton advises the young Henry VIII that "princes especially should enlighten their lives both with excellence in learning, which is the property of a noble soul, and with outstanding probity of character … whom by good example they can inspire to strive with greatest effort in their turn to keep to virtue and to live morally" (Streitberger 39). In Skelton's view, kings need to be educated in virtue, which they can attain by learning from classical and

biblical leaders and heroes, thereby laying the foundation of a moral kingship dedicated to the betterment of their realms. Erasmus gives similar guidance to Henry VIII in *The Education of the Christian Prince*, asserting that it is important not only that rulers recognize correct virtues but that their subjects, including advisors, tutors, and courtiers, also see that their monarchs were acting for the good of the state.

> [W]hen there is no opportunity to choose the prince, care should be exercised in the same manner in choosing the tutor to the future prince. That a prince be born of worthy character we must beseech the gods above; that a prince born of good parts may not go amiss, or that one of mediocre accomplishments may be bettered through education is mainly within our province. (140)

Since it is impossible to determine the virtue of a prince through hereditary means, the only other option that a kingdom has to produce a virtuous ruler is through education. It is important, therefore, that a tutor schooled in the correct educational stratagems and understandings of what made an ideal leader is chosen to instill these virtues into princes. Much like the ruler, the tutor also needs to be properly chosen.

In the first half of *Magnificence*, Skelton applies Aristotle's definition of magnificence to argue that kings need to exercise moderation in all of their activities to ensure that their emotions and disposition remain within the limits of temperance. Here, Skelton draws from the *Speculum Principis*, which advocates that leaders need to achieve rational control over their emotions. For instance, Skelton references Aristotle's advice to Alexander on the virtues of rulership:

> Let us listen to Aristotle's remarks to Alexander; read the hundredth chapter of his letter: you have overcome your enemies, Alexander; you have won many realms; you have subjected many empires; you have obtained sole rule over the entire east; and still you either have neglected to rule or have been unable to govern the minuscule province of your body and soul. (*The Latin Writings of John Skelton* 39)

Skelton evokes Aristotle and Alexander to teach Henry VIII that it is important for people to have self-discipline in order to restrain the passions of the body and soul to ensure that their actions are guided by their rationality and not their passions, which are often influenced by vice.

In Skelton's play, Felicity and Liberty represent the opposite extremes of hoarding or using wealth to demonstrate that the excess of a virtue can be turned into a vice. Felicity, the personification of saving wealth for later use, and Liberty, the character representing individualism and freedom from responsibility, debate their ideal characteristics as the play opens. Felicity, the first to speak, shows his connection to magnificence by reiterating Aristotle's perspective that:

> All things contrived by man's reason,
> The world environed of high and low estate,
> Be it early or late, wealth hath a season.
> Wealth is of wisdom the very true probate:
> A fool is he with wealth that falleth at debate. (lines 1–5).

Felicity contends that reasonable people understand that there are ideal circumstances when wealth can be used to the greatest benefit, while those who are ignorant spend their fortune without thinking about the consequences. As such, Felicity addresses the major theme of the play, the internal conflict between reason and will, or an individual's restraint against their desires. Both those of the highest and lowest status in society are affected by this struggle, which thus has universal relevance. Skelton centres the message of Felicity's and Liberty's first encounter on the elite however; Felicity continues his speech by declaring that only the wealthy can appreciate the loss of fortune because they had something to lose.

> For when men buy wealth, they have little dread

> Of that may come after, experience true and plain
> How after a drought there falleth a shower of rain,
> And after heat oft cometh a stormy cold.
> A man may have wealth, but not as he would … (lines 10–14)

Wealth provides people with a fleeting sense of security, as it is transient by nature. Instead, the experience of gaining and losing fortune is more valuable since it teaches people about the capricious nature of the material world. While everyone can appreciate the loss of fortune, few except the elite can feel the strongest pain of losing a vast amount of wealth and suddenly falling to the lowest state of poverty.

Skelton's inclusion of Felicity and Liberty in the beginning of the play also speaks to another major theme in the play, that of fortune's unpredictability, a quality that, in her introduction, Neuss claims is derived from the late Roman philosopher Boethius's (480–524) influential *The Consolation of Philosophy* (qtd. in *Magnificence, John Skelton* 21). Neuss argues that Skelton's *Magnificence* is more closely linked with the fall of princes genre than to morality plays because "in the *Fall of Princes* writing emphasis is placed less on man's inconstancy, which can be rectified, as shown in the morality plays, and more on the inconstancy of Fortune, to which all are subject" (qtd. in *Magnificence, John Skelton* 21). *Magnificence*, while also identifying as a morality play, contains many of the elements of the fall of princes genre, in which the titular character commits sin and succumbs to the fickle nature of fortune as punishment. Only by relying on their reason can princes overcome their misfortune by gaining greater control over their will. More specifically, Boethius believes that fortune is actually a part of God's providence or his divine plan for all of humanity, in which the mutability of the material world, especially that of luck, acted as a test of people's faith and reason. Harris points out that during the sixteenth century the notion that fortune's fickleness and capriciousness could

be avoided by relying on one's reason had already entered the lexicon of debate on trying to overcome the obstacles of the physical world (57). Yet, Aristotle and Boethius originate these commonplaces, who act as major pillars of classical learning for early modern humanists. Skelton alludes to these two philosophers through the characters of Felicity, Liberty, Measure and, most importantly, Magnificence, who becomes a victim of fortune. According to this interpretation, Felicity represents fortune's prosperity and the initial voice of reason (who is replaced by Circumspection in the second half of the play) because this character argues that wealth should only be used for important matters, such as Magnificence's fulfillment of his royal duties to the court. Liberty, on the other hand, becomes a dual symbol, representing the virtue of the willingness to act or the vice of waywardness that often causes people to sin.

Yet, Felicity and Liberty, as personifications of reason and will, continue to disagree on which of them is the true virtue of magnificence. While Felicity stands for hoarding wealth, his counterpart Liberty, the personification of freedom, thinks otherwise. In response to Felicity's statement on moderation, Liberty retorts that "To tell you, sir, I dare not, lest I should be masked / In a pair of fetters or a pair of stocks" (line 30). True to its nature, Liberty wants to remain as free as possible and to use Felicity's wealth to its fullest potential. Liberty argues that if wealth is always saved for the right occasion, then life can become monotonous and wasteful as people refuse to use their fortune for even the most important occasions. Whereas Felicity speaks to the power of saving wealth, Liberty discusses how spending one's fortune can bring pleasure or become necessary under the right circumstances. As the personification of Freedom states:

> To live under law, it is captivity!
> Where dread leadeth the dance, there is no joy nor bliss ...
> And you have not your own free liberty

> To sport at your pleasure, to run and to ride?
> Where liberty is absent, set wealth aside. (lines 75–80)

Liberty retorts that Felicity's belief that continuously saving to accumulate a vast fortune can be excessive. Even though Felicity argues for the case of moderation, he wants to restrict Liberty to the point of tyranny on itself and others. Both sides offer an imbalanced point of view, with Felicity believing that self-discipline is the most important trait and Liberty arguing that freedom should reign completely by spending lavishly, a return to the nobility's understanding of magnificence as the outward appearance of excessive wealth.

Yet, Measure solves this conflict by taking Liberty under his tutelage at the behest of Magnificence, demonstrating how Aristotle's concept of moderation could turn the waywardness of freedom into the virtue of a controllable will. Measure plays an important role in de-escalating the conflict between Felicity and Liberty as a sign of the strength that moderation has as a conceptual framework for leadership. Measure makes his case to Felicity and Liberty as the master of all when his asserts:

> Where measure is master, plenty doth none offense.
> Where measure lacketh, all thing disordered is.
> Where measure is absent, riot keepeth residence.
> Where measure is ruler, there is nothing amiss.
> Measure is treasure. (lines 121–125)

By its simple presence, Measure is able to broker peace between Felicity and Liberty, with the two characters finally agreeing that they will practice moderation. The political implication of this interaction is immediately felt when Magnificence first enters the play, ordering "Liberty, see that Measure be your guide, / For I will use you by his advertisement" (lines 195–196). Despite being the ruler, Magnificence is taking Measure's advice on how to rule his court and

entrusting his most valuable assets, Felicity and Liberty, to the personification of moderation. Skelton demonstrates how rulers often rely on their advisors, which is why it is important that monarchs surround themselves with virtuous counsellors.

Skelton emphasizes how monarchs need to patronize advisors who are interested in performing their responsibilities to the commonwealth. Specifically, he warns Henry VIII to avoid courtiers who are only interested in excess, such as overspending, and that these unwise advisors manipulate others into committing vice by flattering their sinful qualities, specifically that of their pride. Many courtly scholars, especially the humanists, often discussed the dangers of false flatterers, courtiers, and advisors who used their access to the king for their own benefit to the detriment of the court and the realm. Skelton is no different, as he advises Henry VIII in *Speculum Principis* to "Listen to the other point of view. / Be easy to talk to. / Pursue flatterers with hatred. / Content yourself with wise counsel" ("*Speculum* Principis" in The *Latin Writings of John Skelton* 41). Kings had to balance being open to discussion on their policies and actions, while also being careful about whom they chose to listen to for advice. Erasmus gives similar guidance to Henry VIII in *The Education of the Christian Prince*, arguing that a monarchy cannot survive:

> … unless every means is used to stave off abject flatterers. To this malicious tribe the good fortune of great princes is especially exposed … The less one suspects trickery, the less one knows how to avoid it. Let no one think that the evil of flatterers (being a sort of minor evil) should be passed over: the most flourishing of empires of the greatest kings have been overthrown by the tongues of flatterers. (193)

Skelton and Erasmus regard flatterers as dangerous because they can turn good kings into tyrants by appealing to their pride. False flattery, or the use of advice that urges leaders to act on their whims, is more than a minor evil. It could lead to oppression within royal courts by making leaders believe that their main responsibilities are to themselves, while their kingdom and their

attendants are only tools to be used for their own benefit. Erasmus advises Henry VIII to avoid this outcome if he chooses ministers who are "sagacious and trustworthy, and in addition, to impose a restraint upon them in their assent by means of warnings and threats and also to use rewards to urge them to discharge their office honorably" (194). Skelton cautions that rulers' abilities to lead their kingdoms can be compromised by the company they keep by having Measure discuss the characteristics of a good and bad advisor. When accepting Magnificence's appointment as Liberty's teacher, Measure replies that:

> … good fortune hath annexed us together
> To see how greeable we are of one mind.
> There is no flatterer nor losel so lither
> This linked chain of love can unbind. (lines 198-201)

Skelton likely takes inspiration for his description of Measure as the perfect advisor from *The Education of a Christian Prince*, in which Erasmus contends that kings' ministers should be willing to question their leaders' actions. It was not "enough for the prince to keep his own character pure and uncorrupted … [but he] must give no less serious attention, in so far as he can, to see that every member of his household—his nobles, his friends, his ministers, and his magistrates—follows his example" (211). Erasmus admonishes kings that they are figureheads of the monarchy as an institution and that their choice of advisors, whether they are virtuous or villainous, reflects on their general conduct. Skelton and Erasmus believe that if Henry VIII surrounds himself with virtuous people, then it is more likely that the king would act in the name of virtue. Likewise, if Henry VIII included only ignorant advisors and false flatterers in his court, he would end up living in sin.

In *Speculum Principis*, Skelton directs his dedicatee to learn to act independently from his court, where the king needs to centralize his power in order to properly perform his royal duties without input from other members of his government. Despite advocating for Henry VIII to trust wise and serious advisors, Skelton advises the king that "[y]ou have advisors, but they are either learned or ignorant, and the first are indecisive and the others are wrong; you are wise on your own account" (*The Latin Writings of John Skelton* 39). Henry VIII, as the king of England, possesses the virtue of magnificence that grants him greater political influence and power than that of his ministers. Skelton represents the dichotomy of Henry VIII's kingly position, as a ruler who is expected to listen to experienced advisors and to act on his own accord, depending on which advisor he chooses to listen to for guidance. Under Measure, Magnificence's court and subsequently the realm at large prospers as the personification of moderation governs the king's wealth and freedom in a healthy balance. It is this ethical and political moderation that allows Magnificence the benefits of his office, especially in continuing his rule through the prosperity of his fortune.

The state of Magnificence's court, however, dramatically changes when the fictional ruler begins to listen to Fancy, the vice of fantasy who tempts this leader into giving up Measure as an advisor. Harris connects the two words of fantasy and fancy together as forms of delusions, resulting from the overuse of imagination that leads to strong beliefs contrary to reality. As such, the character of Fancy could be understood as someone "who deludes with false appearances, whose letter shunts reason (Cyrcumspeccyon) aside, whose deception eventually looses the restive will (Lyberte) from its proper restraint" (Harris 51). Fancy symbolizes the process of how Magnificence loses his self-discipline and gives in to his own delusions of grandeur about his royal position, leading him to a life of pride and excess. Harris contends that Fancy represents a

"delusive imagination ... the fact or habit of deluding oneself into imaginary perceptions" (51). Fancy as delusion or an overactive imagination is the prime cause of people losing their ability to accurately judge reality, since they are unable to differentiate between their imagination and reality. Fancy emphasizes this aspect of his character by exaggerating Magnificence's wealth and his position in life:

> Yea, sir, a blanched almond is no bean.
> Measure is meet for a merchant's hall,
> But largesse becometh a state royal.
> What, should you pinch at a peck of groats?
> Ye would soon pinch at a peck of oats!
> Thus it is the talking of one and of other,
> As men dare speak it huggermugger:
> "A lord a niggard—it is a shame!"
> But largesse may amend your name. (lines 381–389)

Fancy tells Magnificence that while Measure is well suited for a certain class of people, such as lowly merchants, that moderation is not fit for rulers, who should proudly show their opulence in grand displays of extravagance.

Under Fancy's influence, Magnificence chooses to become a tyrant by excessively using his wealth for paltry desires that negatively impact his court. The first warning sign of Magnificence's tyranny occurs when the play's king declares that he is no longer ruled by Fortune's fickleness, but that he now controls his own luck and destiny. Magnificence succumbs to his fantasies of grandeur, expelling Measure from the court. He boasts:

> Fortune to her laws cannot abandon me,
> But I shall of Fortune rule the rein.

> I fear nothing Fortune's perplexity.
>
> All honor to me must needs stoop and lean.
>
> I sing of two parties without a mean. (lines 1458–1462)

Whereas Skelton portrays the ideal king as a ruler who lives moderately in the beginning of the play, he is now focusing on tyrants. Magnificence views himself as the greatest leader the world has seen and compares his reign to other historical figures such as Alexander the Great, Cyrus of Babylon, and Julius Caesar. He declares that he is the "doughtiest duke as I deem, / To me all princes to lout man be seen" (lines 1498-1499). Lines argues that Magnificence's boasting is a common trait of tyrants in cycle plays. In medieval plays, boasting displays how tyrants are evil as they openly flaunt their pride in the face of God. Tyrants' arrogant speeches are suggestive of their "insistence on absolute and sole sovereignty … [as the] boasting is a mark of the inappropriate extension of earthly sovereignty to spiritual matters" (Lines 429). Skelton draws inspiration from the cycle plays to demonstrate how Magnificence has fallen from grace by listening to the vices. At the peak of his sinful boasting, Magnificence becomes the tyrant that Skelton and Erasmus warn Henry VIII about in their respective mirror for princes treatises. Skelton asserts that "[p]rinces should, therefore, in my opinion, order their lives with minds more attentive to the imperishable glory of virtue than the vain pride of wealth" (*The Latin Writings of John Skelton* 38). Erasmus also reiterates this advice, contending that "[a]s others indulge you, so you should check yourself … [e]ven when everyone marks you with approval, be your own severest critic" (156). Skelton and Erasmus agree that kings constitute a special class of individuals, since they are born into the highest positions of power, but their virtue is not guaranteed by their birth. Instead, rulers have to work to earn the good grace of their subjects through virtuous acts and they should not listen to flatterers, who would inflate their egos.

