Katherine Howard (1524-1542): A Queen's Jewels

In his meticulously researched and thoughtful biography of Katherine Howard, *Young & Damned & Fair* (2017), Gareth Russell brings to life Henry VIII's young queen: she is attractive, likeable and at the same time startlingly reckless.

In July 1540 when Katherine Howard, niece of the Duke of Norfolk, gave her hand in marriage to Henry VIII, she was already pledged to another man. It would come as a devastating blow to the king, by now well past his prime, to discover that his lovely young bride was not the jewel of womanhood he believed her to be and that his marriage was invalid.

In late 1541 an investigation established that the Queen had been involved with three men both before and after the royal marriage: first with her music master, Henry Mannock followed by Francis



Fig 1 Portrait of a lady, perhaps Catherine Howard (c.1520-1542), William Essex, 1850

Dereham in the household of the dowager Duchess of Norfolk, then Thomas Culpeper, a gentleman of the privy chamber, replaced Francis Dereham in the Queen's affections.¹

[Dereham] "kept the lady from the time he violated her at the age of 13 until 18"

From his despatch to Francis I in December 1541, it appears that although the French ambassador, Charles de Marillac, had been informed of the queen's age, the time frame of her alleged misconduct, as well as the involvement of Dereham and Culpeper, he was apparently oblivious to the 'furtive fondling' of Henry Mannock when Katherine was, in her own words, 'but a young girl'.²

According to Katherine's own testimony and that of Dereham, they lay together as man and wife for a period of four months or a little more and their affair ended just before Henry VIII married Anne of Cleves, therefore it took place in autumn-winter 1538-39.³ Marillac's dating corresponds precisely to the arrival of Henry Mannock into the dowager Duchess of Norfolk's household in late 1536 to Katherine's arrest in November 1541 (roughly five years).

In her recent article, *How Old was Katherine Howard?*, Josephine Wilkinson argues persuasively that Katherine was born in either late 1524 or early 1525.⁴ However, there is circumstantial evidence that strongly suggests it was late 1524. The anonymous author of *The Spanish Chronicle* notes that Katherine 'was not more than fifteen' when Henry 'cast a fantasy' to her at their first meeting. The latter part of the story is corroborated by the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk.⁵ By April 1540 'it had become obvious to careful observers that Henry had fallen in love with her.' However, two of the king's closest advisors appear to have been aware of his majesty's infatuation with the teenage maid of honour in the late autumn of 1539: an argument between Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell was overheard by one of Cranmer's servants. The Archbishop was adamant that the king should marry 'where he had his fantasy and love.' Cromwell disagreed and insisted on going ahead with the Cleves marriage.⁶

It seems likely that Katherine was born in autumn 1524:

- She was in her 13th year (age 12) in late 1536 when Mannock arrived in the Dowager Duchess's household.
- She was in her 14th year (age 13) from late 1537 until late 1538: Katherine and Dereham first slept together when she was only 13.
- She was in her 16th year (age 15) when she was appointed to Anne of Cleves' household in late autumn 1539 and when she married Henry VIII in July 1540.
- She was arrested, imprisoned and executed in her 18th year (age 17).

There is no authentic contemporary likeness of Katherine Howard in existence although she has been associated with several portraits of very different women over the years based on past mistakes and misunderstandings about her probable year of birth.⁷ Queen Katherine's contemporaries and near-contemporaries commented not only on her beauty and grace, but especially her youth.⁸

To be a queen fortune dyd me preferre, Floryshyng in youthe, with beawtie freshe and pure; Whome nature made shyne equall with the sterre, And to reynge in felicitie with joy and pleasure, Wanting no thing that love might procure ...⁹

In September 1540 Marillac described the English king's new bride to Anne de Montmorency as 'A young lady of mediocre beauty but of greater grace, small and slender in stature; her countenance is modest, soft and gentle'.¹⁰

From the French ambassador this was high praise indeed. Ever the diplomat, his descriptions were tailored to meet the expectations of his masters. Only a few months earlier the English king had offended his French rival by his choice of bride: Anne of Cleves and the ladies in her entourage had been described by the ambassador in the most unflattering terms.

