

Male Heirs, Bastard King, Catholic England and Other Alternatives:

A Counterfactual History Analysis of Henry VIII's Three Sons

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Abstract

In this thesis the lives of Henry VIII's three sons, Prince Henry, Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI, will be analysed using counterfactual history as the research method. The aim is to research what effects them not dying prematurely might have had on England's history and how these effects would be visible in England today. Several different alternative scenarios are introduced, and their plausibility is analysed critically.

This thesis concludes that the deaths of Henry VIII's sons altered the history of England drastically. Prince Henry's survival would have altered history the most as him surviving would have resulted in England not going through the Protestant reformation during Henry VIII's reign and therefore remaining Catholic. Henry Fitzroy's role is considered to be major as he is regarded as a potential King of England, regardless of his illegitimacy. Finally, Edward VI's survival would have resulted in a smoother transition of power and it would have saved the people of England from the religious conflicts of the 1550s. Ultimately, all the scenarios would have made the Tudor era longer and changed the way the Tudors are remembered today.

Tiivistelmä

Tässä kandidaatintutkielmassa tutkitaan Englannin kuningas Henrik VIII:n kolmea poikaa, prinssi Henrikiä, Henrik Fitzroyta ja Edvard VI:ta ja heidän elämäänsä. Tutkimusmenetelmänä käytetään kontrafaktuaalista historiaa. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on tutkia, millaisia vaikutuksia poikien ennen aikaisella kuolemalla oli ja miten heidän selviytymisensä olisi muuttanut historiaa ja miten muutokset näkyisivät nykypäivän Englannissa. Useita eri vaihtoehtoisia skenaarioita esitellään ja niiden todennäköisyyttä analysoidaan kriittisesti.

Tutkielmassa todetaan, että poikien ennaaikaisilla kuolemilla oli suuri vaikutus Englannin historiaan. Prinssi Henrikin selviäminen olisi johtanut siihen, että Englannissa ei olisi tapahtunut protestanttista reformaatiota Henrik VIII:n ollessa kuningas. Henrik Fitzroy'n roolia pidetään merkittävänä ja hänet nähdäänkin potentiaalisena Englannin kuninkaana, aviottomuudestaan huolimatta. Edvard VI:n selviytyminen olisi tehnyt kruunun periytymisestä mutkattomampaa ja samalla Englanti olisi säästynyt uskonnollisilta konflikteilta 1550-luvulla. Kaiken kaikkiaan skenaarioiden lopputulema olisi ollut se, että Tudor-suvun valtakausi Englannissa olisi ollut pidempi ja se kuva, mikä ihmisillä suvusta nykyään on, olisi hyvin erilainen.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Studying the past and considering the different alternatives that could have happened is an intriguing thought to most people. For instance, there is a lot of research done on The Second World War and what would have happened if its outcome had been different. The world would surely be different from its current state. Analysing such alternative takes on history can be difficult to understand as it may sound like pure speculation, but ultimately studying them helps us understand what actually did happen and why it happened. It may also grant us different perspectives that have never been considered before. This thesis attempts to take this approach by analysing the events leading to one of the major events in history: The Protestant reformation of England. Ultimately, this thesis revolves around Henry VIII, who was the English king who started reforming the religion in England because he wanted to divorce his wife Katherine, which was something that the Catholic church did not allow. The reason for the divorce was the couple's lack of male children. However, it is not commonly known that the couple did have a son, Henry Tudor, but he died prematurely at the age of seven weeks. It could be argued that if Henry Tudor had not died, the English reformation and other major events would have not taken place.

This thesis attempts to analyse this alternative scenario in history as well as others that revolve around Henry Tudor and Henry VIII's two other male children, Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI. Therefore, this thesis attempts to answer the question of what would have gone differently in the English history had Henry VIII's three male children, Henry Tudor, Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI, not died a premature death. The emphasis will be on the consequences that these counterfactuals would have had on the English history and how these changes in history would be visible today. All sons and the counterfactuals regarding their lives will be analysed separately in their own sections. The events of the counterfactuals will be evaluated and compared to the real history of England and the differences and the plausibility of the alternative events will be analysed critically. The attempt is to try to prove

how events that are in no way controlled by any people can function as the largest influencers of history.

2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The function of this section of the thesis is to describe and explain the story of Henry VIII and his three sons. As the emphasis is on Henry's male children, it is important to know who the mothers of these children were and what Henry's relationship with them was. Naturally, it is also important to know, how the succession of the English throne went after Henry VIII's death and what the reigns of Henry's children were like as it helps understand the comparisons and the reasoning behind the counterfactuals in the analysis.

Henry VIII was the king of England and Ireland in 1509–1547 and the second monarch from the Tudor family (Ives, "Henry VIII"). He is commonly known as the king who had six wives and who began the Protestant reformation in England to divorce his first wife. Regarding the topic of this thesis and its emphasis on Henry's children, it is important to understand the events of Henry's first three marriages as the three latter ones were childless. Henry VIII had five children in total, who were born between the years 1511 and 1537, and two of them were girls and three boys (see figure 1).

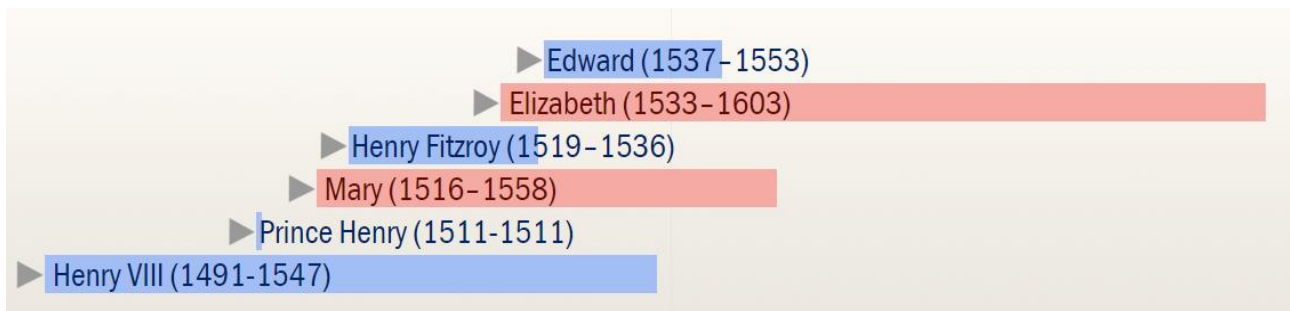


Figure 1. A timeline from 1491 to 1603 showing when Henry VIII and his children were born and when they died. Created by using timeglider.com.

Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour were Henry's first three wives who all gave him children, whereas Elizabeth Blount was his mistress who also gave him a son. Therefore, only

two of his children share the same mother (see figure 2). All women will be discussed in this section alongside their children, who all had great influence on the history of England.

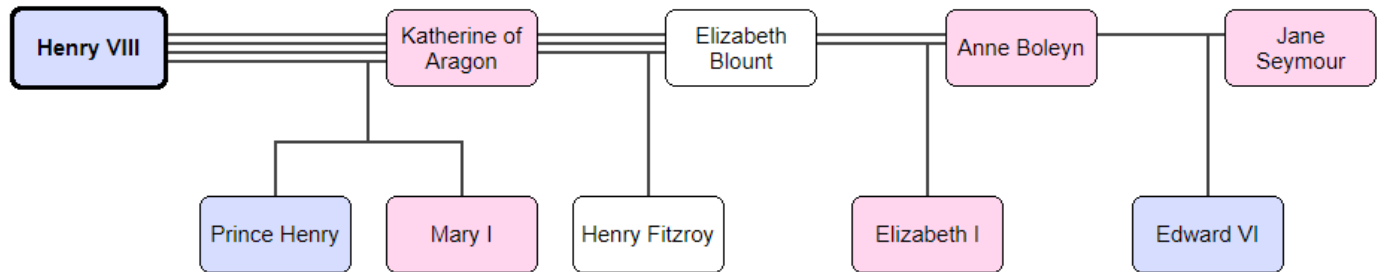


Figure 2. Family tree of Henry VIII showing who the mothers of his children were. Created by using familyecho.com.

Katherine of Aragon was Henry VIII's first wife. She had previously been married to Henry's older brother Arthur, who was meant to succeed as the King of England after their father Henry VII. However, Arthur died of tuberculosis only a few months after his marriage to Katherine, which eventually led to Henry marrying her in 1509 (Davies & Edwards). Once Henry and Arthur's father Henry VII died, Henry VIII was to be crowned the King of England also in 1509 (Davies & Edwards). Henry's marriage to Katherine was the longest of his marriages as it lasted for 24 years. During these 24 years Katherine is known to have been pregnant six times: three of the pregnancies resulted in a stillborn child and one in miscarriage. However, two children did survive birth: Prince Henry from the second pregnancy and Princess Mary from the fifth (Davies & Edwards). Although, Prince Henry did not live long as he died only at the age of seven weeks. Therefore, Mary was the only surviving child from the marriage of Henry and Katherine.

During Katherine's pregnancies Henry is known to have shared the bed with his mistresses as sex during pregnancy was considered potentially harmful to an unborn foetus during the Tudor era (Licence, *In Bed with the Tudors* 110). Therefore, it is likely that Henry had illegitimate children with his mistresses but never acknowledged them until 1519 when his mistress Elizabeth Blount gave birth to a son who was named Henry Fitzroy (Marris 113). As Katherine's last pregnancy occurred in 1519, when she was 34 years old and reaching her menopause, Henry must have realised that she could not

give him a male heir (Ives, "Henry VIII"). Therefore, it could be claimed that Henry grew more desperate. This is why in 1525 Henry decided that his bastard son was to be recognised as the king's son and installed as Knight of the Garter, created Earl of Nottingham and Duke of Richmond and Somerset, all of which were royal titles (Starkey 198). Starkey even goes as far as to claim that this could only mean that Henry VIII had decided that gender was more important than legitimacy as it was a possibility that Henry would exclude his daughter Mary from her rightful inheritance as he would recognise Henry Fitzroy as his heir (198). However, this never did happen as Henry Fitzroy died at the age of 17 in 1536, possibly due to tuberculosis (Murphy).

By the spring of 1527 Henry's desperation had grown to the extent that he had decided he had never validly been married to Katherine and that their marriage must be annulled (Ives, "Anne Boleyn"). Meyer writes that what settled Henry's mind was a text found from the Old Testament: "If a man shall take his brother's wife, it is impurity: he hath uncovered his brother's nakedness: they shall be childless" (33). Henry interpreted the text so that his and Katherine's marriage had violated the law of God, due to Katherine's earlier marriage to Henry's brother Arthur, which is why Henry and Katherine could not have a living son (Meyers 33). During 1527 Henry had also become interested in Anne Boleyn, who was one of Katherine's ladies in waiting (Ives, "Anne Boleyn"). Ives proposes that Henry did not think of marriage when he first approached Anne, rather he saw her as a possible mistress. But as Anne refused to share the bed with Henry unless they were married and as she promised to give him male children, Henry began to arrange his divorce from Katherine and his new marriage to Anne. Ives writes that "Pope Julius II had issued a papal bull allowing Katherine and Henry to marry despite their relationship. [Katherine was seen as Henry's sister through her marriage to Henry's brother Arthur] For his marriage to Katherine to be annulled, that dispensation had to be impugned" ("Henry VIII"). This was not an easy task as it would mean that Pope Clement VII would have to admit that his predecessor Julius II "had exceeded his authority in issuing the original dispensation" (Ives, "Henry VIII"). According to Ives, Clement also had all the reason to believe that

Henry had gotten hold of the wrong biblical text as there are parts in the Bible that specifically advise a brother to “marry his widowed sister-in-law if she had had no sons in order to provide a surrogate heir for his dead sibling” (“Henry VIII”).

As the process of getting the annulment from the pope was difficult, Anne is considered to have taken the next step: she agreed to share the bed with Henry and by the end of 1532 she is suspected to have been pregnant (Ives, “Henry VIII”). Most likely due to Anne’s condition, the couple was married in January in 1533 in a regular but secret ceremony as neither of them wanted the child to be born outside of their marriage to prevent it from being considered a bastard (Ives, “Henry VIII”). Anne’s pregnancy resulted in the birth of Elizabeth who was a girl despite everyone’s predictions (Ives, “Henry VIII”). As for Katherine and Henry’s marriage, Ives writes that the archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer, pronounced the marriage null and void, which made Henry’s union with Anne fully valid and Princess Mary illegitimate and Elizabeth legitimate (“Henry VIII”). Ives continues that Rome’s response to this was a command for Henry to take Katherine back, which the king refused at the same time refusing papal jurisdiction. He then appealed to a general council of the church, which implied that “the pope was not, under God, the ultimate authority in the church”, which eventually lead to breaking all ties with Rome (Ives, “Henry VIII”).