Skelton lays out the path to tyranny by depicting Magnificence falling for his own delusions of grandeur, which invites other vices to his court in the form of false flatterers and abusers of the king's courtly power. Subsequently, Magnificence becomes prideful and believes he is untouchable by both the law of the kingdom and of the natural world. He gives himself the power to unjustly banish Measure from his court and freely pilfer Felicity's coffers, a symbol of how kings often take from the common wealth for themselves. Magnificence's fall into vice demonstrates the connection between Felicity, the virtue of prosperity, and Fancy, the vice of delusion. Similarly to Liberty, Felicity can also become a vice figure when people, especially rulers, base their happiness only on their material possessions. They fall for the delusion or fantasy that their transient fortune gives them the right to act however they see fit, despite the reality of their situation. It is this key change in the behaviour of Magnificence, specifically his abandonment of reason in favour of will or his desires spurred by uncontrollable passion, that points to how Skelton initially defines this titular virtue in the first half of the play as restraint and self-discipline against emotions. Ironically, Magnificence loses his magnificent quality by turning into a tyrant who is now ruled by his passions, as represented by the number of vice characters who overtake his court. Magnificence is essentially defined by the absence of these vices as in the beginning the court is in perfect harmony when Felicity and Liberty are kept in balance by Measure. Magnificence, therefore, becomes a quality of kingship that is concerned with rulers being able to avoid vice by restraining their passions to a healthy mean. Ideal monarchs are not tricked by their fantasies of greatness and do not believe they can control their fortune, but remain grounded in their responsibility to mete out justice and ensure the commonwealth remains prosperous.

While the first half of the play delineates how to achieve magnificence through the moderation of passions, the second half stages what happened to kings after they have fallen from both political power and God's grace. If the temptations of fortune are the major concern at the beginning of *Magnificence*, the consequences of misfortune dominate the discourse of the latter half of this drama. Magnificence's decision to trust Fancy's cohort of false flatterers and to give in to his pride allows the courtly vices to abuse the ruler's wealth. In a fit of despair, Fancy tells Magnificence that "Alas, sir, ye are undone with stealing and robbing! / Ye sent us a supervisor for to take heed; / Take heed of yourself, for now ye have need" (lines 1851–1854). This supervisor is Cloaked Collusion, the vice of deceit, who uses his position as overseer of the court to beguile his fellow flatterers into helping him steal the king's wealth. Magnificence's new state of poverty further emphasizes the dangers of false flatterers about whom both Skelton and Erasmus warn Henry VIII. Not only do these immoral advisors inflate monarchs' egos, but they also defraud rulers of their wealth. Magnificence's loss of his fortune is immediately felt as his "goods [are] misappropriated and wasted by the unsuitable household servants he has unwisely appointed, his fall is in part expressed through the loss of his 'robys'" (Scattergood 235). Skelton connects Magnificence's loss of his spiritual goods by electing the vices to rule the court of his mind to the ruler losing all of his wealth and physical necessities.

Skelton merges the different definitions of magnificence of moderation and spiritual fortitude, when Magnificence confronts the consequences of his error in accepting the vices' counsel. Harris contends that "both morality conflicts in *Magnyfycence* are structurally relevant in dramatizing a theme based upon the doctrine of the cardinal virtue of Fortitude (sometimes called Magnificence or Magnanimity) which required of a man—especially a ruler—that he resist by temperate action the temptations of both prosperity and adversity" (10). For Skelton,

magnificence as the virtue of magnanimity or the Christian ideal of fortitude is connected to Aristotle's concept of moderation. In particular, people can be virtuous in both the face of the temptations of fortune and the struggles of misfortune by conquering their passions. People must learn to let their reason govern their life to protect them from the follies of adversity, namely to prevent themselves from falling into despair. Magnificence faces a group of hardships called Adversity, Poverty, Despair, and Mischief, who each punish him for his mistakes as a ruler. Adversity informs Magnificence that "for thy misdeed / From God am sent to quite thee thy need. / Vile velyard, thou moust not now my dint withstand" (lines 1875–1877). Magnificence has lost more than his felicity; he has also angered God with his sinful behaviour. In this instance, according to the rules of medieval dramaturgy, Skelton is connecting misfortune to God's disfavour, stating that those who experience bad luck or hardship are being divinely punished. Rulers, in particular, would face the harshest judgement of all, as Magnificence's example illustrates.

Skelton educates his audience that liberty holds two competing representations, that of a virtue of freedom or the vice of the misuse of that freedom for selfish desires. From the apparent disparate sections of the initial governance drama on the nature of moderation and the latter morality play section on the Christian ideal of magnanimity, the play's general lesson deals with what Phoebe S. Spinrad declares is "too much liberty, the letting loose of the will from the control of reason, always leads to restraint and ruin" (437). Liberty returns during Magnificence's fall to reiterate this message, hardly believing that his former prince blames him for his current impoverished state. Liberty even questions:

> How he is undone by the means of me?
> For if Measure had ruled Liberty as he began,

> This lurdan that here lieth had been a noble man.
>
> But he abused so free his liberty
>
> That now he hath lost all his felicity. (lines 2109–2114)

Magnificence's greatest crime is the abuse of his freedom, in which he exiles Measure, the personification of self-discipline. Skelton argues that moderation is an important virtue because it prevents people from turning their freedom into waywardness that could lead them to sin by deluding individuals into believing that their actions of vice will not have any negative consequences. As such, Measure acts as a virtue of self-discipline by being an advisor to Magnificence, who recommends self-discipline or a beneficial inhibition as a preventative measure against becoming a tyrant. After Adversity's arrival, Poverty soon follows to scold Magnificence for forgetting that Fortune is mutable, and she can "set up and suddenly plucked down ... / Now all in wealth, forwith in poverty" (lines 2024–2026). After Poverty, Despair arrives, who makes "heavy hearts, with eyen full hollow … / Faith and good hope I make aside to stand" (lines 2286–2288), specifically telling people that their faith is useless because God has abandoned them in their time of need. Finally, Mischief says to Magnificence that "[t]hou art not the first himself hath slain" (line 2316), pointing to a nearby knife that the prince can use to kill himself. Magnificence's potential suicide is a symbol of Henry VIII's loss of control over his court and his kingdom, after the minions have beguiled him into indulging in his passions.

Skelton answered the question of how fallen kings can redeem themselves by following the scheme of morality plays. Magnificence is saved by God's agents, thereby indicating that a combination of Aristotle's teachings and Christian thought is required to achieve true magnificence. Before Magnificence can commit suicide, Good Hope stops the king and introduces him to the virtues, who can teach him how to regain his faith in God, namely Redress and Sad Circumspection. These characters each personify the process of confession, which

requires hope in God's forgiveness for their transgressions, the will to remedy their sins, and finally the wisdom to reflect on their actions. The mirror and reflection imagery at the end of the play transforms the play into a dramatized version of a *speculum principis*. Sad Circumspection comments how a "mirror encleared is this interlude" (line 2519), breaking the boundary between the imaginary world of the play and the real world to invite the audience to reflect upon their behaviour in comparison to Magnificence. *Magnificence* thus follows the structure of medieval morality plays by providing a lesson on the nature of Christian faith, particularly that redemption is possible by confessing one's sins.

As an educational piece, the three personifications' speeches on the goodness of God's forgiveness show how Skelton supports Henry VIII's refashioning of his court and persona from a king ruled by his passions to a serious monarch governed by rational thinking. The play acts as a twofold drama of "both the moral education of a man and the political education of a prince" (Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* 77). Yet, Skelton connects the ethical and political aspects of the drama through his discussion of the different dimensions of magnificence as a virtue. Skelton concludes the play with God's messengers Good Hope, Redress, Perseverance, and Circumspection, absolving Magnificence of his guilt by having the king confess his sins, especially that of his pride and excess that has damaged his court. Walker discusses how it was "honourable for a king to preside over an ordered household, to have the means to live magnificently … [but] if his household was chaotic, his coffers empty, or his subjects discontented, it brought dishonor upon him" (*The Plays of Persuasion* 86). Both Magnificence and Henry VIII can regain their honour as ideal kings by reordering their household into a more prosperous monarchical institution. As a teaching tool, Magnificence the character acts as a mirror for Henry VIII to reflect upon his actions of letting the minions liberally use the court's

funds and live vicariously as representatives of the English monarchy during the French king's revels through the Parisian streets in 1518. The actions of his most trusted servants, in this sense, became an extension of the king's appearance when these courtiers disgraced themselves publicly in France (Walker, *The Plays of Persuasion* 74–75). By adopting new advisors who were more serious and supposedly wiser, Henry VIII was changing his appearance from an immature king to that of a monarch who had experienced misfortune and learned from these hardships.

The change in the royal court is enacted in the final scene of *Magnificence* when the agents of God's authority relay the chief lesson that magnificence as a virtue is based on gaining wisdom from hardship. To conclude the play, Sad Circumspection announces that this life is:

> … inconstant for to behold and see:
> Suddenly advanced and suddenly subdued;
> Suddenly riches and suddenly poverty;
> Suddenly comfort and suddenly adversity …
> Suddenly thus Fortune can both smile and frown. (lines 2520–2524)

The ending of the drama re-establishes the idea that magnificence cannot be found in the accumulation of wealth, since the latter is transient by nature. Skelton makes this case in *Speculum Principis*, arguing that "Princes should, therefore, in my opinion, order their lives with minds more attentive to the imperishable glory of virtue than the vain pride of wealth" (*The Latin Writings of John Skelton* 38). Skelton maintains that ideal rulers are monarchs who act for the moral good of others, improving their lives through spiritual adherence to Christian morality. Erasmus makes a similar point in *The Education of the Christian Prince*, arguing that the "prince should take special care not to sin, because he makes so many followers in his wrongdoings, but

rather to devote himself to being virtuous so that many more good men may result" (157). This focus on the Christian ideal of magnificence as fortitude does not negate the Aristotelian definition present in the beginning of the play. Instead, Skelton emphasizes that once monarchs learn from their misfortunes they must use their wisdom for the proper use of their power, whether through patronizing the correct advisors or through the spending of wealth for the benefit of the commonwealth.

Magnificence's transformation from a king governed by his will to a wiser ruler who understands self-discipline demonstrates how Aristotelian reason and Christian ideals of magnanimity stated by Aquinas in the *Summa Theologiae* work in tandem to provide people with the spiritual fortitude to withstand fortune's transient nature. While Magnificence did cause his own downfall by listening to the vices' advice on what to do with his wealth, the titular character's fall from grace confirms that good fortune can never last forever. This sentiment echoes Boethius's understanding of fortune in *The Consolation of Philosophy*: if Fortune's "wheel stops turning, it ceases to be the course of chance" (20). In the play, Poverty exemplifies this classical view by reminding Magnificence that he should remember the "turn of Fortune's wheel / That wantonly can wink and winch with her heel" (lines 2020–2022). Fortune may not be physically present in the play as a character, but Magnificence is subjected to its influence. However, Magnificence is able to escape its control by using his reason to gain self-discipline over his will and seeking guidance from God to overcome his vices. Magnificence's redemption at the end of the play reinforces Skelton's belief that pagan and Christian interpretations of virtue can strengthen one another and guide individuals to escape the wheel of fortune by guarding themselves from the temptation of good and bad luck.

Skelton and Erasmus are in agreement that magnificence as a virtue was based on people using their reason to overcome their sins, making it a necessary characteristic to ensure that leaders remain dedicated to the betterment of their commonwealth by maintaining the moral health of the monarchy through a dedicated education on the volatile nature of emotions and on the strength of restraint. Good kings should balance their duties responsibly if they look after their own moral health, the order of their household, and the good of their realm. As the patriarch of their states, ideal kings are supposed to live moderately by governing with their reason and not with their will or passions. Emotions are too volatile for rulers to trust; therefore, they need reason to guide them towards the right decisions that would benefit everyone, instead of following their own individual desires. Skelton and Erasmus furthermore maintain that the will leads rulers to give in to excessive obsessions with wealth, pride, and personal power, characteristics of tyrants. Skelton proposes that the solution for leaders facing the conflict of choosing between their individual desires and their responsibilities to the commonwealth can be found in classical works such as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Christian thought which Aquinas discusses in the *Summa Theologiae*. Specifically, Magnificence's redemption at the end of the play is only possible because of his use of reason to discipline Liberty, the personification of his will, and his belief in the powers of Christian virtues of Hope, Sad Circumspection, and Redress to instill in him the correct lessons on how to attain God's forgiveness. As such, Magnificence is able to use his newfound wisdom on moderation to overcome the temptations of good fortune and to withstand the despair of misfortune.

Chapter 2:

The Tyranny of Jupiter: John Heywood's Satire of Henry VIII

Whereas Skelton alleges in *Magnificence* that the well-being of the commonwealth is based on the individual virtue of the king, by the 1530s courtly scholars such as Thomas Elyot and John Heywood argue that too much power held by a singular individual would lead to a tyrannical monarchy. Elyot, a writer supported by Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1473–1530), wrote *The Boke of the Governour* (1531) to promote checks and balances to be established to prevent monarchs, namely Henry VIII, from gaining greater authority. Likewise, Heywood, a court entertainer and playwright patronized by Henry VIII, wrote *The Play of the Weather* (1533) to criticize the king's rhetoric about his monarchical superiority over other forms of authority and his eventual adoption of Royal Supremacy in 1532. These two writers are indicative of a major change in how scholars and playwrights of the Henrician period approached Henry VIII's kingship during the 1530s. Their example further demonstrates how scholars who were associated with the court and had access to the king used their respective literary works to persuade their audiences to balance governmental power to be distributed among different satellites of authority in order to ensure that nobody could gain too much control over the realm.

Elyot wrote *The Boke Named the Governour* with the opposite intention of Skelton's and Erasmus's works, to voice his criticisms against Henry VIII's kingship and offers solutions to political problems that would have greatly reduced the ruler's personal power. *The Governour* responds to both dangerous precedents established by former kings, such as Richard III and Henry VII, and to the political situation following the Act of Royal Supremacy that threatened the contractual nature of England's monarchy as an institution. Elyot's promotion of

conciliarism, that is, the creation of councils and committees, is important in demonstrating how Henrician intellectuals wanted to curb Henry VIII's consolidation of power through the Royal Supremacy. In particular, Heywood presents the god-king Jupiter of *The Play of the Weather* as an analogue of Henry VIII, warning that the English ruler has created the dangerous precedent that kings can act above the laws established by other authorities. Specifically, Heywood believes that Henry VIII's newfound power to separate the English Church from the Church of Rome and to redefine dogma is not in the best interest of the commonwealth; instead, it is for the king's own benefit to gain further control. In the conclusion of the play, when Jupiter reaffirms his authority as king of the gods, Heywood subtly critiques Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy as a sign of tyranny and simultaneously advises the king to use his authority to maintain Church traditions. Therefore, Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* can be considered as a subversive attack on Henry VIII's developing kingship from personal monarchy to absolutist rule. The analogue of the vainglorious Jupiter of the play suggests that a virtuous king should retain some semblance of moderation, or governmental limitations, in controlling England.