In November 1541 the disgraced Queen had been sent with several carefully chosen royal servants and four of her ladies, to the former monastery of Syon to await her fate. The Imperial ambassador, Eustache Chapuys observed wryly that 'She is still at Syon, making good cheer, fatter and more beautiful than ever, taking great care to be well apparelled and more imperious and troublesome to serve than even when she was with the King.'¹¹

We don't have much to go on as far as Katherine Howard's physical appearance: she was a pretty, petite, and slender young lady who became a little plump as Queen, or at least while she was in captivity and unable to take any exercise.



Fig 2 Katherine Howard, Richard Burchett (1815-1875) (circle of)



Fig 3 Unknown woman, c.1532-43, Hans Holbein

By the 19th century a drawing by Hans Holbein in the Royal Collection (ref. <u>RCIN 912218</u>), (fig 3) a later version of the drawing by Francesco Bartolozzi (ref. <u>RCIN 680431</u>) (fig 4) and a miniature <u>portrait</u> by Henry Pierce Bone that was based on these drawings were thought to depict Queen Katherine.



Fig 4 Unknown woman engraved as Catherine Howard, 1797, Francesco Bartolozzi, 1797, NPG D20279

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Fig 5 Katherine Howard, G. P. Harding, published 1854

Portraits en large of several very different women have been associated with Henry VIII's fifth queen:

A young woman in her 17th year; *Portrait of a Young Woman, c*.1540-45 from the workshop of Hans Holbein at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (ref. 49.7.30);



Fig 6 Portrait of a young woman, c.1540-45, workshop of Hans Holbein

Photo: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Given her lavish costume, this young woman in her 17th year must have been of high status. (fig 6) Susan James and Jamie Franco in *Susanna Horenbout, Levina Teerlinc and the mask of royalty* (2000) have argued that this portrait and *Portrait of a Lady, Possibly Lady Jane Grey, c.*1546 attributed to Levina Teerlinc at the Yale Center for British Art (ref B1974.2.59) (fig 11) are Katherine Howard. There is no consensus on the sitter's identity however and 'although the portraits share certain details of costume and ornament their physiognomies are strikingly different.' The young woman's clothing and jewels, although lavish, are not sumptuous enough for a queen nor is there is anything in her clothing or jewellery to connect her with Katherine Howard. It is possible that she is instead one of the ladies of the queen's household. At New Year 1541, Queen Katherine presented her cousin, the newly married Mary Norris, Lady Carew with a necklace 'against her marriage.' It is tempting to speculate that the sitter might be her kinswoman, Lady Carew.¹²

In late 1540 Mary Norris (c.1522-1570) married the soldier and naval commander, Sir George Carew (c.1504-1545). Mary Norris, was the daughter of Henry Norris (d. 1536) courtier, and Mary Fiennes, the daughter of Thomas Fiennes, 8th Baron Dacre, and Anne Bouchier, daughter of Sir Humphrey Bourchier and Elizabeth Tilney. Elizabeth Tilney, the only child of Sir Frederick Tilney and Elizabeth Cheney, married as her second husband, Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk, Katherine Howard's grandfather. Mary Norris had been a ward of the 3rd Duke of Norfolk since her father's execution in 1536.



Fig 7 Unknown lady, probably a member of the Cromwell family, c.1540, Hans Holbein

An unidentified lady in her 21st year, *Portrait of a Lady, probably a Member of the Cromwell Family c*.1540 by Hans Holbein now at the Toledo Museum of Art, Ohio (ref. 1926.57); (fig 7) was identified as Queen Katherine Howard by British art historian Lionel Cust in 1909, after examining the portrait at the request of the owners, the Cromwell family. His findings were subsequently published in the Burlington Magazine in 1910.¹³ There are two other extant versions of the portrait: one at Hever Castle that dates to the mid-16th century (fig 8) and another at the National Portrait Gallery, London (ref. NPG 1119) dating from the late 17th century. (fig 10) The Toledo portrait is acknowledged to be the original and painted by Hans Holbein in around 1540. ¹⁴