Henry’s marriage to Anne ended quite quickly as they were wed in 1533 and Anne was already executed in 1536 (Ives, “Anne Boleyn”). After giving birth to Elizabeth Anne conceived several times but all pregnancies ending in miscarriage, which led to Princess Elizabeth being their only child (Ives, “Henry VIII”). This seemed very familiar to Henry as all of Katherine’s pregnancies had failed to give him living male children. After Anne’s last miscarriage in 1536 Henry begun to doubt his marriage to Anne as he started questioning whether God frowned on his second marriage too (Ives, “Henry VIII”). However, Ives describes the disagreements Anne had with Thomas Cromwell as the essential reason for Anne’s downfall as Anne stood between Cromwell and his lust for more power, which is why Cromwell wanted her dead (“Anne Boleyn”). Cromwell plotted against Anne,

eventually making Henry charge Anne and some of her supporters with adultery even though their innocence was very clear, according to Ives (“Anne Boleyn”). Two days before Anne’s execution her marriage to the king was declared null and void by Cranmer (Ives, “Anne Boleyn”). Due to Henry’s previous relationship with Anne’s sister Mary Boleyn, who had been Henry’s mistress before his marriage to Anne, it was seen that Henry and Anne’s marriage “broke God’s law in the same way as [Henry’s] relationship with Katherine” (Ives, “Henry VIII”). Through this Henry’s relationship with God was at piece again and Anne was beheaded 19 May 1536 (Ives, “Henry VIII”).

Henry did not mourn Anne’s death for long as he married again 11 days later (Ives, “Henry VIII”). This time his bride was Jane Seymour, who had served as a lady-in-waiting to both Katherine and Anne (Beer). As both Henry’s previous wives were deceased since Katherine had died due to an illness two months before Anne’s beheading, there was no doubt of Henry and Jane’s marriage being valid (Davies & Edwards, Beer). Beer writes that despite Henry and Jane being distantly related by being fifth-cousins, Archbishop Cranmer issued a dispensation from prohibitions of affinity for Jane to marry Henry on 19 May, which was also the day of Anne’s execution. On the 30 May a private marriage followed (Beer). Almost a year after their wedding, Jane fell pregnant and Henry’s prayers were answered on 12 October 1537 when Jane gave birth to a living baby boy who was named Edward (Hoak). Only two weeks after her son’s birth Jane died at the age of 28 (Beer). According to Beer, the cause of her death is uncertain, but it was possibly due to complications, which occurred after she gave birth. Jane was the Queen of England for only 18 months, and her death left England without a queen for the first time during Henry’s reign (Beer).

Henry VIII took three more wives before his death in 1547 but none of the marriages gave him more children (Ives, “Henry VIII”). This led to Henry having three living children when he died: Mary, Elizabeth and Edward. Henry Fitzroy having had died at the age of 17 in 1536, the same year Katherine and Anne had died, had left Henry without a son until Edward’s birth in the following year (Murphy). Edward had been proclaimed Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earl of Carnarvon

just days after his birth, which made him the rightful heir to the throne (Beer). Therefore, Edward became King Edward VI at the age of nine years when his father died in 1547 (Ives, "Henry VIII"). However, his reign was short as he died of tuberculosis in 1553 at the age of 15 (Beer). Despite Edward's attempts to alter the succession in his will, his sister Mary was crowned Queen of England after Edward's death (Beer). Edward would have wanted Lady Jane Grey to succeed him as he "regarded Jane as his spiritual sister, his only acceptable successor" (Beer). According to Beer, Edward considered his half-sisters to carry the burden of illegitimacy, which was one reason he wanted neither of them to succeed him. Another, and a more important, reason was religion: Mary was a devoted Catholic and it was likely that Mary would not continue Edward's Protestant reformation if she were to become queen and that was a risk Edward was not willing to take (Beer). Edward was not mistaken since during her reign Queen Mary I and her council equated Protestantism with treason, which led to Jane Grey and many other Protestants losing their lives and Elizabeth being sent to the Tower (Weikel). Mary's reign lasted no longer than five years as she died childless in 1558 at the age of 42, having no other choice but to name her half-sister Elizabeth as her heir (Weikel).

Elizabeth I was the second woman to rule England when she was crowned in 1558 and Mary had left her a country at war, which also suffered from two years of poor harvests, famine, and a flu epidemic (Weikel). Elizabeth was only 25 when she became queen but despite her being a young woman who was never expected to rule, her reign lasted for 45 years until her death in 1603 (Collinson). Her reign was even longer than her father's and she can be considered one of the most influential and memorable English monarchs as great accomplishments such as the defeat of the Spanish Armada, happened during her reign. Elizabethan era is also often called 'the golden age of England', which according to Collinson, is partly invented but it also has some truth to it as playwrights like William Shakespeare were active during the Elizabethan era. However, as Elizabeth I was also known as the Virgin Queen who never married or had children, she was the last Tudor monarch and she was succeeded by James VI and I from the Stuart family (Collinson).