In *The Governour*, Elyot advocates for the well-being of the commonwealth and reminds Henry VIII of his obligations to ensure the prosperity of his subjects. Elyot's writings are an extension and further elaboration of Erasmus's recommendations on kingship found in *The Education of a Christian Prince*, especially the Dutch humanist's proclamation that kings should rule moderately and be ruled by moderation, specifically to be self-disciplined enough to avoid sin. Both scholars, albeit in different periods of Henry VIII's reign, feared that the king might succumb to his vices and turn authority that should be reserved for the good of his subjects into a tyrannical rule. Elyot expresses this opinion through his definition of the commonwealth: a "publik weale is a body lyuyng, compacte or made of sondry astates and degrees of men, whiche

is disposed by the ordre of equite and gouerned by the rule and moderation of reason" (3). Following medieval and early modern conventions, examined in detail by Ernst Kantorowicz in *The King's Two Bodies* (1997), Elyot compares the commonwealth or the public weal to that of a physical body, in which the king acts as the head that is supposed to ensure the health of every social, legal, and religious organ of the realm. In this sense, Elyot builds upon earlier works, such as John Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159), to demonstrate how integral the relationship between the monarchy and its people are for a functioning society. Elyot further emphasizes this analogy by referring to the "olde vulgare, profite … called weale … [and] it is called a welthy contraye wherin all thing that is profitable" (3). The profit or the economic prosperity of the commonwealth was considered an indicator of the moral health of the monarchy, in which an ideal king maintained the stability of the government to guarantee that neither injustice nor war threatened the safety of his subjects' livelihoods. A virtuous monarch, supported by ideal and experienced counsellors, fulfilled his duty as the head of the realm by working as the commonwealth's representative. Elyot's views on the importance of the realm's stability being connected to the head of the body politic, the king, were influenced by the ramifications of the War of the Roses. Sullivan and Walzer contend that the "memory of thirty-two years of intermittent civil war probably imprinted on … [Elyot's] grandparents and parents a fear of civic strife, a desire for civil order, for a determined, indisputable succession, for constitutionalism, all values Elyot promoted throughout his writings" (6–7). The passing of the throne from Henry VII to Henry VIII proved to Elyot that the Tudor dynasty had the necessary familial and political strength to rule England properly, as they could ensure a stable transition of power from prior monarchs to the next within the royal family. As such, a strong monarchy, both as an institution

and a dynasty, was needed to maintain an effective government and subsequently the realm's economic prosperity.

However, Elyot was also influenced by Henry VIII's adoption of Royal Supremacy and England's break with the Church of Rome during the 1530s to argue for limitations to be placed on the monarchy's authority. Henry VIII's rhetoric on his kingship only being surpassed by God's authority and his adoption of an absolutist monarchy threatened to cross the boundary between a strong kingship and tyranny. Elyot's main problem with the change in Henry's status was the king's belief that he no longer required the advice of his court; he could simply follow his own inclinations and the opinions of a group of advisors who were biased in favour of the King's Great Matter. Elyot viewed the "relationship between prince and counsellor … [as] the lynchpin of the humanist conception of the state, and each party needed to understand and fulfill the role allotted to him" (Walker, *Writing under Tyranny* 143). Henry VIII's new absolutist monarchy, while fulfilling the standards of the new Renaissance kingship established by humanists, represented a breakdown in the relationship between the monarchy and its subjects. Elyot judges that re-establishing the relationship between counsellors and the king would remedy Henry VIII's tyrannical pursuits by providing a political impediment to his authority. As a member of More's humanist circle, Elyot draws inspiration from Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince*, which was instrumental for other courtly scholars in forming a new ideal of kingship during the 1530s. Elyot bases his own *The Boke Named the Governour* on Erasmus's treatise, creating a mirror for magistrates that promotes a series of educational reforms targeting the nobility in order to train them as a new generation of counsellors to advise future kings. Like Erasmus, Elyot prescribes a curriculum for young noblemen that focus on learning the virtue of administration and how to give proper advice to their patron. For instance, Elyot believes that

dancing can teach young men about the art of cooperation, persuasion, and listening, all skills that a virtuous counsellor needs to succeed at the court. Elyot also proposes that courtiers learn about the "commodiouse virtue called prudence, whom Tulli defineth to be the knowledge of thinges whiche oughte to be desired and followed, and also of them whiche ought to be fledde from or echewed" (*The Boke, Named the Governour Devised by Sir Thomas Elyot* 54). Elyot's comments on the virtue of prudence recall lessons inherent in Skelton's and Erasmus's work on the importance of a rational government. As a result of this educational regime, magistrates who hold limited political authority can become equally or even more virtuous than their sovereign, a prerequisite of effective governance.

Elyot's adaptation of Erasmus's mirror for magistrates allows him to openly discuss his opinions on Henry VIII's evolving kingship during the politically and religiously turbulent times of the 1530s by discussing the education of the nobility. Walker contends that previous scholarship assumed that Elyot's *The Governour* did not hold any political significance as it only dealt with educational reform (*Writing under Tyranny* 141–142). However, behind the façade of an educational treatise, Elyot discusses the nature of the ideal kingship and the ways monarchs can improve their rule by sharing their authority with lesser magistrates. These magistrates can also curb the king's power by having the necessary, albeit lesser, authority to advise the king on political matters. Walker points out that the "model of kingship advanced in *The Governour* is in fact far from absolutist in its implications, and far from uncritically supportive of Royal Supremacy" (*Writing Under Tyranny* 150). Mottram concurs with this point, arguing that "Elyot's vision in the *Gouernour* is of a monarch-led meritocracy that mirrors the anatomy of the physical body in its subordination of appetite to the rule of reason" (121). The sovereign may still rule as the head of the commonwealth, but with the magistrates acting as his representatives

the king would rely on their knowledge of the different locales that they oversaw to effectively govern the realm. Elyot proposes a constitutional monarchy with the court's counsellors operating as a system of checks and balances to keep the English government working towards the benefit of the commonwealth. At the same time, the king would have the final say in decisions on policy to ensure that the diversity of voices and opinions of his subjects do not impede his authority.

Elyot's concerns are shared by Heywood, who composed *The Play of the Weather* in response to Henry VIII's declaration of being the Supreme Head of the English Church. *The Play of the Weather* encapsulates Heywood's response to Royal Supremacy; the playwright uses praise and comedy to hide his real opinion that he believes the king's new policies are tyrannical in nature, specifically that the king might become a threat to the English Church's traditional dogma and practices of worship. As a part of the Rastell and More family alliance, two religious conservative families, Heywood considered the Christian rites established by the papacy as sacred and that these generational traditions needed to be protected from those religious reformers who wanted to change them. The relative who had the most influence on Heywood was More, who taught his nephew the intricacies of court politics. Walker describes the dangerous circumstances surrounding Henry's Royal Supremacy and his break with Rome, in which "[t]hrough the Treason Act of 1534 it would declare anyone who denied these claims, or disputed the Boleyn succession, a traitor, making merely speaking such thoughts … itself an act of treason" ("Complaining about the Weather" 113). Even before this declaration, it was dangerous to voice such claims, as Henry VIII was ready to imprison anyone who disagreed with his plans, as was the case of Cardinal Wolsey, who was arrested in 1530 as an "anti-papal act;

but for his death on the journey to London, he would very likely have faced a show trial" (Bernard, *The King's Reformation* 40).

To shield themselves, writers, courtly scholars, counsellors, clerics, and playwrights started to hide their critical opinions of the king's actions and policies behind a veneer of exuberant praise for the monarch's magnificence. Walker argues that More, newly appointed as chancellor, delivered his opening speech to the Reformation Parliament in 1529 with a "hint at least of his tongue being in his cheek, sufficient to allow him to reconcile his humanist principles with the demands of the realpolitik of the moment" ("Complaining about the Weather" 120). Edward Hall (1496–1547) recorded More's speech, in which the Chancellor declared that "diverse new enormities were sprung up amongst the people" (qtd. in "Complaining about the Weather" 114) a vague reference to how there was some unrest concerning Henry VIII's new position as the Supreme Head of the English Church. More's ambivalent language made him appear neutral, but his choice in wording was specific in drawing out certain political issues that deeply troubled him. Walker highlights More's use of the word "'Enormities' [which] surely implied a little more than run of the mill misdemeanours and routine maintenance … [i]ndeed, the severity of the language might readily have been taken to reflect the unprecedented events of recent months" ("Complaining about the Weather" 115). Without saying it outright, More was consciously drawing his audience's attention to the political, religious, and social turmoil that Henry VIII's recent actions had caused in England. Those in the audience who were aware of More's political leanings or who comprehended the double meaning of enormities would have understood that More was criticizing Henry VIII's kingship. To hide his intentions, More uses "enormities" in his comparison of the English monarch to a loving shepherd guiding his people, protecting himself from any possibility of being accused of treason.

More's political stance on Henry VIII influences Heywood's composition of *The Play of the Weather*, suggesting that the play's comedy is critical of the king's newfound powers. Heywood was in attendance during More's opening speech to the Reformation Parliament, a likely start date for the composition of the play. Walker determines that Heywood includes references to current events that occur before Henry VIII's break with Rome and after his adoption of Royal Supremacy. For instance, Heywood uses Jupiter's allusion to Katherine and Anne Boleyn in his comments about replacing a leaky moon with a new, younger one ("Complaining about the Weather" 121–122) to criticize Henry VIII for his divorce. Merry Report tells the Gentlewoman that she cannot see Jupiter in person because the god–king is:

> … right busy …
> Even now is he making of a new moon.
> He sayeth your old moons be so far tasted
> That all the goodness of them is wasted,
> Which of the great wet hath been most matter,
> For old moons be leaky; they can hold no water. (lines 794–799)

Through the fictional character of Merry Report, Heywood is able to criticize Henry VIII for his fickle nature in replacing his first wife Katherine of Aragon with a newer, younger lover in Anne Boleyn. Specifically, Heywood argues that Henry VIII's decision to marry Anne Boleyn is based on lust as the king has used up the old moon, Katherine of Aragon, while trying to conceive a new heir. The playwright leaves it up to the audience to interpret what exactly the metaphor of Jupiter replacing one moon with another would mean during this politically fraught time. In addition, More and Heywood include common phrasing in reference to Henry VIII, specifically that of "enormities," that connect the two works in their criticism of this monarch. In his opening speech, Jupiter states that the other gods seek him out for the "redress of certain enormities" (line

25), a reference to how Parliament gave Henry VIII greater authority to eliminate the papacy's influence over the populace. The political nature of the humour that appears in *The Play of the Weather* indicates that Heywood intends for his play to be not just a critique of Henry VIII's virtue or his royal appearance, as in Skelton's *Magnificence*, but an attack on the ruler's actions against the English Church's traditional practices. Heywood follows More's Lucianic oration by hiding his disagreement with Henry VIII's policies behind his comedic description of the king and the commonwealth. The playwright argues that monarchs expanding their personal authority disturb the social cohesion of the realm and destroy the prosperity that traditions bring to society.

In *The Play of the Weather*, Jupiter, a dramatic analogue of Henry VIII, represents the English king's divinely sanctioned status as the Supreme Head of the Church. Heywood guarantees that Henry VIII will be compared to Jupiter by having the god appear in the "Great Hall of a Tudor palace, where in the style of the monarch on progress he establishes a temporary Presence Chamber clearly based upon the Tudor model" (Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* 148). Heywood ensures that the comparison between real life and that of fictional kings cannot be mistaken, especially since other writers have already established the analogy between Henry VIII and Jupiter in previous works. For instance, Skelton uses this comparison in his poem "Speke, Parott" as a passing reference to the king (148): "On bright Olympus Jupiter is venerated as a god; and here a god is honoured…Jupiter is ruler of the stars and lord of the heavens; he rules the English realm (lines 405-406, 409-410, trans. by John Scattergood). Heywood's depiction of Jupiter is especially significant because the playwright uses this god as a "mouthpiece for something more than flattery, presenting a political philosophy that affirms the mysterious and non-negotiable nature of kingship … urging Henry to fulfil the obligations inherent in his vocation as personal monarch" (Pamela King, "John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*" 217).

Jupiter shows how Henry VIII's title as monarch is blurred with that of a god, making his kingship not only divinely appointed but divine by nature. In his closing speech, Jupiter remarks that he has become "God and governor of heaven, yearth, and all" (line 1245). Heywood uses Jupiter to reference how Henry VIII's new position as the Supreme Head of the English Church has granted him authority over the religious and secular aspects of the realm, giving the king control over what can be considered doctrine and law. Heywood questions if the king's vast power gives him greater reach than any other individual to comprehend the problems of the realm, since he deals with all aspects of society, and has the capability to resolve them, by advancing greater reforms or protections of certain traditions. The monarch's powers are all based on the belief that God has granted them this ultimate authority over the physical world.

However, the analogy between Henry VIII and Jupiter can also be interpreted such that the Royal Supremacy set a dangerous precedent for future English monarchs. Henry VIII had established that his kingship had authority over religious dogma, threatening the sanctity of the English Church's papal traditions. For Heywood, Henry VIII's adoption of Royal Supremacy proved his tyrannical nature. Lines argues that the playwright "portrays a ruler who is truly God on earth, with potentially disastrous consequences" (422). Heywood questions Henry VIII's integrity as a king dedicated to the good of the commonwealth by portraying him as Jupiter, a pagan god who acts as if he holds as much authority as the Christian God in deciding the outcome of people's lives. Heywood believes that Henry VIII unlawfully interfered in the affairs of the Church in order to advance his own desires in the King's Great Matter. Scholars such as Happé, Richard Axton, Lines, and Walker, agree that Heywood intends to disparage Henry VIII by comparing him to the Roman god Jupiter. Heywood portrays Henry VIII as a tyrant who

regards himself as a god; hence, the play is not intended to praise his policies but to criticize him as a tyrant who threatens to dissolve the necessary traditions keeping English society together.

Heywood's portrayal of Jupiter reveals the playwright's negative opinion of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy. The playwright describes Jupiter as a vain ruler who is insecure about his power. Before addressing his newfound control over the weather, Jupiter strides onto the stage to declare his godly majesty after inheriting Saturn's reign. The god declares that "above all gods since our father's fall / We, Jupiter, were ever principal" (lines 6–7). Jupiter's rise in power is reminiscent of Henry VII's dethroning of Richard III at the end of the War of the Roses and alludes to the fact that Henry VIII's inheritance of the English monarchy is also based on the violent upset of former power structures. In classical mythology, Jupiter gains the throne of Olympus by overthrowing his father, Saturn, and the other Titans. King points out "In Jupiter … Heywood exaggerated 'the rhetoric of royal independence,' in a play that enacts an understanding that threats to royal power arise from rival claims to exclusivity" ("John Heywood, *The Play of the Weather*" 220). Jupiter's reference to his fallen father recalls the Tudor family's insecurity about the throne and their royal power. Throughout his reign, it was common for Henry VIII to suppress any resistance to his rule or possible threats to his legitimacy through imprisonment or executions. In 1521, Henry VIII held a trial and an execution of Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, who had "accepted prophecies of the king's death and reputedly said 'that if the King should die, he meant to have the rule of England'" (Graves 128). Henry VIII's executions of his rivals were motivated by a sense of self-preservation of his control over the throne and to ensure that his lineage remained the only contender for the royal family. These trials marked the deaths of his opponents as political declarations of his ultimate authority.