Fig 8 Portrait of a lady, possibly Catherine Howard

A miniature portrait based on the Hever portrait. (fig 8)



Fig 9 Portrait of a woman called Princess Mary, Duchess of Suffolk, William Essex, 1844



Fig 10 Unknown woman, formerly known as Catherine Howard, after Hans Holbein, late 17th century

Lionel Cust's identification was overturned by Roy Strong in 1967 who argued plausibly that the sitter was Elizabeth Seymour, Lady Cromwell (c.1518-1568), wife of Gregory Cromwell (c.1520-1551). All three portraits have links to the Cromwell family. A forthright attempt to revive Cust's original identification was made by Bendor Grosvenor, David Starkey and Alasdair Hawkyard in the *Lost faces* exhibition catalogue (2007). The identification of the sitter as Katherine Howard is tenuous, resting on dubious physiognomic comparisons and generic descriptions jewellery. Moreover, it would appear that the young queen was still in her teens when she was executed in 1542. Nevertheless the association of this portrait with the teenage queen has taken firm root in the public consciousness and has support. 18

A miniature portrait of a young woman in her 18th year; *Portrait of a Lady, Possibly Lady Jane Grey, c.* 1546 attributed to Levina Teerlinc at the Yale Center for British Art (ref <u>B1974.2.59</u>). (fig 11)



Fig 11 Unknown lady, possibly lady Jane Grey, c. 1546, Levina Teerlinc

Photo: Yale Center for British Art

Given her lavish costume, the woman in her 18th year must have been of the highest status. Susan James and Jamie Franco in *Susanna Horenbout, Levina Teerlinc and the mask of royalty* (2000) have argued that she is Katherine Howard, claiming a resemblance to the MMA portrait. (fig 6) There is no consensus on the sitter's identity however. Maryan Ainsworth noted that 'Although the portraits share certain details of costume and ornament their physiognomies are strikingly different.' She suggested that the two miniatures usually associated with Katherine Howard, one in the one in the Buccleuch Collection (ref. Strawberry Hill ID: sh-000454 and the other in the Royal Collection (ref. RCIN 422293) offer a closer comparison. (figs 13, 18). Most recently Bendor Grosvenor, David Starkey and Alasdair Hawkyard in *Lost faces* (2007) proposed that she was Lady Jane Grey. This was refuted by Stephan Edwards in *A Queen of new invention: portraits of Lady Jane Grey Dudley, England's 'Nine Days Queen'* (2015). Eric Ives in *Lady Jane Grey: a Tudor mystery* (2009) and Chris Skidmore in *Death and the virgin queen* (2010) have argued that she might be Amy Robsart.¹⁹

A likeness said to be Katherine Howard depicted as the Queen of Sheba in a stained glass window and the initials "H" and "K" appearing in the tracery at King's College Chapel, Cambridge are more likely to represent Henry VIII's sixth wife Katherine Parr. (fig 12) Reminders of Henry VIII's discarded wives were quickly removed and although small badges or lover's knots might be overlooked in a ceiling or screen, a large stained glass window would not.²⁰

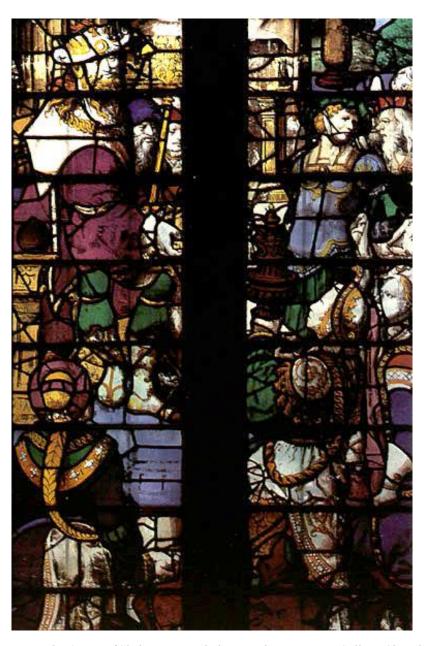


Fig 12 Katherine as the Queen of Sheba in stained glass window at King's College Chapel, Cambridge