3 RESEARCH MATERIALS

As the emphasis of this thesis is on the counterfactual history of the Tudor era, moreover Henry VIII's male children, and most importantly on the effects that these counterfactuals could have had on the English history, the research materials include articles discussing the possible alternative outcomes of history that involve Henry VIII and his family. The research materials also include a book *The Lost Kings* by Amy Licence that is about men who ruled or could have ruled England but died a premature death. This thesis uses the chapters in which Licence discusses Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI. Alongside the articles and the book the research material for this thesis also includes material that will be used to explain and describe counterfactual history as a research method. All historical facts have been collected from several different articles on Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

“As glad a father as ever was King’: The Reformation counterfactuals of Henry VIII’s children” is a counterfactual history article by Caroline Marris, which discusses the alternatives of history regarding Henry VIII’s children. In her article, Marris describes four different scenarios and speculates the possible effects that they could have had on English policy and monarchy. She also emphasises the effects of biological chance that have been mostly ignored in previous studies involving counterfactual history, which is something this thesis attempts to highlight as well (Marris 109). Out of Marris’ four scenarios, this thesis analyses the ones discussing Henry Tudor and Edward VI as the emphasis will be on Henry VIII’s male children. Two of Marris’ alternatives include Mary and Elizabeth being born boys, which creates two completely new people who never existed in actual history. This makes analysing these alternatives challenging because a lot of it would be just speculation as their personalities and goals would be impossible to analyse. Marris’ two other alternatives including Henry Tudor and Edward VI are easier to analyse as they were real people and especially Edward is a character that historians have been able to analyse a lot as there is a lot of information about him. Marris also briefly mentions Henry Fitzroy but ignores how close he was of becoming the heir to the English throne despite his illegitimacy. Furthermore, Marris does not

elaborate on the counterfactuals concerning him. To conclude, Marris' counterfactuals that include Henry VIII's sons Henry Tudor and Edward VI will be analysed and used in this thesis, but they will be analysed critically while elaborating whether her assumptions are realistic or not. In addition, the counterfactuals regarding Henry Fitzroy will be also emphasised in this thesis unlike in Marris' article.

Another article this thesis will be analysing is "What Catholic England would look like today" by Dominic Selwood, which discusses the consequences of England evolving as a Catholic country and not as a Protestant one like it did in history. This article supports several ideas that will be discussed in the analysis section of this thesis, but there are also some claims in the article that will be spectated more critically. Essentially, this article will be used as a guide into understanding what aspects of England might be different from today if the Protestant reformation had not occurred. This article is fitting to this thesis as Selwood's theory of England remaining Catholic is that Henry and Katherine's son Henry Tudor did not die at the age of seven weeks, rather he became King Henry XI after his father died, which is one of the counterfactuals that will be discussed in detail in this thesis.

4 RESEARCH METHOD

In this section the research method of this thesis will be introduced. Counterfactual history is a form of historiography that attempts to answer ‘what if’ questions known as counterfactuals (Bunzl, 2004). However, it is something far more than just thinking about alternatives and how things could have happened. Ferguson describes the motive for counterfactual history by writing: ”To understand how it actually was, we therefore need to understand *how it actually wasn’t*” (87).

An important term in understanding counterfactual history is plausibility. Ferguson writes that counterfactual history researchers must “make value judgements about the character, purposes and motives of individuals” ultimately meaning that it is important to make a distinction between “what did happen, what could have happened and what could have not happened” when analysing something from the point of view of counterfactual history (83). Later Ferguson summarizes this by stating “by narrowing down the historical alternatives we consider to those which are *plausible* [...] we solve the dilemma of choosing between a single deterministic past and an unmanageably infinite number of possible pasts” (85). Then he describes the counterfactual scenarios that are constructed to be “simulations based on calculations about the relative probability of plausible outcomes in a chaotic world” (85). Ferguson emphasises the importance of understanding probability as it is crucial when analysing plausible outcomes as the researcher needs to know what makes a counterfactual scenario plausible.

Ferguson then asks how probable alternatives can be distinguished from improbable ones. To this he has an answer as he writes that “only those alternatives which we can show on the basis of contemporary evidence that contemporaries actually considered” should be considered as plausible or probable (86). By this Ferguson means that at a certain point in history many different scenarios were plausible for the future. For example, when Henry VIII’s first son Prince Henry was born, him living a long life and becoming King of England was a plausible counterfactual for the contemporaries

as no one could foresee his premature death. To conclude the key is to concentrate on the plausibility of each counterfactual when considering whether they should be analysed further, which will be done in this thesis when introducing different counterfactuals about Prince Henry, Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI.

5 EXPLORING THE COUNTERFACTUALS

In this part of this thesis each of Henry VIII's sons and the counterfactuals concerning the lives of each of them will be analysed separately in their own sections. Each section introduces several different counterfactuals that will be analysed from the point of view of the son in question. As these counterfactuals are introduced, their plausibility is also analysed as it is important regarding the research method of this thesis.

5.1 Henry Tudor

It is true that Henry VIII only had one living son when he died, Edward VI, who succeeded him on the English throne. But what if none of his male children had died a premature death? It might have been so that Edward VI would have never been king, let alone even been born, as Henry's first son Henry Tudor from his first marriage would have been the heir to the English throne. It could be argued that Henry Tudor's premature death was the most influential death out of the three male children that Henry VIII had. Henry Tudor was the result of Katherine's second pregnancy, which occurred very early on in the couple's marriage when they were deeply in love with each other and way before Henry VIII started doubting his marriage to Katherine.

Henry Tudor was born on New Year's Day in 1511 and as Licence writes, Katherine had done her duty by giving England a prince (Davies & Edwards; *In Bed with the Tudors* 86). The boy was made Prince of Wales, a title usually granted to the heir apparent of England who is first in line of succession (Davies & Edwards). Prince Henry's birth triggered public rejoicing and celebration in London, which lasted for days (Licence, *In Bed with the Tudors* 86). Henry VIII was overjoyed about the birth of his heir and according to Licence he even undertook a pilgrimage to Walsingham to give thanks to the Virgin Mary for his son's safe arrival (*In Bed with the Tudors* 87). Henry VIII had everything he could have desired and all his hopes as well as Katherine's were centred on their tiny son. The happiness did not last for long as Prince Henry died in February at the age of seven weeks. According

to Licence, the couple's sorrow was intense, but it did bring them closer together in their desire of having another child (*In Bed with the Tudors* 94). But no living sons were given to them despite Katherine's four pregnancies that followed Prince Henry's death, which eventually led to Henry divorcing Katherine whom he blamed for their lack of a son. However, the divorce was not approved by the Catholic church nor the Pope, which is why Henry had to reform his own religion as well as that of the whole English nation even though Henry himself was known to be a Catholic man who valued his religion and its teachings. He is known to have been against the reformation in Germany and he even wrote "a polemic against Martin Luther and his doctrines" (Marris 115). Therefore, it could be claimed that Henry never intended to reform the religion in England, but his desperation drove him to do so to get a legitimate male heir. From that it could be concluded, as Marris claims, that "[t]he divorce, and, one could say, only the divorce motivated [Henry] to take the radical step of breaking from the Pope's authority" (115). Alternatively, it could be claimed that if Prince Henry had not died at the age of seven weeks, Henry VIII would have had no reason to start the Protestant reformation in England because he would have had a living male child to secure the succession.