Heywood views Henry VIII's oppression of his rivals as a sign of the monarch's paranoia about losing the English throne and his tyrannical behaviour, which the playwright depicts through Jupiter, a god who concerns himself more with his appearance of power than his subjects' well-being. While Jupiter does not imprison or execute any of his subjects, the language of his introductory speech on his greatness contains elements of grandeur and pride that are reminiscent of Henry VIII's own rhetoric on his royal superiority. Walker argues that Heywood deliberately copies Henry VIII's style of writing and speech that appears in the "Henrician statute and proclamations" (*Writing under Tyranny* 116) to connect Jupiter's declarations about his authority to Henry VIII's proclamations of Royal Supremacy. For instance, Henry VIII's declaration to the sheriffs in 1534, in which he stated that "both spiritual and temporal, assembled in our said court of Parliament have upon good, lawful, and virtuous grounds, and for the public weal of this our realm, by one whole assent granted, annexed, knit, and united to the crown imperial of the same, the title, dignity, and style of Supreme Head in earth immediately under God of the Church of England" (Henry VIII 124), was similar in cadence, language, and tone to Jupiter's boasting how the Parliament of the gods consent to give him complete control of the weather.

> Before our presence in our high parliament
> Both gods and goddesses of all degrees
> Hath late assembled by common assent
> For the redress of certain enormities
> Bred among them through extremities. (lines 22–29)

Jupiter initially calls attention to how the Parliament of the gods, made up of Saturn, Phoebus, Aeolus, and Phoebe, agree to give up their control over specific aspects of the weather to address their conflicts with one another. Heywood's use of the word "consent" is significant because it

references how Henry VIII often referred to how the English Parliament “assented” to give the king greater powers to define the Church’s dogma, that he had the permission of his subjects to have this greater authority. Jupiter phrases this permission as the gods have “wholly surrendered / Into our hands … All manner weather by them endangered” (lines 71–73), changing his original term of consent into the more forceful word “surrendered.” The implication of this change in words demonstrates how Jupiter, and by comparison Henry VIII, may have lawfully acquired his newfound authority, but they both see this power as their own personal victory instead of as a necessity to ensure the welfare of their respective commonwealths.

The connection between Henry VIII’s and Jupiter’s language, especially in proclaiming their greatness, reveals how Heywood is deliberately satirizing the English king for his attempts to reassure himself that he reigns supreme over England. Heywood argues that Henry VIII’s recent actions, such as his persecution of potential pretenders to the throne and his rhetoric on his superiority to all other forms of authority, display the ruler’s fear of losing his throne. Specifically, Henry VIII during the 1530s was worried that his lineage was in danger because he had no viable male heirs, potentially causing another internal conflict akin to the War of the Roses (Bernard, *The King’s Reformation* 4). Henry VIII’s insecurity caused him to act as a tyrant, removing his subjects’ freedoms and stripping the power from other authorities that could challenge the king’s choices, such as the English Church. Heywood notes this anxiety in Jupiter’s opening speech, when the god continuously declares his greatness:

> What honor, what laud given us very right,
> What glory we have had duly
> Unfeigned
> Of each creature which duty hath constrained … (lines 3–5)

Jupiter's reference to his honour relays how the god perceives that his ascension to the throne proves his prior assumptions about his divine nature and capability to lead. Despite claiming that his subjects give their peaceful consent to bestow the glory of royal responsibility in leading the realm upon Jupiter, Roman legends dictate how this god violently overthrows Saturn, his father, for the throne of Olympus. Jupiter's contradictory statements show how he is an unreliable narrator about how he obtains the throne, leading to further doubt about his other statements. For instance, Jupiter argues that his power is "ever principal," that his royal authority is eternal by nature, existing prior and presently to his position as king because of his greatness. Jupiter reinforces his greatness in different instances, asserting that he is "[b]eyond the compass of all comparison" (line 9) or how "[s]tood we never in such triumphant estate" (line 14). Heywood satirizes the English king's belief that his appointment as the Supreme Head of the English Church by Parliament was a formality to legally restore what sovereign rights the monarchy held over religious dogma before this authority was taken away over the centuries by the Church of Rome. In a similar manner to Henry VIII's rhetoric of his greatness, Jupiter repeats his royal aptitude to reassure himself that he is not only powerful but that his reign can truly last forever. Yet, Jupiter demonstrates in his overthrow of Saturn that monarchical reigns are always threatened by civil strife, just as Henry VII taught his son that another rival could take the throne from the Tudors as he himself had previously had taken the English throne from Richard III.

Despite the "ever principal" kings, Henry VIII and Jupiter, stating that they are absolute monarchs, they rely on the commonwealth in the form of their respective Parliaments to legally grant them the right to extend their royal authority. In his declaration, Henry VIII carefully phrased how the English Parliament reaffirmed his right as king to control the definition of state law and religious dogmas, something that the ruler argued was previously usurped by Roman

Catholic Church from his predecessors (Baumer 34). In this case, Parliament only granted Henry VIII what should have been his all along, but was denied by the pope, specifically Clement VII. Although the declaration of Royal Supremacy was the result of Henry VIII's divorce from Katherine of Aragon, it altered the right of kings to rule their realm without external interference from Rome or from other arms of the English government. Heywood reflects on this matter by portraying how the Parliament of the gods grants Jupiter control of the weather to solve their dispute (lines 71–76). He presents the Parliament of the gods as an analogue of the English Parliament, in which these minor deities fail to order the weather. Jupiter takes the opportunity to act as the arbitrator over the other gods to confirm his position as the ultimate authority, using his control over the weather as a symbol of his absolute political power. The god-king declares in celebration of this agreement:

> … in all things with one voice agreeable
> We have clearly finished our foresaid parliament
> To your great wealth, which shall be firm and stable,
> And to our honor far inestimable.
> For since their powers as ours added to our own,
> Who can we say know us as we should be known? (lines 79–84)

Jupiter emphasizes his greatness by referring to how the Parliament of the gods bestows upon him the honour of their powers over the weather. However, Jupiter treats this gift as a personal accomplishment, instead of a responsibility that obligates him to ensure the economic and moral stability of his realm. Even though Jupiter promises to make sure that the other gods' wealth will be "firm and stable" (line 81), at the end of his declaration the god-king declares that his power is beyond anything his subjects can ever achieve, thus making his promotion all about his own satisfaction and pride.

Jupiter proudly boasts that he has obtained his kingly supremacy neither through force or coercion, but that the Parliament of the gods has consented to give him this authority as a sign of his supreme ability to rule. Walker contends that the "language of consent and consensus dominates Jupiter's account of his supremacy" (*Writing under Tyranny* 144). Similarly, the royal charter characterized Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy by stating how Parliament legally reaffirmed his supreme authority. The irony in these statements is that Jupiter and Henry VIII claim that their authority is absolute and inherent within their persons, yet they both require permission of their subjects, those supposedly below them on the social hierarchy, to assume supreme rule. There is, as Walker points out, a "paradoxical tension in that speech between the god's eternal and immutable aspirations and the merely temporal and contingent nature of the events and powers he describes" (*Writing under Tyranny* 113). Heywood depicts Jupiter, and Henry by proxy, as a ruler who has capitulated to his delusions of grandeur. As such, Jupiter's opening speech is a condemnation of Henry VIII (echoing Skelton's account of Magnificence), who boasts about his greatness in comparison to former rulers. In either instance, Heywood and Skelton warn their respective audiences, including Henry VIII, to beware of rulers who become prideful and lose sight of their responsibilities to the commonwealth.

The irony present in Jupiter's statements at the beginning of the play acts as a warning that Henry VIII, too, has transgressed the boundaries of good kingship and disregarded the interests of the commonwealth. Heywood reinforces this message by casting children as each of the characters in the play (Walker, *Writing under Tyranny* 107), a common convention of Henrician drama that he employs to further emphasize his point. The result is a powerful Jupiter giving a speech laden with rhetoric about his supremacy and absolute rule being spoken by a child, who is later outsized by his chosen servant, Merry Report, who is played by Heywood

himself. This disconnect between a child actor playing the all-powerful god-king deepens the irony of Jupiter's speech about his ultimate authority. Katrina L. Spadaro discusses the satire inherent in *The Play of the Weather*, noting that the "intimacy of the interlude and its closeness to governance enable possibilities ranging from deferent counsel to sanctioned subversion" (471). Heywood counsels Henry VIII by subverting the English king's image through Jupiter, suggesting that, as Walker contends, the "king who claimed supreme power for himself would thus have seemed comically ill-suited to exercise it" (*Writing under Tyranny* 107). Through Jupiter, Heywood argues that Henry VIII has claimed too much power to complete his tasks, making Royal Supremacy appear as an act performed by a spoiled child. The use of a child actor changes Jupiter's opening speech from a comedic jest to a warning about the political situation during the time of the Reformation Parliament. Specifically, Heywood admonishes his audience about providing Henry VIII with all of this power, especially over the English Church, which is similar to giving control of the weather to a childlike Jupiter. Without some political or religious measures in place to contain Henry VIII's authority, it is possible that England's laws would be at the whim of a flawed ruler who is increasingly becoming tyrannical over the course of his reign. Jupiter reinforces this lesson when he proclaims:

> All manner people which have been offended
> By any weather meet to be amended,
> Upon whose complaints, declaring their grief,
> We shall shape remedy for their relief. (lines 88–91)

Despite the weather being of paramount importance to his subjects, only Jupiter has the final say on how his powers over the climate will be implemented. Jupiter might be asking for the opinions of his subjects, but they have no real power over their own situations and must rely on the whims of a god-king portrayed by a child.

Yet, Heywood does not limit his satire to Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, but also extends his criticism to the general populaces of England to highlight the discord that characterizes the estates in his opinion. Heywood demonstrates through the depiction of the different social orders, from the noble gentleman and gentlewoman to the daily labourers (including a lowly child), how a single individual does not have the ability to perceive what actions could benefit the whole of the commonwealth. In their introduction to their edition *The Plays of John Heywood*, Axton and Happé note how the "cast of ten in *Weather* gives Heywood the opportunity to work with his greatest variety of character types, and to satirize the self-interest of the estates of England as they clamour for the ear of their ruler" (qtd. in *The Plays of John Heywood* 24). In many regards, the suitors want the weather to benefit themselves at the expense of their economic or social rivals. For instance, the Water Miller asks for "rain; the devil-sped drop" (line 444) to power his water wheels, while the Wind Miller requests that "in this world were no drop of water / Nor never rain but wind continual. / Then should we wind millers be lords over all" (lines 543–545). In another example, the Gentlewoman wants "weather close and temperate, / No sunshine, no frost, nor no wind to blow" to keep her skin fair (lines 830–831) and the Launder demands the opposite, that the "sun shine that our clothes may dry" (line 942). Heywood uses these economic and social conflicts to argue that a single individual does not have the moral fortitude to sacrifice his own needs to benefit those around them. The suitors were either unaware that their demands would harm their fellows or they were unwilling to compromise to share the weather with everyone else. As a result, a commonwealth is fragmented because of competing economic and social pressures among the different estates who are only interested in their own desires.

The solution to resolve the conflicts between the estates is introducing a third party, the king, who can best administer the law in a balanced manner and adjust the imbalances between different groups. Every character that appears in *The Play of the Weather* represents their respective social group, economic position, or gender, including Jupiter himself, who symbolizes not only Henry VIII but the idea of divine kingship. Walker contends that “Skelton had built his model King upon Aristotelian principles, producing a Sovereign whom his audience could recognize as the exemplar of a rational ideal … For Heywood here majesty is a mystery, beyond human reason” (*Plays of Persuasion* 146–147). In other words, Heywood presents a paradoxical understanding of kingship: although monarchical authority is divine by nature and derived from God’s authority, thus beyond the capability of mortal subjects to understand, he still criticizes it by attacking Henry VIII’s morality. Heywood’s belief in the divine nature of monarchy is also starkly contrasted by Skelton’s own ideals about rulership, who advocates in *Magnificence* that virtuous kings can be crafted by the right education. According to Heywood, Henry VIII as God’s representative is given the unique responsibility of caring for the entirety of the commonwealth and requires the necessary authority to oversee the administration of the realm’s law (*Plays of Persuasion* 148–149). To reconcile these contradictory beliefs, Heywood suggests that power cannot be adequately shared among everyone in the commonwealth but that it should be concentrated within the singular individual of the king. It is this divine aspect of kingship that Heywood believes placed kings above their subjects, which gives rulers the right to govern their commonwealths and to determine what solutions are necessary to ensure that the entire commonwealth prospered, instead of just a single group or individual. However, Heywood suggests that kings need to respect the authority of the Church, as the pope and the clergy are responsible for the spiritual health of the commonwealth, with rulers only being obligated to

oversee secular matters. Heywood's satire of the estates demonstrates his conviction that the masses are unable to rule themselves and that they require the guidance of their monarch. Jupiter argues that the Parliament of the gods and the suitors' main issue is their inability to compromise, citing that the solution lay in abiding to a moderate plan of action:

> Such debate as from above ye have heard,
> Such debate beneath among yourselves ye see.
> As long as heads from temperance be deferred,
> So long the bodies in distemperance be.
> This perceive ye all, but none can help save we.
> But as we there have made peace concordantly,
> So will we here now give you remedy. (lines 1130–1136)

Unlike Skelton's *Magnificence*, in which the ruler must be brought back into harmony after falling from grace, here Jupiter is a king who will restore balance and order to his society by making the final decision on the weather. By giving Jupiter the power to restore order, Heywood reminds his audience that the king holds power over a large number of people and that his word, especially in his role as the head of the English Church, carries more authority to establish unity among those who want religious reform and those who want to protect the Church's traditions. Heywood proposes that Henry VIII's main duty is to bring his subjects together by upholding England's traditions, specifically the English Church's religious teachings, which, in his view, gives the commonwealth the necessary guidance, that of God's, to resolve the conflicts between the estates. As such, where the commonwealth looks to their king for guidance on how to bring one another together, Heywood suggests that the monarch must look to God and the Church for spiritual counsel on how to remain virtuous.