No conclusive evidence has yet been put forward to substantiate the persistent, but late, identification of this subject as Katherine Howard, particularly since there is no authentic contemporary likeness of the queen in existence. The most compelling argument in favour of her regal status is that the large ruby, emerald and pearl jewel which the sitter wears is the same as that shown in Holbein's panel portrait of Henry VIII's third queen, Jane Seymour (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) and that this, and the jewelled band around the sitter's neckline, may have been given to Katherine Howard by Henry VIII on their marriage in 1540.

There are two extant miniatures, each said to be the work of Hans Holbein. In each the sitter is wearing the same necklace (fig 26) and pendant (fig 27) as Jane Seymour. The first, *Portrait Miniature of Katherine Howard*, now in the collection of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry (ref. <u>Strawberry Hill ID: sh-000454</u>), (fig 13) is known to have been in the possession of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (1586-1646),



Fig 13 Portrait miniature of Katherine Howard, c.1540, Hans Holbein

and while in his possession, was engraved by Wenceslas Hollar as an unnamed sitter. (ref. <u>RCIN</u> 803870) (fig 14) It was engraved by Cornelis Martinus Vermeulen as *Catherine Howard* in the late 17th century, (fig 15) and as *Catherine Howard*, *Queen of K. Henry VIII* by Jacobus Houbraken (ref. <u>RCIN</u> 600893), for Thomas Birch's *Heads of Illustrious Persons of Great Britain* (1743). (fig 16)

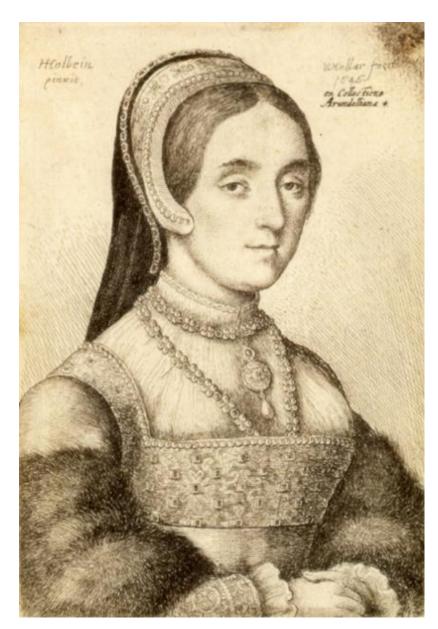


Fig 14 Catherine Howard (?) 1646, Wenceslas Hollar



Fig 15 Catherine Howard, by Cornelis Martinus Vermeulen, after Adriaen van der Werff, late 17th century, NPG D24185 © National Portrait Gallery, London



Fig 16 Catherine Howard, Queen of K. Henry VIII, c.1743-52, Jacobus Houbraken



Fig 17 Catherine Howard, unknown artist, 17th century?

When a second miniature, was first recorded in the Royal Collection in around 1837, it was also described as Henry VIII's fifth queen.²¹ (fig 18)



Fig 18 Portrait of a lady, perhaps Katherine Howard c.1540, Hans Holbein

The latter was identified as Katherine Howard by David Starkey in *Six wives: the queens of Henry VIII* (2003) although the title remains *Portrait of a Lady, perhaps Katherine Howard* (1520-1542) (ref. <u>RCIN 422293</u>). (fig 18)²²

She had auburn hair, pale skin, dark eyes and brows, the rather fetching beginnings of a double chin, and an expression that was at once quizzical and come-hither

At first sight the miniatures appear to be almost identical, but on closer inspection there are subtle differences: while each sitter has auburn hair and a fair completion, the sitter in Royal Collection miniature appears to have dark eyes while the other sitter's eyes are blue-grey; the jewels on the upper billament of their French hoods are in reverse order, the arrangement of the jewels on their respective bodices is not identical and the embroidery on the cuffs is not the same. It is conceivable that her sumptuous attire and jewels are an indication of her regal status.²³

Dispute has raged as to whether the subject really is Catherine. But the identification of the jewels settles the issue once and for all ...