Next, the counterfactual of Prince Henry Tudor not dying prematurely will be discussed. In this counterfactual, Prince Henry lives to adulthood and succeeds his father on the English throne as Henry IX in 1547 at the age of 36. Henry IX is a Catholic king like his father was as Henry VIII never found it necessary to break with Rome. As his father ruled for 38 years, it could be argued that Henry IX's reign could have lasted for almost 30 years as well, a time in which England had three different monarchs in real history: Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I, Elizabeth's reign ending in 1603 (Collinson). Therefore, Henry IX would have ruled at a time when, as Selwood speculates, he would have been able to "[sponsor] the maritime genius of Drake and Raleigh, [oversee] England's first substantial colonies in the New World, and [witness] the consolidation of England and Spain as Europe's leading Catholic powers". It might be that he would have become a great king, if he had had the chance that was derived from him as he died prematurely.

It is possible that Henry Tudor would have become Henry IX of England and would have had children of his own who again would have inherited the throne after his death. This would have excluded Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I from the Tudor line of monarchs. In fact, it is plausible that Edward and Elizabeth would have not been born at all because it is likely that Henry VIII would have only been married to Katherine out of the six wives he had in real history. Naturally, it is very likely that Henry VIII would have remarried after Katherine's death in 1536 so he might have had more children with his second wife. However, that would have not affected Prince Henry's position as the heir as he would have remained Henry VIII's eldest son and, therefore, heir to the throne. Naturally, it is possible that Henry would have married Anne Boleyn in this alternative as well but even if he did, it is unrealistic to think that Elizabeth would have been born as Anne's pregnancies would have taken place a lot later than they did in real history. Therefore, it is safe to assume that Henry VIII would have had more children with his second wife, who might or might not have been Anne Boleyn. But even if the children had been sons, they would have not passed Prince Henry in the line of succession. And as Henry IX would have had children and heirs of his own, his siblings would have come so late in the line of succession that them accessing the throne would have become improbable. Evidently, if Prince Henry had become king, his children would have succeeded him, excluding all his other relatives from the line of succession. There is no need to start speculating the succession any further than that as it would not be based on any real people making it mere speculation.

As the Protestant reformation of England never happened in this counterfactual, Edward IX would have ruled as a Catholic king and England would have remained one of the leading Catholic countries in Europe. As England would have remained Catholic, its position among other Catholic countries would have been good as Europe remained mostly Catholic at the time when Henry VIII started reforming the church in England. Henry IX could have been a great Catholic king as he would have been taught by the greatest men in England and he could have been one of the best-educated kings of England in the Middle Ages. And as Henry IX would have become king at the age of 36, he would

have most likely already had children of his own at the time of his coronation, securing the line of succession from the beginning of his reign.

It is difficult to say what Henry IX's personality would have been like as Henry Tudor only lived for seven weeks. Due to his short life span, there is not much to investigate when it comes his looks, personality, intelligence or anything else because none of them had time to evolve at all. It might be that, therefore, many counterfactual history researchers tend to forget Henry Tudor completely as there is not much you can say about his personality and how he would have been as a king. For example, in Amy Licence's book *The Lost Kings*, Licence discusses the premature deaths that occurred in the Lancaster, York and Tudor families and how they resulted in the loss of many possible kings. Licence only discusses Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI as possible kings out of Henry VIII's children, which is an example of how Prince Henry is often forgotten. It can also be a sign of his life being very difficult to analyse as it was as short as seven weeks. This is also why this thesis does not attempt to speculate his life any further than him succeeding his father on the English throne as a Catholic king.

The main impact of Prince Henry not dying prematurely would have most likely been that England would have remained Catholic. That would have had a huge impact on England and its history as well as what the country would be like today. During the reformation of the church of England, Henry VIII is known to have torn down monasteries and taken all wealth from the church and transferring it to the crown. If this would have not happened, the Catholic culture and art would have flourished, and they might have become very significant in history if they had had the time to evolve. The Catholic church and the Pope would have also been involved in England's politics as the church and the state would have not worked completely separately as the English law was often subject to papal authority (Marris 111).

It cannot be said for certain if the reformation had happened at some point later if it had not happened during Henry VIII's reign. Marris also introduces the alternative of Henry VIII breaking with Rome despite having a male heir to the throne, but regarding all the evidence of Henry VIII being a devoted Catholic and self-proclaimed "Defender of the Faith" the scenario is very unlikely (111). It is possible, but this thesis will not start elaborating on the possibilities of it happening due to its improbability. On the contrary, the focus will be on England remaining Catholic. In the Catholic belief all holy texts including the Bible are written in Latin and due to the reformation not happening in England, the Bible and other religious texts might have not been translated into English as early as they were. This would have influenced the evolution of the English language. The translation of the Bible can be considered as a mile stone regarding the common people and them learning how to read and write English. Therefore, England's Protestant reformation can be regarded as something that helped the evolution of the English language. However, it is very likely that the Protestant reformation would have happened eventually in England. Marris argues about the Protestant reformation in Europe that "[w]hether [the reformation] was provoked by divorce, the translation of the Bible into English, or state-sanctioned iconoclasm in churches, the full brunt of Catholic power would eventually fall on any state which dared to challenge it" (111). In other words, Marris sees that the position of the Catholic church would have eventually deteriorated because of secularization that would occur in Europe during the following centuries. This statement seems legitimate as secularization was a very wide-spread phenomenon and it affected most countries in Europe at some point in history. To conclude, Prince Henry's premature death not occurring, would have only postponed the reformation, rather than prevented it from happening.

It could be argued that Henry IX's reign might have not been extraordinary in any way as England would have remained Catholic during his reign and possibly many decades after it. The main outcome of this counterfactual is England remaining Catholic and the religious culture flourishing. In addition to this, Prince Henry's survival might have resulted in Henry VIII's personality developing differently

as he would have not been as desperate for a son for all his life as he was in real history. Therefore, Henry VIII might have not been as ruthless as he was when he beheaded his two wives, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. And obviously, as Henry would have not had all his six queens, his life would have been completely different. It could be argued that each wife had a huge impact on Henry making him the man he became. Therefore, it is obvious that he would have not been the same man if his life had been as different as in this counterfactual. It cannot be said for certain, but he might have been a better man, but he would not be remembered as well today as he is now.