The weather is an important metaphor in the play because of its flexible meaning pertinent to different political events that occurred while Heywood wrote *The Play of the Weather*. In Jupiter's introductory monologue, the weather is a representation of political power and authority, through which the Parliament of the gods transfers their control to the god-king. For the suitors, the weather embodies the estates' desires that contradict one another and as such the disharmony that divides society. By the end of the play, the weather's symbolism changes again with Jupiter's final declaration:

> Wherefore we will the whole world to attend,
> Each sort, on such weather as for them doth fall,
> Now one, now other, as liketh us to send.
> Who that hath it, ply it, and sure we shall
> So guide the weather in course to you all,
> That, each with other, ye shall the whole remain
> In pleasure and plentiful wealth certain. (lines 1202–1208)

Jupiter proclaims that he honours each of the suitors' demands but that they have to share the weather with the others and their desire will only occur during certain times of the year. Hence, the god-king orders his subjects to compromise with one another so that the whole of the realm and not just one individual can prosper. Jupiter's monologue is meant to counsel Henry VIII, advising him to use his authority, especially his newfound position as an absolute monarch, to bring England together by uniting them under a common goal of improving one another's economic and social positions. In particular, Heywood argues that the ideal king uses his royal authority and political power to fairly administer the law equally to all of the estates. Heywood contends that societal unity between the peoples of the commonwealth could only be brought about by a politically moderate kingship, albeit a ruler who is fully independent from

manipulation. Pamela M. King notes that the "main action in *The Play of the Weather*, that is the presentation of individual cases by individual citizens, can be read as a series of satirical attacks on the different kinds of self-interested partisanship which reinforce the case that the King, and the King alone, must take responsibility for all sovereign action" (219). Heywood is not commenting on political factionalism specifically or the modern concept of class divisions but on individuals and their greed, which threatens to harm others for their own advantage. Jupiter's actions provide a mirror for Henry VIII to reflect on his own monarchical rule, through which Heywood counsels the king to use Royal Supremacy for the good of the realm and not for his personal desires or for a select few individuals.

The implicit irony in Jupiter's decision to not change the weather further illustrates how Heywood criticizes Henry VIII for his acquisition of power at the expense of the English Church. While Heywood initially appears to be following Skelton's lead in praising and counselling Henry VIII on how to shape his kingship, he is also performing a discreet act of resistance on the public stage. By giving the suitors what they want during the time allotted to them, Jupiter establishes that the seasons should remain the same to protect the stability that the regular weather brings to everyone's lives. In particular, Jupiter contends that change to the climate will not only be unfair to certain suitors, but will bring about great disaster for everyone involved:

> Now on the tother side, if we had granted
> The full of some one suit and no mo,
> And from all the rest the weather had forbid,
> Yet who so had obtained had won his own woe …
> All to serve at once, and one destroy another,
> Or else to serve one and destroy all the rest—
> Nother will we do the tone nor the tother (lines 1188–1197)

Jupiter states that the only way to please everyone is to reaffirm the traditions of the weather appearing in their allotted seasons to preserve what semblance of normalcy they bring to his subjects. By favouring one suitor over the other, Jupiter will have doomed each of the suitors to a single type of weather that will have been disastrous for the land and its peoples. Jupiter determines that it is best that he alone decides the weather to ensure that his subjects receive what they need, for their benefit, and not what they want, to their detriment. Happy with the result, the suitors each kneel before their god-king and reaffirm their loyalty, praising their divine ruler for his wisdom. Heywood argues that Henry VIII should copy Jupiter by re-establishing the traditions of the English Church that the playwright, as a religious conservative, believes provide the necessary cohesion to bring the realm together into harmony. Similarly to Jupiter, Henry VIII should provide his subjects with what they need to prosper instead of giving in to the demands of religious reformers who believe their desires will be beneficial for everyone. The king's reward will be a unified kingdom whose subjects will celebrate him for his wisdom for not enacting any changes to how secular laws are applied and, more importantly, how religious dogmas are practiced. Heywood asks Henry VIII to leave the status quo as it has been for centuries, implying that he does not agree with the king's absolutist kingship.

Jupiter plays a different role from Magnificence in that the god-king is not just a literary mirror for Henry VIII to reflect on but a satirical portrait to condemn the king's recent actions on confirming his supreme authority over the Church. Jupiter's grand exit by expressing his greatness in solving the suitors' problems is undercut by the knowledge that the god-king in actuality accomplishes nothing throughout the play. Instead, Jupiter boasts about his superiority and political supremacy above everyone else. What greatness Jupiter achieves in the play is based on inheriting the throne from his father and being given power by the Parliament of the

gods, not because of his own actions. Likewise, Jupiter chooses not to use this power over the weather, demonstrating in turn that the god-king considers the suitors' problems and potential solutions to be frivolous. Jupiter's declaration concerning the fulfillment of his obligations to his subjects becomes a statement of irony about the unnecessary power given to the god-king that he uses to bolster his appearance of greatness:

> Not only here on yearth in very coast
> But also above in the heavenly company
> Our prudence hath made peace universally,
> Which thing, we say, recordeth, us as principal (lines 1241–1244)

While prudence, or moderation, is an important virtue in Skelton's *Magnificence*, here Heywood subverts this ideal characteristic by making Jupiter appear indecisive and lazy in his application of the law. Jupiter appears to do nothing, but in fact reaffirms his control over the weather by becoming the only one with the authority to decide what the climate will be from now on as shown by the capitulation of the suitors to his whims without any resistance. Heywood suggests that even though Henry VIII could not give back the power granted to him by Parliament, the king should not to use his newfound authority.

Moreover, Heywood introduces Merry Report to perform a dramatic act of subversion on Jupiter's, and by analogy Henry VIII's power, by scrutinizing the god-king's restoration of order when he mentions that "Sirs, now shall ye have the weather even as it was" (line 1238). Heywood's inclusion of Merry Report, the main comedic force of the play, indicates that the playwright intends to criticize Henry VIII. In particular, Heywood satirizes the king for the consolidation of his political authority over the religious affairs of the English Church. Lines contends that "Heywood's 1533 plays [including the earlier *The Play of the Weather*] are utterly

engaged in their political moment—the struggle over the extent of royal authority and the separate existence of the church" (430). Merry Report is unlike other vice characters of medieval cycle plays or those of *Magnificence*. Instead of trying to manipulate Jupiter into sin, such as other vices who have attempted with their respective kingly figures, Merry Report acts more as a modern fool character that will later appear in Shakespeare's plays to undermine their rulers' actions to the audience through dramatic irony and to relay the truth of situations in a comedic fashion. These fools essentially provide a voice of skepticism to the actions of those in power. Merry Report's subversive actions, specifically expressing his opinions on the other characters' actions or making fools out of the suitors' demands, "resist, in their skepticism of absolute interpretive authority … the increasing centralization of both political and religious power in the king's hands" (lines 430–431). As a vice figure, Merry Report does not cause Jupiter's downfall through temptation but instead questions the need for the extension of his control over the weather and casts doubts about the god-king's supposed triumphant. In reality, Jupiter gains more power and greater support from his subjects by doing nothing and keeping the weather the same. While Merry Report states that Jupiter did not do anything at the end of the play, Walker rightly argues that what "Jupiter actually proposes is not … to leave the weather as it was, but to determine it at his own discretion" (*Plays of Persuasion* 152). Jupiter uses the opportunity of gaining the Parliament of the gods' and the suitors' consent to establish himself as the sole arbiter on how power will be used. As a result, Jupiter eliminates the contractual nature that former kings had with their subjects. Lines compares Jupiter to the tyrants of cycle plays, contending that *The Play of the Weather* "casts absolutist claims, with … [tyrants'] disruptive potential, as dangerously arrogant" (430). Merry Report skeptically questions Jupiter's good intentions in bringing together his suitors to hear their opinions and counsel on what to do with

the weather, implying that the god-king's real reason for summoning his subjects is to reinforce his absolute authority over them. The implicit analogue between Jupiter and Henry VIII and the confrontation between the characters suggests how Heywood is subtly critiquing Henry VIII's own efforts in increasing his power, arguing that the king is not consolidating his control for the good of the people but separates England from the Church of Rome to promote his own endeavours.

The duality of Heywood's message at the end of *The Play of the Weather* is to publicly resist the king's efforts to make himself the primary force of governance within the English commonwealth, while also counselling the king not to use his newfound authority over religious dogma. While it initially appears that these two interpretations contradict one another, that Heywood is either praising the king for his absolutist tendencies or condemning him for his tyrannical policies, both of these arguments propose that Henry VIII should essentially do nothing with whatever power he has managed to obtain. Walker discusses how Heywood "touched daringly and unmistakably on contentious contemporary issues of intense political interest … in ways that, rather like More's speech, seemed to endorse the nature and direction of royal policy, while simultaneously also implying doubts about, and even an ironic critique of those same things" ("Complaining About the Weather" 122). The outcome is a description of Henry VIII as a god-king, who on the surface cares deeply about his subjects and their needs, yet the play's comedy reveals the English ruler is a vainglorious individual who cares only about his own rise in power. Jupiter in his declaration about the weather and Henry VIII in his adoption of Royal Supremacy do not protect the traditions that bring unity among their subjects, but instead use their new opportunities for more control to consolidate the power of their respective governments.

Chapter 3: To Make Precedent for Monarchical Sovereignty:

John Bale's Support of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy

In their discussions of the nature of the ideal kingship, Skelton, Erasmus, Elyot, and Heywood touch upon the issues of secular and religious obedience. Each of these writers delineates the perfect relationship between kings and their followers, in which subjects remain loyal to their rulers and kings fulfill their obligations to the commonwealth. Skelton and Erasmus argue that only virtuous kings deserve their subjects' obedience, but that this loyalty can be ultimately maintained if kings are educated on the proper use of their authority over the realm. Elyot and Heywood furthermore argue that while virtuous kings should be obeyed, tyrants should be disobeyed by their subjects; moreover, virtuous monarchs should act within the confines of the laws of the commonwealth and within the ethical consideration of their subjects' needs. Ideally, kings work in tandem with their subjects to preserve the harmony of society by ensuring the stability that such a hierarchical arrangement provides. Kings as the head of the realm require the body politic, their subjects, to govern effectively. These writers insist that monarchs need to work for the benefit of society, potentially at their own expense. Monarchs, such as Henry VIII, are servants of the people who are supposed to maintain the rule of succession to prevent discord within the state. Rulers are also responsible for the fair and equitable administration of the realm's justice.

The monarch's responsibility to ensure the stability of the realm and the administration of justice is a central concern in Starkey's *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* and Bale's *King Johan*,

who each advocate that subjects are to be absolutely obedient to their rulers even if they are tyrants, a stark contrast from the works of Skelton, Erasmus, Elyot, and Heywood. Both Starkey and Bale emphasize that the English commonwealth can be greatly strengthened if subjects give their complete devotion to their king. In particular, Starkey and Bale believe that instead of dividing their loyalties between two masters, people should only obey Henry VIII and not the pope because the king offers a better chance to reform the English Church back to its original state, free from its preoccupation with temporal affairs and corruption. These two writers base their arguments on religious doctrine, namely on the belief that kings are divinely appointed by God to act as his arbitrators in the physical world.

While extant sources do not show that Starkey and Bale were directly influenced by one another's writings, they were a part of the same propaganda network created by religious reformers to support Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy and his break with the Church of Rome. Starkey and Bale were both patronized by Cromwell, whose actions as Henry VIII's secretary, according to Howard Leithead, were influenced by his desire to "improve the 'common weal,' and … his motivation was largely evangelical and humanistic" (13). Cromwell drafted a number of reforms to introduce to the king, some crafted by courtly and religious scholars that he had employed in his large household, men such as Starkey, William Marshall the "lawyer and minor royal official who was translating and publish certain books" (Everett 130), and Richard Morison, "known as Henry VIII's most prolific propaganda writer" (Sowerby, *Renaissance and Reform in Tudor England* 1), "who helped develop reformist ideas for him to implement" (Leithead 13). Cromwell was influenced by a "determination to remake the body politic by subjecting the Church to the State, and establishing the supremacy of king-in-parliament" (Everett 200). This translated into his support for religious reform to ensure the prosperity of the

commonwealth by having an independent monarchy capable of passing laws without the approval of numerous other political entities, such as Parliament or the Roman Church. Cromwell and his fellow reformers, including Archbishop Cranmer, tied the successes of their political aspirations for a more independent English nation and Church to Henry VIII's ability to enact these proposed changes. It was "this fundamental contingency to Henry's interest in reform which posed the gravest threat to Cromwell and his allies … [as] it meant that at virtually any moment both they and their cause might be abandoned if the political situation suggested it" (Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* 204). Cromwell was motivated by the political survival of his reformist ideals to patronize individuals who could help him convince the king of the importance of freeing England from papal authority.

Cromwell patronized Starkey in order to garner support from the nobility for Henry VIII's divorce and Royal Supremacy and to further his own ambitions to see a reformed English Church. Similar to Skelton and Erasmus, Starkey advertised his humanist education and talents as a writer to attract prospective patrons. It was during his education, most likely at Magdalen College from 1516 to 1522 that he met Reginald Pole (1500–1558), a prominent ecclesiastic scholar and relative of Henry VIII, who would become Starkey's first patron from 1529 to 1534 (Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* 1). It was also during this period that Starkey met Thomas Lupset (1495–1558), a fellow ecclesiastical scholar in Pole's household. Starkey dedicated *A Dialogue* (1532), a treatise on the reformation and education of England's nobility, to Pole and Lupset, both of whom influenced his views on the aristocracy. (Mayer, "Starkey, Thomas" 1). He would later incorporate many elements of this work into *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes,* also known by its alternate title of *An Exhortation to the People Instructing*

Them to Unity and Obedience, a sermon composed for Cromwell in 1536, which argues that kings deserve their subjects' complete obedience.

Starkey advances the discussion on England's Protestant Reformation by arguing for greater political and religious moderation, a conciliatory approach to secular and religious rule. Thomas F. Mayer describes how Starkey's *A Dialogue* is "labelled a classic of English political thought since the nineteenth century, but the scrutiny which this designation has produced has not resulted in an adequate interpretation of the work" (qtd. in *Thomas Starkey: A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* xii). Mayer, therefore, aims to correct the scholarship by contending that Starkey wishes to see Henry VIII work more closely with a council consisting of nobility to help oversee the realm. In particular, Starkey hopes to see his patron, Pole, rise in political power to become a leading force in this new government founded on the return of the contractual relationship between the king and his subjects.

In *A Dialogue*, Starkey claims that the nobility requires an education on courtly advice to create professional counsellors to help the king govern the realm, echoing Elyot's own conclusion in *The Boke Named the Governour*. Starkey's work, however, differs from Elyot's own proposals about advisors in two ways. First, Starkey emphasizes the need for councils and committees, made up by the nobility, to oversee the monarch's actions to ensure that England's kings did not overstep their authority or act in a tyrannical manner. Mayer notes that "Starkey clearly hoped to see an oligarchical constitution in England" (qtd. in *Thomas Starkey: A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* xiii), in which the king worked in tandem with the nobility to maintain the realm's stability, a major concern for intellectuals associated with the court during Henry's adoption of Royal Supremacy that prompted various political and religious changes. Drawing from his humanist training, Starkey advocates for courtly advisors to undergo an

educational reform similar to what Erasmus proposes for kings and what Elyot suggests for the nobility, in which virtuous tutors would teach future counsellors on the ethical manner of ruling a realm. Mayer continues that, "[t]hus equipped, the high nobility would deserve the places reserved for it in two councils which Starkey designed to restrain the prince's power" (qtd. in *Thomas Starkey: A Dialogue between Pole and Lupset* xiii). While Starkey criticizes the nobility for being the cause of instability throughout England's history, his proposed changes give more power to the nobility to create a means of balancing the monarchy's political control.