It is surprising that these miniatures are not yet officially recognised as depictions of Queen Katherine Howard.²⁴ The sitter's sumptuous attire, featuring cloth of gold and cloth of silver, lavish embroidery, the sable on her sleeves as well as her exquisite jewellery denotes a lady of the highest echelons of society. Her necklace comprising four pearls, alternating with gemstones (diamonds and/or rubies) set in gold is the same design as the jewelled bands on the hood worn in portraits by Henry VIII's mother, Elizabeth of York. (figs 19, 20) Several pieces of the sitter's jewellery, including her necklace, appear, not only in royal inventories, but also in portraits of Henry VIII's other wives (necklaces, pendants). (figs 21-28)²⁵

Elizabeth of York



Fig 19 Elizabeth of York, unknown artist

Note the pattern on the jewelled band on her hood: squares comprising four pearls, (perhaps representing a four-leaf clover), alternating with gemstones set in gold on Elizabeth of York's hood. (figs 19, 20)



Fig 20 Elizabeth of York, unknown artist

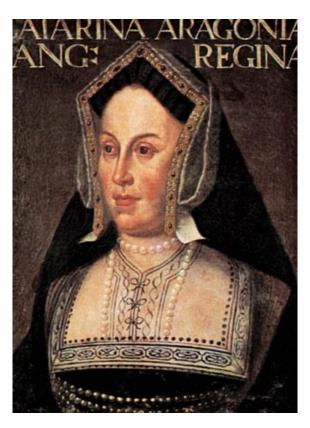


Fig 21 Katherine of Aragon, unknown artist



Fig 22 Katherine of Aragon, unknown artist

Note the same jewelled band on Katherine of Aragon's Hood (fig 21) and hood and jewelled band on the neckline. (fig 22)



Fig 23 Katherine of Aragon, unknown artist

In this unflattering portrait, Katherine of Aragon is wearing a jewelled band in the same design as Elizabeth of York on her hood with a matching necklace (four pearls, alternating with diamonds and rubies set in gold). (fig 23)

Anne Boleyn



Fig 24 Anne Boleyn portrait medal, 1534

Here we have the only undisputed likeness of Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn: a damaged portrait medal that was struck in 1534, now at the British Museum (ref. M.9010). (fig 24) A replica of the Anne Boleyn 'Moost happy' portrait medal, the result of the meticulous research and skill of Lucy Churchill, (fig 25) reveals that Anne Boleyn has the same jewelled band on her hood and is wearing an identical necklace to that of her predecessor. ²⁶ (figs 21-23)



Fig 25 Anne Boleyn 'The Moost Happi' Portrait Medal, by Lucy Churchill

Jane Seymour



Fig 26 Jane Seymour, 1536, Hans Holbein, Kunsthistoriches Museum, Vienna

Jane Seymour has the same band on her hood and the matching necklace. (fig 26). She is also wearing the same pendant containing a ruby and a table cut emerald (fig 27) as Katherine Howard. (figs 13, 18)



Fig 27 Jane Seymour, c.1540, studio of Hans Holbein. Mauritshuis, The Hague

Katherine Parr



Fig 28 Queen Katherine Parr, The Hastings Portrait, undated, unknown artist

Here Katherine Parr is wearing an identical necklace. (fig 28)



Fig 29 Queen Katherine Parr, The Glendon Hall Portrait, c.1545, attributed to Master John



Fig 30 Katherine Parr, late 16th century, unknown artist

The pendant worn by Katherine Parr (figs 29, 30) is similar but not the same as that worn by Jane Seymour and Katherine Howard. (figs 13, 14 and 27) It may however be identified in an inventory of Katherine Howard's jewels compiled in 1542: 'one ouche of gold wherein is a fair pointed diamond and a fair ruby with a very fair pearl hanging at the same.'²⁷

While the sitter's ruby and emerald pendant has disappeared and may indeed have been given to a favoured lady-in-waiting, her necklace was identical to the one worn by Jane Seymour and Katherine Parr: (Figs 26, 28) the necklace evidently belonged to the royal jewels that were passed from consort to consort.