5.2 Henry Fitzroy

In this section of the thesis the emphasis will be on Henry VIII's second son Henry Fitzroy. The counterfactual about Prince Henry not dying prematurely that was introduced in the previous section of the analysis will be considered in this section as well but new counterfactuals will also be introduced. The first of the two is a counterfactual in which Henry Tudor dies at the age of seven weeks and Fitzroy is born like in real history. In this counterfactual Henry VIII never divorces Katherine, which makes Fitzroy the only living son of Henry VIII after Henry Tudor's death. The second new counterfactual follows real history identically Fitzroy not dying prematurely being the only exception. In this counterfactual Fitzroy again remains the only living son of Henry VIII after the death of Prince Henry and Edward VI.

Firstly, the focus will be on the counterfactual about Henry Tudor. Following the beforementioned counterfactual Henry Tudor lives a long life and rules England after his father dies excluding his siblings from the line of succession as his children succeed him on the throne. In other words, Henry Tudor does not die prematurely in the counterfactual. However, it could be argued that Henry Fitzroy would have been born even if Henry Tudor did not die early. As mentioned earlier, Henry VIII is known to have had mistresses and he would turn to them especially when his wives were pregnant (Licence, *In Bed with the Tudors* 110). Elisabeth "Bessie" Blount was one of these mistresses and

she gave birth to Henry Fitzroy, Henry VIII's illegitimate son. Blount's pregnancy must have taken place in 1518-1519 as Fitzroy was born in June 1519 (Murphy). This ultimately means that Fitzroy was conceived during Katherine's sixth and last pregnancy that resulted in the delivery of a stillborn daughter in November 1518 (Davies and Edwards). In real history Henry VIII was thrilled when Fitzroy was born despite his illegitimacy as it proved that he could have living male children. However, in this counterfactual Henry VIII already has a living son due to which it could be argued that Fitzroy's birth would not have been so important to Henry VIII in this scenario. Therefore, it is possible that he might have not acknowledged him as his son at all, which would have led to Prince Henry being the only male heir to the throne at the time of Henry VIII's death. To conclude, if Henry Tudor had not died prematurely, it is probable that Fitzroy's role as an acknowledged son of Henry VIII would have been non-existent diminishing his status completely and also resulting in him not having the surname "Fitzroy" that means "son of the king" (Simkin).

The second counterfactual discusses a situation in which Henry Fitzroy would have been the only living son of Henry VIII. One could first think of a situation where Henry VIII never divorces Katherine to be such a situation. However, this situation is very unlikely, considering the circumstances. The only reason why Henry VIII would not have divorced Katherine is a situation in which the couple has a living son to succeed the throne. However, the only plausible situation providing this scenario is Prince Henry not dying, which again would mean that Fitzroy's position would have remained non-existent as discussed earlier. Furthermore, the only plausible counterfactual in which Henry Fitzroy is the only living son of Henry VIII is that of Fitzroy not dying as a teenager leading to him outliving Edward VI who died in 1553 at the age of 15 (Hoak).

The counterfactual of Fitzroy outliving Edward is full of possibilities. In 1536, a year before Edward's birth, Fitzroy seemed to be the strongest candidate of inheriting the throne out of Henry's three children (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 244). In that year archbishop Thomas Cranmer annoucer Henry's second marriage to Anne invalid, which made Princess Elisabeth illegitimate alongside her two half-

siblings Princess Mary and Henry Fitzroy (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 244). This resulted in a situation in which all of Henry VIII's children were illegitimate, which was profitable for Fitzroy because as the only male descendent of Henry VIII, he was seen as the most potential candidate to inherit the throne due to the English throne practicing male-preference primogeniture. Even though Henry VIII married his third wife Jane just days after Anne's execution, the birth of legitimate sons seemed very unlikely considering the king's age of 45, his deteriorating health and his poor record of fathering sons in the past 27 years of marriage to two different women (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 245). This is mind Henry VIII passed the Second Act of Succession in June of 1536, which gave the king the right to choose his own successor in his own time if no legitimate children were born (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 245). According to Licence, the implications for Fitzroy to become Henry VIII's successor were obvious, and for a few weeks in 1536 the possibility of Fitzroy becoming the next king was very real (*The Lost Kings* 245). The possibilities of this happening were destroyed a month after the passing of the Second Act of Succession when Fitzroy's health began to fail, and he died suddenly and unexpectedly at the age of 17.

After Fitzroy's death Henry VIII remained sonless for over a year as Edward was not born before October in 1537 (Murphy). It could be argued that if Fitzroy had not died a premature death, Henry VIII would have made him his successor before Edward's birth. The king was very desperate for a son and Jane not becoming pregnant during the first months of their marriage must have been frustrating for the eager and aging king. His desperation might have driven him to name Fitzroy his successor when he feared that Jane would not give him sons. Licence sees this as a highly plausible outcome if Fitzroy had lived longer as she continues to elaborate what kind of a king Fitzroy would have been if he had inherited the throne. But even if Henry VIII had named Fitzroy his successor, Edward would have passed him in the line of succession as Henry's legitimate son. It could be argued that this would only have postponed Fitzroy's reign as in this counterfactual Fitzroy outlives Edward, whom he then follows as the next king of England. This could have been caused by Henry VIII by

naming Fitzroy his successor and this resulting in Fitzroy having been the second in line of succession all of Edward's life. Another alternative is Edward himself naming Fitzroy his successor when he fell ill. Edward was a devoted Protestant and he wanted England to remain a Protestant country even after his death in 1553, which is why he attempted to alter the line of succession by naming the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as his successor (Hoak). It is possible that Edward might have named his half-brother instead of Jane Grey if he had still been alive when Edward fell ill because it is likely that Edward would have grown to respect Fitzroy throughout his childhood as Henry VIII showered him with titles and wealth. Fitzroy's religion would not have been a problem either, as he had sat in the reformation council and thus been visibly Protestant like his father. All in all, Fitzroy would have very likely succeeded Edward VI on the English throne if he had not died of tuberculosis in 1536. He would have been 34 years old during his coronation in 1553, and it is likely that he would have already had children of his own to secure the line of succession as he would have been married to Mary Howard since 1533 (Murphy).