The second aspect that differentiates Starkey's work from Elyot's is his inclusion of papal authority in his discussions and his restriction of the papacy's role to spiritual matters. Starkey contends that the papacy had become too involved in temporal affairs, leading to its corruption; thus *A Dialogue* "defined papal tyranny as the usurpation of power in temporal affairs" (Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* 100–101), in which the papacy used its authority over spiritual matters to force monarchies to adhere to its political demands. For England, this meant the papacy's unwillingness to allow Henry's divorce from Katherine at the behest of the Holy Roman Emperor was unethical because it went against biblical law that the pope was not allowed to interfere with the duties of God's magistrates, the monarchs. Starkey proposes an educated nobility to counterbalance what he perceives as the two biggest sources of tyranny: kings and the pope. Furthermore, Starkey argues for conciliarism, the belief that secular or spiritual authorities should have their decisions overseen by councils and committees, as a means to hold these powers accountable to the commonwealth, preventing them from gaining more authority over secular laws and religious doctrines. Under Pole's patronage, Starkey views the nobility as the solution to the ills of English society and designs *A Dialogue* to spur his

patron to lead his movement for greater empowerment for councils, specifically from the nobility, to act as the king's main source of political advice.

A Dialogue demonstrates Starkey's initial opinions about kingship while under the patronage of Pole and before Henry VIII redefined his rule as an absolute monarch with his adoption of Royal Supremacy. Starkey's belief in conciliarism forms part of his humanist vision of the monarchy, according to which political moderation is needed to ensure England's continuing prosperity as an independent nation and a member of the wider world of Christian nations across Europe. For Starkey, the nobility's corruption and political incompetence threatens to upset the balance of leadership within the realm. As such, the king and his noble subjects need one another to fulfill their obligations to the commonwealth, balancing one another's political power. Starkey argues for moderation in terms of power being shared between monarchs and their subjects, albeit with kings still retaining their position as the head of the body politic. With the traditional hierarchy intact, but with the added changes of an oligarchic system in place, Starkey hopes to improve the position of the nobility as a measured response to and an indirect reform of Henry VIII's developing kingship.

Between 1534 and 1536, however, Starkey's political views underwent major changes and he abandoned his earlier ideas of conciliarism in support of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy. Despite remaining close friends, Starkey lost Pole's patronage, which was replaced by Cromwell's, who would patronize Starkey upon his short visit to England in 1535. Cromwell would request for Starkey to act as an "intelligencer for Italy, assiduously soliciting the latest news from his wide range of correspondents in and around Pole's household in Padua and Venice" (Mayer, *Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* 201). Starkey eventually won Cromwell's favour and his new patron suggested that he rework *A Dialogue*'s arguments into a

new work entitled *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes ,* also known as *An Exhortation to the People* (1536). As a patron, Cromwell considerably influenced Starkey's ideological reasoning by essentially paying his servant to articulate literary arguments that reflected his own reformist aspirations. In turn, Starkey looked to Cromwell for advice and often had his patron peruse his writings to ensure they met the Lord Chancellor's and Henry VIII's wishes. Mayer claims that in their correspondence "Starkey told Cromwell that their last conversation had inspired him to write up his 'fancy & opynyon' about points Cromwell had raised" (*Thomas Starkey and the Commonweal* 217) specifically about emphasizing anti-papal sentiments. However, Cromwell did not have complete control over Starkey, who often disregarded his patron's opinions, in which the writer argued that the extreme politics of the religious reformers and religious conservatives, namely the papacy, divided people against one another in the European Christian world.

Starkey changed, however, his perspective from the creation of *A Dialogue* to *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes ,* additionally titled as *An Exhortation* on political moderation, which he defined as "*government* with no clear boundary inward and outward" (Shagan 8), in reference to secular and spiritual obedience to the king as an ideal solution to prevent further division by giving everyone the commonality of being obedient to a single source of authority. Whereas *A Dialogue* argues for conciliarism to achieve a balance of power within the internal power structures of England's monarchy and nobility, *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* advocates that English monarchs require the complete obedience of their subjects to fulfill their proper obligations towards the commonwealth. Starkey bases this argument on the idea that God's scriptures dictate that "whether it be in the state of a prince or populare: than the people are to them bounde by the virtue of goddis owne worde, who commaundeth expressely his disciplies to

be obedient to commune policie" (*A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* 8). Scriptural doctrine establishes the precedent that God supports the notion that people need to obey the laws of the realm as laid out by the local ruler, not the general counsel of the pope or his councils. For Starkey, the Church of Rome acts as a form of general counsel, in which the pope can advise local rulers on particular matters, such as religious dogma, but rulers hold the right to determine what laws best serve their subjects. As such, Henry VIII holds the legal and religious privilege to demand the complete loyalty of the people of the commonwealth since the king is the ultimate source of "common authoritie" (10) in England. The people of the English commonwealth should thus consider Henry VIII's authority as the final say in what is legally or spiritually correct, as long as the king rules in accordance with the "worde of god … [as the] chiefe authoritie" (9).

Starkey justifies his belief that an absolutist monarchy could reunite the commonwealth by advocating that obedience to a singular ruler could achieve unity through political moderation. One of the major arguments Starkey expresses in *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* is the idea of "[t]hynges indifferent … whiche by goddis worde are nother prohbthyted nor commanded, but lefte to worldly polycie" (7). Starkey alleges that worldly matters, specifically rules and regulations that the scriptures do not deal with, are to be decided by secular rulers, such as Henry VIII. Shagan argues that Starkey helped introduce the concept of adiaphora to Henry VIII, which is defined as the "idea of 'things indifferent,'" in reference "to the morality of human beings, or more broadly, external actions that were neither intrinsically good nor intrinsically evil" (76). In particular, Shagan points out that *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes* has "long been known to historians as a blueprint for the *via media* of Henry VIII, rejecting both the Romanism of Reginald Pole and the evangelism of Thomas Cranmer in favour of a moderate middle way"

(79–80). Specifically, Henry VIII acted as a mediator between the religious conservatives and Church reformers by appealing to the groups' sensibilities of obeying their monarch. In this way, Starkey asserts that unity can be achieved between those who want to keep the Church's Roman traditions and those who advocate for change by having Henry VIII, now the Supreme Head of the English Church, act as a locus of commonality among all of those in the English commonwealth.

Starkey is not unique in his considerations about how obedience to the monarchy can produce societal unity, as William Tyndale (1494–1536), an English propagandist in favour of religious reform whom the English government deemed a heretic for his writings. In his treatise *The Obedience of a Christian Man and How Christen Rulers Ought to Governe* (1528), Tyndale argues that religious reformers did not advocate for people to commit sedition against local rulers (4–6). Tyndale originally published *The Obedience of a Christian Man* in 1528 in response to religious conservatives such as More who wanted to suppress what he saw as heretical thought during his time as chancellor, and who asserted that the "reformers throughout Europe were encouraging sedition and teaching treason" (Daniell, "William Tyndale" 6). Supposedly by 1529, Anne Boleyn gifted this heretical text to Henry VIII, who was influenced by Tyndale's arguments on Christian loyalty and obedience (Coast 1). However, G.W. Bernard and David Coast each contend that Henry VIII likely did not read Tyndale's work. Bernard, for instance, points to the fact that Henry VIII still considered Tyndale a heretic and a threat to his authority. In particular, Tyndale and those who were in possession of his works were often persecuted, exiled, or executed, which "shows that the authorities were largely on top of what they saw as a serious heretical challenge" (Bernard, *The King's Reformation* 279). Coast further corroborated Bernard's charge by pointing out how Henry VIII "appears to have been hostile to Tyndale and

his writings" as evidenced by his numerous attempts to extradite this heretical propagandist from Brussels to England for his heresies against the Church (4). While it is highly doubtful that Tyndale's writings had any impact on Henry VIII's policies in so far as being an inspiration for this king's outlook on his subjects' obedience to his royal personage, *The Obedience of the Christian Man* demonstrates that Starkey is not alone in discussing the scriptural support for subjects to obey their rulers.

Specifically, Tyndale advocates that good Christians obey their local rulers because they are divinely ordained to act as God's representatives, a concept that Starkey echoes in his own writings. Tyndale believes that obedience as a Christian concept expands beyond the confines of the Church's hierarchy of worshippers owing allegiance to the pope, but also to subjects' relationship with their monarch. Good Christians, according to Tyndale, are those who adhere to the "obedience of children to parents, servants to masters, wives to husbands … all of it under God" (Daniell, "The Obedience of a Christian Man" 224). God had created a natural hierarchy to be followed and sedition went against this divine order. Holly A. Crocker further emphasizes Tyndale's hierarchal perspective on obedience, contending that for this propagandist to "obey the king … is to follow God's law in its secondary externalized form: 'Because God will so have it, we must obey'" (146). Tyndale argues that obedience in all its forms is an expression of faith in God's plan and that disobedience especially that of sedition to a Christian king is to go against divine law. Tyndale adds the caveat that subjects are allowed to disobey "evil commands, but if he protests, he is to suffer punishment peacefully" (Daniell, "The Obedience of a Christian Man" 224). Similar to Starkey, Tyndale believes that subjects owe their loyalty to their kings, whether they are virtuous or tyrannical, as God sends these rulers to administer the Almighty's justice.

Yet, Coast points out that Tyndale's hierarchal view is also against monarchical sovereignty in that "kings were largely irrelevant to the actual practice of politics, since they exercised no real power or agency" (21). Crocker emphasizes this argument by contending that Tyndale believes that the conscience, or the shared experiences of the lay community, replaces "institutional knowledge … [p]ersonal, spiritual cultivation is achieved almost exclusively through the reading and hearing of scripture" (144). Understandings of scripture are a personal experience that can be shared within the Christian community but cannot be only controlled by major authority figures such as the Church and most importantly the monarchy. Whereas Starkey argues that obedience as a Christian concept must be expressed to God by obeying local rulers, Tyndale advocates that true loyalty to the divine can only be found through the personal journey of individuals exploring and interpreting the scriptures for themselves. As such, Tyndale contends that monarchs cannot hold sovereignty over dogma, a point that Henry VIII promoted so that he could become the Supreme Head of the English Church.

Whereas Starkey envisions an authoritarian monarchy and Tyndale wants a communal understanding of the scriptures, Bale shares a concern for papal interference demonstrated by his belief that a king needs absolute authority to ensure the sanctity of the realm's Church. However, Bale represents a more radical interpretation of Henry VIII's role as a religious arbitrator, as he advocates that the king needs to dismantle the Roman traditions of the Church to effect a return of the original religious doctrines laid out by Christ and his apostles. While Heywood insists that Henry VIII needs to protect the Roman traditions of the Church, Bale wants the opposite in destroying these customs to allow further reform to remove what he and other Protestants believe are corruptions of the original apostolic doctrines. Nevertheless, both dramatists want to guarantee that their version of the true religion remains intact in a changing political climate of

the 1530s. What differentiates these two writers is their support of Henry's consolidation of his power, with Heywood satirizing the king as a tyrannical god and Bale contending that the king needs to further consolidate his authority in order to advance religious reform.

Literary scholars and historians argue that *King Johan* represents Bale's ideology, in particular how this former Carmelite monk uses his knowledge of papal traditions to criticize Rome's policies towards the English Church. Cavanagh, for instance, asserts that *King Johan* is a "powerful instance of ideological critique, for it deciphers how the vested interests of the medieval church obstruct a just estimation of the truth and recovers persecuted voices that have attempted to promote a fuller vision of human community" ("The Paradox of Sedition in John Bale's *King Johan*" 172). As a form of propaganda, *King Johan* breaks the mould of medieval and Henrician morality plays, as the rhetoric inherent in Bale's drama goes against traditions established by the papacy and addresses the papal corruption of the English Church. Specifically, Bale derides what he believes are the papacy's superstitions, such as the use of idols to represent Christ. Happé furthermore points out that, in *King Johan*, Bale expresses his controversial opinions about the Church, while protecting himself from royal persecution during a time when open critique of religious policy was dangerous: "Bale's manipulation of Johan's character, his forthright but varied use of language, and his resourceful accumulation of allegorical devices and motifs are all a part of his rhetorical flexibility" ("A Reassessment of John Bale's Rhetoric" 263). Bale's interest in King John is less about the reverence of the monarchy as a governmental institution and more about how rulers can be used to facilitate greater religious reform. Similar to Skelton and Heywood, Bale intends his religious propaganda to persuade Henry VIII to use his highest authority to bring positive change to the English Church.

Bale's positions on Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy and his support for the Protestant Reformation were deeply shaped by his education, his conversion to Protestantism, and his influential patrons. Bale attended Jesus College, Cambridge, during a time of support for the Protestant Reformation "instigated by clerics like Hugh Latimer and Miles Coverdale who had been influenced by Lutheran ideas" (John N. King 1). Nevertheless, Bale remained a staunch supporter of the Roman Church and its traditions during his studies, eventually becoming the "prior of the white friars' convent in … Maldon in Essex" and the head of the Ipswich Carmelite Convent in 1534 (John N. King 1). However, Bale turned his back on the Carmelites during the 1530s when he "fell under the influence of Thomas, first Baron Wentworth of Nettlestead [(1501–1551)], to whom he attributed his conversion to Protestantism" (John N. King 1). Wentworth, Bale's first patron, encouraged the Carmelite monk to abandon his clerical position and commit himself fully to the Protestant cause to reform the Church. By 1536, Bale was in Suffolk acting as a Protestant polemicist and dramatist, using his dramatic works to preach religious reform by writing about "two dozen polemical evangelical plays in the 1530s, though only five have survived" (MacCulloch 417). However, Bale "got into trouble in Suffolk …, but had useful support after [his] arrest and detention at Greenwich palace around Christmastide 1536 on charges of preaching heresy" (417). The heresy laws of which Bale had run afoul were based on his "sermon that denounced 'papistry'" (John N. King 2), demonstrating that although Henry VIII may have separated the Church from Rome, he initially refused to change the law to reflect his policy on this separation. Henry VIII retained certain heresy laws in case he wanted to reopen diplomatic channels with Rome. Bale found himself in the middle of Henry VIII's balancing act between Protestantism and the Roman Church, about which this radical dramatist criticized the king.

Bale's arrest in Suffolk represented a turning point in his career as his polemical plays and fervent support of Protestant reform gained the attention of Cromwell. Whereas Cromwell patronized Starkey to act first as an intelligencer and second as a writer, he saw Bale's dramas as a tool to engage in public forms of propaganda. Walker discusses how Cromwell and the polemical pamphleteer Morison arranged to use drama as a popular form of entertainment to move the masses to support the Protestant Reformation. In particular, Cromwell "argued for the suppression of the 'papist' Corpus Christi cycles and their replacement by Protestant plays demonstrating rather the 'abhomynation and wickednes' of the Bishop of Rome, 'monkes, freers, nonnes, and suche like'" (Walker, *Plays of Persuasion* 11). Seeing an opportunity to enact this plan, Cromwell freed Bale at the behest of Wentworth and John Leland, an English antiquarian who was acquainted with the dramatist through their mutual love of history (MacCulloch 417). Cromwell then offered Bale and his playing troupe, Bale and His Felowes, employment if he continued to perform plays that criticized the papacy and supported the Protestant movement (White 12). While Cromwell patronized Starkey to use his intellectual works to convince the nobility, among them Pole, to support Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, he hired Bale to compose plays that would persuade the common people to organize together to demand more Protestant policies, largely by having the king's subjects support religious reform. Cromwell's patronage of Bale underscored how the chancellor used this dramatist and his playing troupe to enact Morison's idea of using theatre to convince the public of the benefit of changing the English Church's traditions.