Brett Dolman's suggestion that searching for Catherine's portrait may be a futile quest given the transience of her career is depressing but inescapably fair.

In rejecting all the portraits that have been linked to Katherine Howard, Brett Dolman might just be throwing the baby out with the bathwater.²⁸ The lovely, young sitter of the Buccleuch and Royal Collection miniatures is surely none other than Henry VIII's fifth consort.



31 Catherine Howard, T.H. Lacy, 1865

Sources and notes

¹ R. M. Warnicke, "Katherine [Katherine Howard] (1518x24–1542)," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008. http://www.oxforddnb.com.rp.nla.gov.au/view/article/4892 (accessed 20 Aug 2016).

² LP xvi, 1426. Ambassadors Charles de Marillac and Eustache Chapuys were unaware of the involvement of Henry Mannock with Katherine Howard. See LP xvi, 1359 and 1366.

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- ⁴ J. Wilkinson, "How old was Katherine Howard?," 15 December 2016. [Online]. Available: http://josepha-josephine-wilkinson.blogspot.com.au/2016/12/ How-old-was-katherine-howard.html. [Accessed 28 December 2016].
- ⁵ That the king 'cast a fantasy' to Katherine at their first meeting appears to be true. See LP xvi, 1409, "Who told her "that the King's highness did cast a fantasy to Katharine Howard the first time that ever his Grace saw her?"
- ⁶ Chronicle of Henry VIII, p.75; "that the King's highness did cast a fantasy to Katharine Howard the first time that ever his Grace saw her."; See also LP xvi, 1409, A question put to the Dowager Duchess of Norfolk: "Who told her "that the King's highness did cast a fantasy to Katharine Howard the first time that ever his Grace saw her?" Katherine Howard may have been the unnamed reason for a disagreement between Archbishop Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell towards the end of negotiations for the Cleves marriage in autumn 1539. See D. MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer: a life, New Haven, 1996, p. 257-8.
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- ⁸ H. Robinson. Original letters relative to the Reformation, I, pp. 201, 205: Richard Hilles to Henry Bullinger (London 1541): "the courtiers, who observed the king to be much taken with another young lady of very diminutive stature" p. 201, "that young girl Catherine" p. 205; M. A. S. Hume, Chronicle of King Henry VIII, p. 75: "… there was one maid called Katherine Howard, who was not more than fifteen, and had hardly been at Court a year, but who was more graceful and beautiful than any lady in the Court, or perhaps in the kingdom."
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- ¹⁰ LP xvi, 12; J. B. L. Kaulek, Correspondance politique de mm. de Castillon et de Marillac, ambassadeurs de France en Angleterre (1537-1542), Paris, 1885, pp. 370-372 at p. 218.
- ¹¹ LP xvii, 63; L. P. Gachard, Analectes historiques, vol. I, Brussels, 1856, pp. 237-238 at p. 242.
- ¹² LP xvi, 1389; BL Stowe MS 599, ff. 55-68: "to the lady Carew, late Mrs. Norrys, against her marriage, Item one peir of beades of Cristall garnesshed with golde being of them xl/ betwixt euery of them a pece of golde/ smytheswerke/ and viij beades of golde ennamuled blewe and set with stones/ hauyng also a pillor of Cristall with aman of golde in the same/ & with a tassel of venice golde/"; The cameo worn by the sitter appears to depict two heads, possibly male and female (Zeus and Hera?) symbolising marriage. See M. W. Ainsworth and J. P. Waterman, German paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1350-1600. New York, 2013. 155–57, 306–7, no. 37, ill. (col.) and figs. 130–31.
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- ²³ S. Foister, Holbein and England, New Haven, 2004, pp. 199-200, no. 202.
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