In her book *The Lost Kings* Licence discusses what Henry Fitzroy would have been like as a king. Licence describes Fitzroy as a young man very much in his father's model, "handsome and red-haired, intelligent and well-read but preferring sport, fond of chivalry and romance" (*The Lost Kings* 254). Licence highlights Fitzroy's good relationships with royalty as well as his friendships with the kings of France and Scotland as means of a smooth transition of power as well as a peaceful reign (*The Lost Kings* 255). Licence goes as far as to claim that Fitzroy might have been better prepared to rule than his father was, which is most likely true as Fitzroy had been raised as the king's only son, which meant that he had experience in courtly duties and ruling and he had also witnessed the reformation and the removal of a queen (*The Lost Kings* 255). It could be argued that Fitzroy would have been more than capable of ruling England already at the age of 17 so, ultimately, at the age of 34 he would have only been more intelligent and experienced making him an even better ruler.

However, Licence introduces two aspects in Fitzroy's life that might have been uncertain: his religion and fertility (*The Lost Kings* 255). As mentioned earlier, Fitzroy did sit in the reformation council, which made him a Protestant, but Licence still introduces the uncertainty that revolved around Fitzroy's religion. He certainly was not as devoted a Protestant as his half-brother Edward, which is why Licence suggests that it is impossible to know whether Fitzroy would have leaned more towards "his early experience of religion [the era before the Dissolution of the Monasteries], or allowed his father's settlements of the 1530s to stand, or even whether he would have pushed for greater reform" (*The Lost Kings* 255). It could be argued that religion was not of great importance to Fitzroy as he did not show any radical nor opinionated arguments about it during his life. Furthermore, it could be argued that Fitzroy would have not made any great alteration to the religion of England during his reign as he had no great interest in religion to begin with. His fertility was another aspect that Licence raised questions about. It is indeed true that his fertility was untried, but Licence promotes that Fitzroy had a young and healthy wife and Licence proposes that it is "not implausible that Mary might have borne at least one son while the pair were in their prime" (*The Lost Kings* 225). This is indeed true, and one could argue that in the counterfactual of Henry Fitzroy becoming king it is more than likely that at least one child would have been born to the pair during the 20 years that Fitzroy and Mary would have had been married before his coronation. To conclude, it is plausible that Fitzroy's fertility would have not been a problem and he would have had at least one child to succeed him on the throne after him.

Ultimately, Fitzroy not dying prematurely could have had massive consequences in the line of succession during the Tudor era. It might have excluded Mary and Elizabeth from the line of succession entirely, which might have had major effects on the development of England as a country. For example, England and Scotland would not have united as early as they did, if at all, due to the crown staying in the Tudor family for a longer period of time. England could have possibly remained Protestant if Fitzroy decided to follow his father and half-brother's footsteps. Henry VIII's personality

could have also developed differently as he would not have had to deal with the death of a son so many times. He would not have had any sonless years after Fitzroy's birth and he might have felt more secure having two sons alive at the same time, which might have made him less stressed and less ruthless. However, the alternative development of Henry's personality is difficult to analyse, which is why the plausible counterfactuals are almost impossible to name. What can be said for sure is that Fitzroy's role, especially in 1536, should not be taken lightly. After all, had he survived tuberculosis, he might have been the one who would have helped to keep the Tudor dynasty alive for centuries from the 16th century onwards, which might have made the Tudors even more influential a family that they already are in real history.

5.3 Edward VI

When Edward VI was born in 1537, he was the only living son of Henry VIII, which automatically made him one of the most important people in England and the heir to the English throne according to the Second Act of Succession. In this section of the analysis the role of Edward VI will be analysed with the help of two counterfactuals: if prince Henry had not died an infant and if Henry Fitzroy had recovered from his illness. A counterfactual concerning Edward's own death is also analysed as the question of what consequences Edward not dying so young would have had on England is answered.

It is easiest to start by taking the counterfactual of Prince Henry surviving into consideration. Had Prince Henry lived, it is most likely that Edward would have not been born at all due to Henry VIII never divorcing Katherine and, therefore, his marriage to Jane not taking place. Prince Henry would have followed his father on the throne and the line of succession would have consisted on Prince Henry's own children. Accordingly, as Edward's reign and let alone existence is highly implausible in this counterfactual, there is no need to elaborate on it further.

A more plausible counterfactual is that of Edward's half-brother Henry Fitzroy overcoming his illness and not dying in 1536. This might have possibly affected Edward VI's life in many ways. One of the

aspects it might have affected is the way Edward was raised. Due to Henry Fitzroy's death of illness and Edward being the only living male heir to the English throne, Henry VIII was very careful when it came to Edward's safety and the cleanliness of his residence ever since he was born (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 269). One could argue, however, that this would have not been the case had Fitzroy survived the illness. Surely Edward's health would have been very important to Henry VIII, but he might have been more relaxed having two sons alive at the same time, which was a situation in which he never had the pleasure of being. This might have also been a positive influence on the king's personality as he would have not had to deal with the loss of a son so many times. Furthermore, had Henry VIII not been so careful and strict with the cleanliness of Edward's residence it could be that Edward might have developed a better immune system, which would have made him less exposed to illness. On the other hand, it might also be that Henry's carefulness saved Edward from getting seriously ill at an even younger age considering the plausibility of illness and dying of it in the Middle Ages.

Fitzroy's survival might have also affected the succession. In this counterfactual four of Henry VIII's children are alive, Mary, Henry Fitzroy, Elizabeth and Edward, out of whom only Edward is considered legitimate. However, in 1544 Henry VIII passes the Third Act of Succession, which restored Mary and Elizabeth's positions as legitimate children entitled to the throne (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 276). Had Fitzroy been alive, he might have also been included in the line of succession after 1544. He might have also been included in Henry VIII's will when Henry VIII died in January 1547 as in his will Henry claimed that "the crown was to go to Edward, followed by Mary then Elizabeth and, if they should die without issue, it would pass to the Grey and Suffolk families, descendants of Henry's second sister, Mary, Duchess of Suffolk" (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 278). This ultimately meant that Henry excluded the issue of his eldest sister Margaret, who married James IV of Scotland, from the succession although it would not go as Henry had intended as Margaret's great-great-grandson James would rule England after Edward VI's death (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 279).