Cromwell used the resurgence of interest in King John by Protestant reformers to demonstrate that Henry VIII's policies during the 1530s held historical precedent. Levin argues that "King John had been despised with near unanimity for centuries … the chroniclers recalled

him as a young prince habitually plotting against his brother Richard (who forgave him each time with suave contempt), and as an arbitrary king who vexed his own nobles into civil war" (23). Most importantly, the English chronicles note how King John's conflicts with England's bishops resulted in the nation's excommunication and almost caused France's invasion of the realm to return it to papal control. King John previously served as an example of a tyrannical monarch, a leader who abused his authority for his own gain and whose incompetence nearly destroyed the commonwealth by aggravating rival nations. However, during the Henrician period "John's reputation underwent—at least officially—a complete rehabilitation: the medieval villain became a hero of English liberty … a lonely pioneer in resisting the tyrannies of Rome" (Levin 23). The historical re-evaluation of King John was political in nature, as his actions against the Papacy gave precedence to Henry VIII's own conflict with Rome. At the same time, the connection between King John and Henry VIII provided historical evidence that English monarchies were originally independent of the papacy, but that over time different popes had used their power over spiritual matters to interfere in England's politics. As such, English Protestants viewed King John as an ideal figure to demonstrate a pattern of papal tyranny that had threatened England not only in the past but also during Henry VIII's reign.

Bale wrote the first draft of *King Johan* while under Cromwell's patronage in 1536, using a popular retelling of history among fellow religious reformers to convince audiences that the English monarchy represented a bastion of religious freedom from papal tyranny. Aware of England's and his subjects' destitute state because of the papacy's greed, King John calls together the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Civil Order to declare that he will be gathering taxes from the Church. Sedition, along with the other vices who also work for Rome, plan to thwart King John by turning the different estates against him and to have the pope excommunicate

England to give France a justification to invade. King John is ready to surrender to prevent his subjects from further rebellion and to prevent the destruction of the commonwealth by an invading force. However, Dissimulation, disguised as a Dominican friar, assassinates King John before the ruler can remedy the situation. The first draft of the play completed in 1536 ended with King John's subjects regretting their actions in light of their ruler's death and renewing their loyalties. Happé mentions that Bale "continued to work on it for many years after a known performance in 1538, and it thus has another life or lives as revisions were incorporated" ("A Reassessment of John Bale's Rhetoric" 260). Howard B. Norland insinuates that Bale's revisions hold a deeper political reason as he added a new ending that is "prepared for presentation to Queen Elizabeth, probably at Ipswich in August in 1561" (*Drama in Early Tudor Britain* 188). In this new version, Bale continues the story after King John's death with the arrival of Imperial Majesty, who restores order to England by executing Sedition and forcing the other estates to declare an oath of loyalty to England. Bale's message both in the old and new versions is clear: he is warning the English monarchy, from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I, to remain vigilant against any papal incursion as, in his view, Rome's objective is to erode monarchical power in England.

It is unclear how effective Bale was in changing public opinion, but historians note that Cromwell's patronage extended *King Johan*'s reach to larger and more prolific audiences. White points out that "'Balle and his felowes' were recorded for two performances paid for and attended by Cromwell himself: in September 1538 in St. Stephen's Church, near Canterbury, a rectory under Cromwell's direct charge since 1535 … [and] a third performance is indicated in a deposition of one John Alforde, who witnessed *King Johan* at the Canterbury residence of Archbishop Cranmer in December 1538" (17). While guests of various backgrounds may have been present at St. Stephen's, the higher ranks of society most likely attended the show at

Cranmer's residence. White furthermore argues that the reach of Bale's play was in part due to Cromwell's influence, as Bale was creating plays specifically to cater to his patron's wishes (27). Yet, Atkin posits, inspired by Walker's perspective on the matter, that "Reformation drama … represented a negotiation between playwrights and patrons, players and audience members, over a variety of contested religious and political issues" (9). Even though Cromwell opened up a number of opportunities for Bale, Atkin suggests that many of the play's messages and themes are based on the playwright's own opinions rather than those of his patron. Although the dissemination of *King Johan* may have been based largely on Cromwell's ties to the king's court, it was Bale's own words which were being used to disperse Reformation theology.

King Johan was the first historical drama in the English canon, in which Bale used the history of King John to explain that Henry VIII's struggles against the papacy held precedent. Bale stages real historical figures and events in *King Johan* to convey the political message of Henry VIII's royal superiority instead of using archetypical characters who represent abstract concepts of virtue and sin that appear in Skelton's and Heywood's plays. Historical figures such as King John become symbols of the struggle between the English monarchy and the papacy. Yet, Bale also introduces vice characters who conceptualize the evils of society, in this case the tyrannies of Rome. Even though Bale employs the conventions of the medieval morality play, *King Johan* presents a "historical analogue designed to reflect the contemporary situation" of England during the 1530s (Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain* 189). As Happé notes in his introduction, Bale's play "has attracted [the] most attention … because it has been seen as 'the first English history play, a vehemently Protestant ancestor of Shakespeare's *King John*" (qtd. in *The Complete Plays of John Bale* 1). As a piece of Protestant propaganda and a precursor to Elizabethan history plays, Bale uses history as a rhetorical strategy to persuade his diverse

audiences and Henry VIII himself to continue resisting what he sees as papal tyranny. Bale's devotion to Protestantism shaped how he viewed the responsibility of the English monarch: the protection of the English commonwealth from foreign incursions and the Church from corruption. Compared to Skelton and Heywood, Bale did not wish to limit Henry VIII's authority as long as the king used his newfound powers to guard the commonwealth and the English Church from foreign influence.

For Bale, King John represented a proto-British hero who defined the boundaries of England's identity as an empire and subsequently of the monarchy's position as an emperor. Mottram confirms that Henrician writers during the 1530s, especially those of "both royalist and 'radical' political casts," perceived the commonwealth of England as an empire (7). In particular, Mottram warns against the notion of seeing the "term 'imperial' … [as only referring to] colonial expansion in the sixteenth century," since it also defines a "sovereign realm" independent of foreign authority (10). As such, when Henry VIII defined Royal Supremacy as granting him imperial privilege, he was referring to the concept of his own royal rights as being above the Church of Rome's influence, including the papacy's control over the English Church and religious dogma in England. Bale was a part of this concerted effort to create an imperial identity for England by dramatizing King John's history. As a consequence, Bale's reinterpretation of King John as a monarch who struggled for England's independence from the papacy connected Henry VIII to an imagined struggle for religious reform that had occurred in the past.

Bale, much like Starkey, believes that kings were God's chosen arbitrators to administer the law to their respective realms. King John reiterates this belief in the opening lines of the play by declaring that "[b]oth Peter and Paul maketh plenteous utterance; / How that all people should show their true allegiance / To their lawful king, Christ Jesu doth consent" (lines 4–6). For Bale,

God has established an appropriate hierarchy, with subjects obeying every command of the head of the body politic, the monarch. Other dramatists and writers also believe in this notion. For example, Skelton and Erasmus contend that rulers become magnificent when they seek out power to help fulfill their responsibilities towards their hierarchical inferiors, their subjects. Elyot and Heywood also provide a similar argument, in that rulers are needed to maintain the stability of their realms, but with the caveat that monarchs' authority should be balanced by other political entities to ensure that these leaders do not become tyrants. For Bale and Starkey, monarchs are divinely chosen, which means that subjects, other political institutions, or foreign powers, such as the papacy, should not challenge kings and their authority. According to Bale, kings are infallible whether they act as virtuous rulers or sinful tyrants; if subjects criticize their king's orders, they are questioning God's judgement. Since God chooses kings to act in his stead, Bale believes that monarchs, such as Henry VIII, deserve the respect and obedience of their subjects, despite the populace's loyalty to the papacy.

Norland contends that Bale views the virtue or sinfulness of kings as being a consequence of their subjects' behaviour, in which the "allegorical character, England [(Ynglond)] … expresses the Tudor and Stuart doctrine of rule by divine right: 'Be the king good or bade he is of Godes apoyntyng' … A good king is perceived as a reward for virtue and a bad king the punishment for evil" (*Drama in Early Tudor Britain* 191–192). Bale adds Ynglond as a character to symbolize the commonwealth as a geographical and a political identity on the stage. Mottram argues that Bale, along with other writers, such as Morison and the playwright Nicholas Udall share "a common concern to represent England in ways other than through the person of its reigning king or queen" (222). The importance of this separation of England from the ruler is to demonstrate how the English people, including the monarchy as an institution, are obliged to

uphold the values of the commonwealth. For Bale, this means the protection of the Church's sanctity from papal corruption and interference. The separation between English monarchs and England within the play portrays how Bale is influenced by anti-papal rhetoric, including Henry VIII's own propaganda on Royal Supremacy, to view the English commonwealth as being more important than the larger Christian world because it provides the perfect location to reclaim the true practices of the early Church.

However, Bale uses the character of Ynglond to reveal to his audience how rulers need to ensure the health of their respective commonwealths in order to remain in power, since their rule depends on the welfare of the body politic or of the peoples of England. While Mottram is correct in asserting that Bale separates the English monarchy from England as distinct political entities, he also connects these two institutions in a symbiotic relationship. In particular, King John's strength as a ruler does not only come from God's divine judgement but it also comes from England's economic and spiritual prosperity. Ynglond echoes Bale's opinion on the state of the English Church by blaming the clergy for her destitute state as the "clergy hath done very sore amiss / In misusing me against all right and justice" (lines 27–28). She claims that "[s]uch lubbers as hath disguised heads in their hoods, / Which in idleness do live by other men's goods; / Monks, canons, and nuns, in divers color and shape" (lines 36–38) use their authority over religious observance to beguile people into giving up all of their wealth to their priestly orders. As a result, the Clergy drains Ynglond's wealth and has greatly weakened the realm's political power in the process. Gerhardt contends that Bale uses Ynglond's grievances against the clergy as a part of his plan to recreate King John as a just ruler, in which the "mark of a king … is to defend his poor subjects, and Ynglond understands this duty in relation to her widowhood" (53). Ynglond acts as a foil to King John, in which the ruler shows his virtue and his desire for justice

by aiding what Gerhardt terms a "member of the deserving and obedient poor" (60). Bale therefore redefines King John's character as it appears in the English chronicles from a greedy ruler who taxes the Church for his own selfish desires to a monarch who wants to redistribute the wealth that the Clergy and the foreign papacy have stolen to his deserving subjects.

Yet, Bale also implies that King John has an ulterior motive for helping the widow Ynglond, whose destitution reveals how his royal authority is being countermanded by papal agents in his own realm. The presence of the main vice character Sedition during King John's and Ynglond's meeting demonstrates how the commonwealth's impoverishment at the hands of the clergy is a direct threat to the king's authority. Sedition, including his fellow vices, acts both as papal agents and as representations of what Bale believes are the papacy's failings. In particular, Sedition is later transformed into Stephen Langton (1150–1228), the archbishop of Canterbury who, in the past, helped negotiate between King John and the barons in the creation of the Magna Charta, a bill of rights that limited monarchical authority (Holdsworth 8). For Bale, Langton symbolizes how the papacy often clashed with the monarchy on political matters, ultimately interfering with the king's duties in maintaining the realm's stability. Sedition thus represents the rebellious Church which undermines the king's political power by stealing the realm's wealth and using its authority over religious dogma to instigate the people against their king. For instance, Sedition responds to Ynglond's complaints to King John against the clergy by mocking the widow and her poverty:

> I will not away for that same wedred witch;
> She shall rather kiss where as it doth not itch.
> *Quodumque ligaveris*, I trow, will play such a part
> That I shall abide in England, magry [in spite of] your heart.

Tush, the pope ableth me to subdue both king and kaiser. (lines 95–99)

Sedition refuses to obey King John, showing how this vice disregards the English monarch's authority and subsequently his intent to continue the pope's orders to pillage Ynglond's estate.

Sedition is able to undermine King John by attacking the source of his authority, the realm that grants him the military and economic power necessary to protect his reign. King John is not only motivated to seek justice for Ynglond but also to uplift the realm that strengthens his monarchical authority. White argues that *King Johan* "reflects Crown fears that while the doctrine of papal supremacy had been legally dead since 1534, the religious and cultural fabric on which it rested was not, and with the ever-present threat of invasion by Catholic powers on the Continent … propaganda against the Papacy would need to be stepped up to sway public opinion against Rome and reduce the risk of further seditious uprisings such as the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1535" (27). The Church had culturally conditioned the English people to owe their allegiance to the papacy, the institution that claimed to hold the key to spiritual salvation. English monarchs were forced to compete with the Church for control over the commonwealth as each institution vied for the obedience of the people.

Bale represents the dangers of the papacy having control over the English monarch's subjects through the seditious actions of the king's council, made up of Nobility, Clergy, and Civil Order. King John calls his council together to seek justice for Ynglond by declaring a new taxation on the Church in the hope that it will hinder further papal interference in his rule. While the three estates vow to obey their king, Clergy later turns Nobility and Civil Order against their ruler with the threat that the pope will excommunicate anyone who goes against his authority. In particular, Clergy declares to the other members of the King's Council how the pope is "above the princes all; / Therefore beware ye do not to heresy fall" (lines 613–614). Nobility remarks

that he is “unlearned, my wits are soon confounded” (line 617) on the concerns of religious practice, leaving Clergy to guide him in the proper matters about how to confront what the Church deems to be King John’s sedition against the pope. Thus, the pope and subsequently the Church derive their power by gatekeeping scriptural understanding, claiming what they say is the correct interpretation of God’s Word. Without this scriptural education, Nobility and King John’s other subjects are unable to defy the papacy’s authority because they fear that they might inadvertently commit heresy. As an extension of the Pope’s authority, Clergy is able to steal the obedience of King John’s subjects through the threat of expulsion from the wider Christian world and disbarment from heaven itself.

Bale emphasizes the pope’s tyranny through Comminality, a representation of King John’s common subjects, who struggle with impoverishment and refuse to obey the king. Comminality is in a state of misfortune similar to Ynglond herself, because this character has been blinded due to their “want of knowledge in Christ’s lively verity” (line 433) or truth. According to Bale, the papacy has caused Comminality’s spiritual blindness by making him believe that his salvation is based on the worship of false idols and superstitious rituals that serve no real purpose in the practice of the true faith, but to instead steal money from those who want to worship God. Bale demonstrates through Ynglond’s and Comminality’s misfortune at the hands of the Church that the greatest threat to the commonwealth, including its kings and queens, is the papacy’s control over the spiritual education of the English people. According to Bale, the pope and his agents maintain their authority by acting as the main interpreter of the Scriptures. This allowed the papacy to interpret the Bible for its own benefit, claiming that worshippers can claim God’s favour by appeasing the various priests who act as an extension of the pope with payments of their wealth.