One of the most intriguing counterfactuals that could have been the result of Fitzroy surviving is his position during Edward's reign. At the start of Edward VI's reign his uncle Edward Seymour was elected the Lord Protector and he was elevated to the position of Duke of Somerset (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 280). But as the position had belonged to Henry Fitzroy before his death, it is possible that if Fitzroy had been alive, he would have been elected the Lord Protector. He was well educated and had experience in ruling and other inquiries of the kingdom. Fitzroy would have also been in his late twenties having reached legal adulthood unlike his half-brother King Edward who was only nine years old at the time of his coronation (Hoak). Due to the king's young age, the lord protector would rule the kingdom till the king would come of age and this was the situation in Edward's case as well. Ultimately, it could have meant that Fitzroy could have ruled England as Lord Protector until Edward would react adulthood had he been alive.

After this the counterfactual of Edward himself not dying premature can be introduced. Had Edward not died in 1553, England would have most definitely developed differently. Licence writes that Edward's death had "a devastating impact upon England as a newly reformed country" (*The Lost Kings* 303). What she means by this is Mary following Edward on the throne. Due to her being Catholic and not Protestant like his brother, the Catholic Counter-Reformation was allowed a brief window of opportunity, which established an unprecedented period of religious conflict in England (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 303). Licence speculates that if Edward had lived just a decade longer outliving his sister Mary, the transition of power to his Protestant sister Elizabeth would have been much smoother saving England from the period of religious conflict (*The Lost Kings* 303). Had he not died prematurely, he might have lived a long life reinforcing the Protestant faith in England as Edward is known to have taken the reformation even further than his father ever did. This was done by banning the images in churches and the veneration of saints followed by the rejection of chantry and beliefs in purgatory and the afterlife just as Luther advised in his teachings (Licence, *The Lost Kings* 304). According to Licence this brought about a revolution in the way people thought about

death, which could be claimed to have made the people of England more modern in their thinking (*The Lost Kings* 304). Ultimately, by Edward living a long life the religious conflicts in England during Mary's reign in the 1550s would have been avoided as Edward living longer and having children of his own would have eventually excluded both Mary and Elizabeth from the line of succession. The Tudor era is known for the drastic changes in the country's religion, which means that Edward not dying prematurely might have erased this section of the era's memorability. However, Edward having survived might have made the Tudor era a lot longer than it was as Mary and Elizabeth both died childless. Surely there is no guarantee of his fertility but nor is there evidence proving that he would have had a physical condition preventing him from fathering children who would have eventually succeeded their father on the English throne extending the Tudor era in England.

6 DISCUSSION

Licence writes in her book that “the teenage years were considered potentially dangerous for young men” during the Middle Ages and quotes Thomas Elyot’s work in which Elyot claims the age from 14 and the middle to late teens to be a dangerous time for young men as they were prey to all kinds of fevers, such as “pleurisy, the spitting, and vomiting of blood, inflammation of the lungs, diseases of the sides, lethargies, frenzies, hot sickness and choleric passions“ (*The Lost Kings* 270). This can easily be concluded from the premature deaths of Henry VIII’s male children as well. It is a fact that Katherine did give birth to stillborn girls as well but both Mary and Elizabeth lived a reasonably long life in comparison to their brothers. This raises a question of whether there actually was a physical difference between the sons and daughters of Henry VIII. One could argue that the cause for the longer lives for the daughters was a genetic one. Could it be possible that Henry VIII carried a gene mutation that shortened the lives of his male children? It is possible, but it is also very likely that Henry’s sons were just very unlucky as the child mortality rates were high in the Middle Ages. However, the chances of a gene mutation and or other possible reasons for Henry VIII’s sons’ premature deaths would be an interesting topic to study further as the reason for the poor health of the boys could still be considered a mystery.

Ultimately, there are more mysteries in Henry VIII’s life that are yet to be unravelled. It could be argued that Henry Fitzroy surely was not the only illegitimate child that Henry VIII had as he is known to have had many other mistresses alongside Elizabeth Blount. One of them was Mary Boleyn, Anne Boleyn’s sister. According to Hughes, the relationship of Henry and Mary occurred partially during the latter’s marriage and Hughes claims it to be due to Henry thinking it “safer to risk having children whose paternity could be denied, rather than avowed bastards whose existence only emphasized his lack of legitimate heirs”. Hughes estimates the liaison of Mary and Henry to have lasted from 1522 to 1525, which was before Henry’s marriage to Anne but after Fitzroy’s birth. Hughes then continues that “it is likely that the affair was over by the time Mary was pregnant with

her son Henry Carey, born on 4 March 1526.” Furthermore, Mary had two children during her life and they were named Henry and Katherine, and Katherine is often considered to be the older of the two. They were recognized as the children of Mary's first husband William Carey but Mary's relationship with Henry VIII always raised questions about their paternity (Varlow). There is a lot of evidence that makes it seem very plausible that Katherine and Henry were indeed Henry VIII's children. Therefore, if the topic of Henry VIII's children and their health were to be studied further, the children of Mary Boleyn should be taken into consideration as potential children of the king.

However, this thesis has focused on Henry Tudor, Henry Fitzroy and Edward VI who were Henry VIII's children for certain. Regardless of the reason for their premature deaths being uncertain, it is certain that their deaths had a great influence on England and its evolution as a country. Out of the three sons Henry Tudor's survival would have had the greatest influence on history as England would have developed as a Catholic country as it would have not gone through the Protestant reformation during Henry VIII's reign. Henry Fitzroy's influence is also highlighted as he is considered to be a potential king of England, which is a scenario not often considered by historians. Finally, Edward VI's survival would have resulted in a smoother transition of power and the English people would have been saved from the religious conflicts of the 1550s. Ultimately, the sons of Henry VIII and Henry VIII himself are a great example of how biological chance plays a key role in history by transforming the lines of succession in ways that are sometimes very difficult to predict. For example, had Henry VIII's brother Arthur not died of tuberculosis, Henry would have never become king and would have, therefore, never started the Protestant reformation of England and, ultimately, the topic of this thesis would have been completely different. Furthermore, all this highlights the uncertainty of life in history: the death of an heir can result in a future that no one could have predicted beforehand.

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