Bale's separation of England from its monarchs gives the realm its own personhood, meaning it has a right to independent determination within the larger Christian world. As such, Bale's argument is similar to Starkey's in that English monarchs have an obligation to England first. For Bale and Starkey, this meant that English monarchs had the right and responsibility to administer religious dogma as it pertains to the commonwealth, especially in turning the local Church back to its roots as laid out by Christ and his apostles. English monarchs, notably Henry VIII, empowered their reigns with absolute authority to prevent foreign powers from competing with their control. Bale dedicates the first version of *King Johan* to an exploration of the ideal relationship between monarchs and their subjects. In particular, Bale contends that English monarchs require the support of their subjects to effectively govern. With the advent of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, the administration of religious dogma went under the purview of English kings and queens. For Bale, the papacy is not only a tyrannical institution that corrupts Christ's gospel for its own purposes but an invading force that is conquering England's cultural and spiritual realms. *King Johan* demonstrates that an ideal monarchy for Bale consist of rulers who are strengthened by the support of their subjects to protect the English commonwealth from physical and spiritual incursion.

Bale's support for Henry VIII's reign diminished over time, as the playwright became disappointed in the king's lack of action against papal traditions in the English Church. The first draft of the play ends with King John's death, which signals a call to action for Henry VIII to continue the fight for religious freedoms against the papacy's tyranny or suffer the same fate as his predecessor. However, Bale eventually became disenchanted with Henry VIII's efforts in reforming the English Church. Atkin claims that, in 1544, Bale argues in his "*The epistle exhortatorye of an Englyshe Christiane unto his derelye beloved contrye of Englande* … that the

Henrician church is merely popery without the pope, its bishops little better than Catholic clerics, unable to distinguish pious from profane practice" (91). Bale promotes a similar message in the revised edition of *King Johan* which was written for Queen Elizabeth I (Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain* 188). Whereas Bale had failed to persuade Henry VIII to fully reform the English Church, he now hoped to move Elizabeth I to action with his drama. As such, Bale uses King John and Imperial Majesty, a symbol of Henry VIII and the larger institution of the monarchy, to show that it is every English monarch's responsibility to fight against papal tyranny.

With the addition of Imperial Majesty, Bale explores how the burgeoning concept of England's empire influences the conception of the ideal English kingship. Whereas Starkey and Bale initially establish how biblical precedent gives kings the right to control their realms and to refuse papal orders, the Protestant playwright advances this argument in the advent of the Elizabethan period. Now, Bale claims that God's divine favour allowed English monarchs, especially that of Henry VIII and his daughter Elizabeth I, to claim imperial status. Burns defines "*imperium* as embodying a fullness or plenitude of royal power in the same way as, in the theology of sacramental order, the bishop enjoys the fullness of priestly authority" (13). In this sense, the imperial status of English kings was viewed as a more independent monarchy in which the political power and authority of the commonwealth was fully invested in the ruler as the absolute sovereign of the state. Accordingly, Bale believes that England acts as an insular empire that bestows monarchs with the sovereignty necessary to declare their independence from foreign authority, especially that of the papacy.

In the play, the arrival of Imperial Majesty after King John's death demonstrates how the English monarch has regained his *imperium* and sovereignty that the papacy had appropriated. In

the revised edition, Bale follows the narrative pattern established by prior English morality plays, in which the royal figure corrects the damage caused by the vices and restores order to society. Dissimulation's assassination of King John leaves the kingdom in disarray as the members of the King's Council, the monarch's subjects, namely Comminality, and Ynglond herself grieve over the loss of the ruler who fought to free the commonwealth from the papacy's control. At this point, Veritas, the Roman goddess of truth, descends from heaven to relay the lesson of the play to the audience by chastising the ruling estates for their disobedience:

> I am Veritas that come hither you to blame
> For casting away of our most lawful king.
> Both God and the world detesteth your damnable doing.
> How have ye used King Johan here now of late?
> I shame to rehearse the corruptions of your state.
> Ye were never well till ye had him cruelly slain,
> And now, being dead, ye have him still in disdain.
> Ye have raised up of him most shameless lies,
> Both by your reports and by your written stories. (lines 1158–1166)

Through Veritas, Bale condemns the English chronicles for propagating lies about King John's reign. He speaks of how during King John's time his subjects refused to obey his orders and how later generations continued their predecessors' seditious behaviour by believing the false history of this former monarch shaped by his papal enemies (Schwyzer 500). Veritas as a character diagnoses the problems of the play and subsequently of contemporary English society; people fail to place their loyalties with the right master, that of their king.

With King John's death, the characters now owe their allegiance to Imperial Majesty, who inherits the former monarch's authority and responsibilities, to ensure that Ynglond, both

the character and the realm, retain their religious freedoms. Imperial Majesty fulfills a similar role to that of Skelton's Magnificence in representing the English king through a specific virtue that defines the play's overall message; in this case, that monarchical sovereignty makes an ideal ruler. Imperial Majesty personifies Henry VIII as he assumes absolute authority and imperial status with his adoption of Royal Supremacy, confirming his status as one of God's chosen rulers. The new ruler states that "He sayeth that a king is of God immediately, / Then shall never pope rule more in this monarchy" (lines 1261–1262). Whereas King John struggles to gain his subjects' loyalty, Imperial Majesty commands it immediately as Clergy, the most seditious member of the King's Council, vows that papal authority will be exiled from England and that "your grace shall be the supreme head of the Church" (line 1265). Bale furthermore demonstrates that prior to the Tudor dynasty, English monarchs had the authority to reclaim their sovereignty from the papacy but not the power nor the obedience of their subjects to complete this process. With the advent of Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, however, Tudor kings extended their authority by claiming control over religious dogma and the Church's finances. Imperial Majesty thus stands for more than just Henry VIII; it symbolizes the shift from relying on the contractual obligations of feudalism to absolute kingship based on the centralization of political and religious power held by the head of the state.

The succession of the throne from King John to Imperial Majesty is more than the transference of authority between two rulers; it indicates the development of England's kingship from a medieval standard of mutual obligation to the Henrician model of absolute authority. The major difference between King John and Imperial Majesty is how each ruler exercises his authority. King John's struggle to maintain the stability of England is often met with resistance by his subjects because they fear the power the pope and his vices hold over their entrance into

the afterlife. While Bale denies earlier critiques of King John's character, he inadvertently proscribes that this ruler is ineffectual in controlling his subjects and as a result is unable to fully remove the papacy's control over the English people. Imperial Majesty, on the other hand, commands the people with his very presence and uses his authority to combat the papacy. As punishment for his involvement in King John's assassination and general rebellious behaviour, Imperial Majesty declares that Sedition is to be brought to "Tyburn; let him be hanged and quartered … And on London Bridge look ye bestow his head" (line 1455). Whereas King John attempts to fight the vices by gaining control of his subjects through appeals to their good Christian nature, Imperial Majesty demands obedience by making an example of Sedition of what would occur if anyone goes against his authority. As Cavanagh points out, the "play ameliorates this historical catastrophe with a coda that depicts Sedition's execution and the quelling of Catholic power by Imperial Majesty … [and this] action renews the bonds of loyalty between the King's three estates" ("The Paradox of Sedition in John Bale's *King Johan*" 173). While King John fails to bring his people together and to punish those responsible for stealing from Ynglond, Imperial Majesty corrects these problems with his descent from heaven. With the restoration of order, Imperial Majesty establishes himself as not only the new monarch, but a better and more powerful ruler who can effectively administer justice. Happé argues that Bale purposefully makes a distinction between these two kings, in which "Johan is fallible, a victim of circumstances and the unfortunate result of his own good will, Imperial Majesty is invincible and divinely inspired" ("A Reassessment of John Bale's Rhetoric" 262). Monarchs prior to Henry VIII had the legal right, but not the necessary authority or political power, to enact meaningful change that could contest the papacy's control over England. However, Henry VIII and the Tudor dynasty now have the authority to command their subjects' complete loyalty. At the same

time, Bale holds some reservations about Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy, as the playwright's description of ideal kingship and how absolute authority is exercised often causes the oppression of the general populace. There is hope in *Magnificence* and *The Play of the Weather* that kings and their subjects can fulfill their obligations towards each other to allow the commonwealth to prosper economically and spiritually. Bale goes against Skelton's and Heywood's ideals by contending that ideal princes demand their subjects' obedience through any means necessary. For Skelton and Heywood, this kind of kingship crosses the boundary of ethical rule into the realm of tyranny.

Yet, Bale considers tyranny a necessary risk if England is to be cleansed of its papal corruption and seditious behaviour. Cavanagh discusses how Bale becomes aware of the paradox of treason and "witnessed how this once seditious perception became accepted again as orthodox" ("Reforming Sovereignty" 184). Sedition is naturally treasonous because of his alliance with the pope and his desire to destabilize England through the disaffection of the people against their king. In Bale's time, however, sedition was often considered far more complex, as treason was defined by whoever sat on the throne, which made the concept duplicitous. Cavanagh argues that Bale learns that monarchs can use the threat of sedition against the commonwealth to give them free reign to persecute their political rivals or those whom they deem as undesirable for society ("Reforming Sovereignty" 182–184). Although Bale depicts Imperial Majesty's execution of Sedition as a moment of justice, the divine prince is only able to accomplish this task by tricking the vice. "Sedition reveals his activities only after having ensured he will receive a pardon from Imperial Majesty, a promise that is revoked in a manner that resembles the critical comments aroused by Henry VIII's manipulation of the rebels involved in the Pilgrimage of Grace" (Cavanagh, "Reforming Sovereignty" 189). Imperial

Majesty uses his absolute authority, especially his power over the administration of justice, to eliminate a political rival who threatens to undermine his rule. In this sense, Bale supports Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy and violence against his seditious subjects, but only as long as it targets the Catholic clergy who abuse their authority and corrupts the English Church.

Bale's *King Johan*, both the initial draft written during Henry VIII's reign and the later revised edition performed for Elizabeth I, mark a major divergence from prior plays in the conception of an ideal kingship. Influenced by his own conversion from a Carmelite monk to a Protestant polemical, Bale believes that the system of mutual obligation had failed because kings prior to the Tudor dynasty are unable to eliminate papal interference. As a result, Bale's depiction of Henry VIII as an ideal monarch differs greatly from Skelton's and Heywood's own descriptions. Skelton and Heywood both view Henry VIII as a figure of hope personifying their ideals of propagating humanist thought or protecting the Church's traditions. Thus, the monarch, as the head of the body politic, becomes synonymous with the commonwealth, as subjects can show their loyalty to England by being obedient to the king. For Bale, Henry VIII and his subjects are equally obligated to protect England, which is tantamount to the original Church built by Christ and his apostles. In this sense, King John acts as a call to action to persuade the common people to support Henry VIII's policies on separating the English Church from the papacy, while Imperial Majesty reminds Elizabeth I to continue her father's work to further establish England as an insular empire (Mottram 10).

Conclusion

Skelton's *Magnificence*, Heywood's *The Play of the Weather*, and Bale's *King Johan* are representative examples of how playwrights closely associated with the royal court dramatize the mirror for princes genre to counsel Henry VIII on different aspects of kingship: how to be a virtuous ruler or how to use absolute authority for the good of the English commonwealth. In *Magnificence*, Skelton advises the king on the need to embrace the Christian virtue of magnanimity, which he defines as the act of withstanding the temptations of fortune or misfortune to ensure his moral health. Skelton also promotes a program of humanist education informed by Aristotle's understanding of magnificence or moderation, which leads to self-discipline and control over emotional desires. The ongoing dialogue between Christian and Aristotelian interpretations of magnificence that runs throughout the play, in Skelton's view, complements and mutually enriches one another. Similar to Skelton's earlier treatise *Speculum Principis* and Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince*, the play *Magnificence* reaffirms the humanist conviction that the well-being of the commonwealth is intrinsically tied to the physical, spiritual, and moral health of the king.

Although Heywood's play echoes Skelton's conclusion, its tone is more critical in its subtle warning about the danger of tyranny inherent in Henry VIII's adoption of the title of Supreme Head of the Church. Heywood's *The Play of the Weather*, a satirical take on Henry VIII's kingship, offers a more scornful interpretation of the ruler's virtue compared to Skelton's in *Magnificence*. Jupiter, the king of the gods, personifies Henry VIII, who acts on his pride to develop his personal kingship into an absolutist monarchy. The play also offers an indirect lesson for the ruler on what he should do with his newfound authority over religious dogma. Heywood advises Henry VIII to keep the "weather" the same, that is, to maintain the Church's traditions.

The Play of the Weather demonstrates how Henry VIII's developing kingship during the 1530s changed the discourse on the appropriate boundaries of monarchical power over the commonwealth. In this instance, Heywood believes that Henry VIII has overstepped his bounds by having the legal right to oversee the Church, which Parliament granted to him. Consequently, the English king with his god-like status challenges the authority of God, who had granted him his divine power. Just like Skelton, Heywood warns Henry VIII to practice moderation or self-restraint in using his monarchical powers. As a religious conservative, Heywood considers the best course of action for Henry VIII is to further establish the existing religious status quo by refusing any calls for religious change.

While Heywood is wary of Henry VIII's new position as Supreme Head of the English Church, Bale embraces it by advocating that the English king needs to implement more changes to develop his absolutist position and to eliminate any papal influence from the commonwealth. Bale's use of history in *King Johan* demonstrates how religious reformers used historical precedents to argue for England's independence from the pope's authority. Specifically, Bale revises the history of King John's rule to convince his audience that Henry VIII has precedence to justify England's break from Rome especially since the Church's traditions are not true to scriptural teachings. Bale shares Skelton's and Heywood's opinion that the king's well-being is paramount in ensuring the stability of the realm but he goes a step further in contending that only the monarch has the right to choose what should be considered religious dogma. Bale argues that in his new position as Supreme Head of the English Church, Henry VIII in actuality is reclaiming political power previously appropriated by the papacy. Whereas Skelton advises Henry VIII to practice moderation and Heywood counsels him not to use his newfound powers, Bale wants the king to re-establish his imperial majesty by reforming the English Church on the

foundation of Christ's true teachings. As such, Bale's *King Johan* can be interpreted as a dramatized *speculum principis* in which the playwright advises Henry VIII to consider King John's example as a mirror to reflect on his own reign. Nevertheless, Bale's support of the new Supreme Head of the Church is fundamentally different from the opinions of Skelton and Heywood, who both promote moderation and restraint in the use of monarchical power. For Bale, Henry VIII should further expand his power to ensure the sanctity and protection of England's Church from the papacy's influence.

These plays exemplify advice literature in a broader sense as well by offering their playwrights' views on the political and spiritual struggles of Henrician England. Similar to contemporary mirror for princes treatises, they explore different aspects of political morality. Skelton's *Magnificence* advocates education is a crucial element of building self-discipline, an aspect seen in this playwright's earlier *Speculum Principis* and in Erasmus's *The Education of a Christian Prince*. Heywood's *The Play of the Weather* communicates a similar message to Elyot's *The Boke of the Governour*, as both argue that tyranny begins when an individual is able to hold absolute authority over a realm. In *A Dialogue* and *A Preface to the Kynges Hyghnes*, Bale and Starkey contend that governmental authorities require the will of their subjects to function. Skelton, Heywood, and Bale believe that their positions as writers and playwrights grant them the privilege to help shape Henry VIII's sovereignty as it develops over the course of his reign from a personal kingship to an absolutist monarchy. The diverse efforts of these literary artists demonstrate how they each looked to the *speculum principis* genre not only to educate their audiences on the impact of Henry VIII's rule on society but to teach the king himself that as the head of the state his moral responsibility is always to ensure the protection of the commonwealth and his subjects.

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