

**Historical and Linguistic Deviation in Philippa Gregory's Novels**

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## **Introduction**

Philippa Gregory is a historian and a journalist and has also written several historical novels about British royal families and their history. Her books are thematically motivated, for instance into *The Cousins' War*, *The Civil War*, *The Wideacre Trilogy* and *The Tudor Court Novels*. The events Gregory describes in her novels are based on true facts and her “commitment to historical accuracy are the hallmarks of her writing” (philippagregory.com). However, describing what happened during the sixteenth century is a challenge, even more so is making the era appealing to a modern readership. The awards she has won indicate she has achieved the latter, but the question remains how accurate her novels really are, historically and linguistically speaking. To analyse Gregory’s accuracy, this thesis will be split up into two parts, each focusing on one of her novels: the first part will discuss *The Other Boleyn Girl*; the second part will focus on *The Virgin’s Lover*. These two famous novels describe a part of the lives of Anne Boleyn and Elizabeth I, respectively.

Firstly, Philippa Gregory’s historical accuracy will be analysed, by using the story of Anne Boleyn as a focal point. Queen Anne was notorious for her allegedly turbulent love life, which produced only one child, her daughter Elizabeth. Gregory’s novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* will be compared to other historical sources to determine how historically accurate Gregory’s version of the story of Anne Boleyn is.

Furthermore, the second part of this thesis, a linguistic analysis of Philippa Gregory’s work, will focus on Queen Anne’s legacy, Queen Elizabeth, also known as the Virgin Queen (Weir, *Elizabeth* 57) who served as the inspiration for Gregory’s novel *The Virgin’s Lover*. Queen Elizabeth I is known for her writings and scholarship and her style and language have been extensively researched. Based on this research a comparison will be drawn up between the language Gregory uses and the language Elizabeth would have used during her lifetime, to determine how accurate Gregory is from a linguistic perspective.

## **Part I – Historical analysis**

## **Introduction**

In the “Author’s Note” of *The Other Boleyn Girl* Philippa Gregory mentions several authors and their works, which she used as inspiration and sources for her novel. Most of these authors are historians, who write non-fiction, for example, David Starkey, David Loades and Alison Weir. As Gregory claims to have based her novel on the works of these (and several other) authors, a comparison between Gregory’s novel and her own sources might shed some light on how Gregory’s story deviates from the apparent reality. In other words, drawing up a comparison between Gregory’s fictional novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* and several non-fictional works will indicate how historically correct Gregory’s novel is. However, the events described took place in the sixteenth century, and hardly any evidence of personal nature is recorded in official documents, so it is hard to find out what really happened. Yet, the historians mentioned in Gregory’s “Author’s Note” have based their version of the events upon primary and sometimes secondary evidence, such as official records and actual correspondences, including letters and papers, or books containing these documents. Therefore, these works probably constitute a more accurate rendering of the events, including Anne Boleyn’s life. The focus in the present paper will be on Anne Boleyn’s love life, which was rather turbulent and ultimately caused her downfall. As a result, several works of non-fiction will serve as the historical facts and will be used to compare Gregory’s novel with: How historically accurate does Philippa Gregory describe Anne Boleyn’s love life in her novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*?

## **Anne’s Beauty**

One of the biggest discrepancies between Philippa Gregory’s novel and the historical fact is Anne Boleyn’s beauty. According to Gregory, she is both beautiful, in the sense of pretty, and charismatic. This is emphasized throughout the novel. For example when Anne

gets into a fight with her sister Mary and her brother George, because she is mad that she is not yet engaged while her younger sister is, and has two children by the King of England: “She scowled at him, her beauty completely erased by jealousy. ... ‘Half the court thinks I’m the most beautiful woman in the world’” (*Boleyn* 162). Another instance the focus is on Anne being beautiful is when Mary uses Anne’s beauty as a way of calming her sister down: “Anne could always be comforted by the sight of her own beauty” (*Boleyn* 226). Gregory also refers to Anne as the girl who was “in some glorious new condition, earned by her beauty and her wit” (*Boleyn* 276), which indicates that Anne is not just beautiful, but that she uses her charms and brains as well to get exactly what she wants. Anne seems to be very aware of her looks and knows how to use them to get the attention and the things she so much desires, even from the King of England himself:

But only Anne had that deliciously self-conscious way of walking. She moved as if every man in the world was watching her. She walked as if she were irresistible. And such was the power of her conviction that every man at court did look at her, did find her irresistible. ... Anne tossed her head and walked away from them all, as if no one could be good enough to please her, and went straight toward the king and queen and swept them a curtsy. (*Boleyn* 169)

There are many more instances in which Gregory stressed Anne’s beauty and allure, and claims that she is a very beautiful young woman, although several historical sources indicate that she probably was not a beauty according to Tudor standards. For one, Alison Weir quotes several contemporaries of Anne Boleyn, like the French courtier Brantome, Nicholas Sanders and the poet George Wyatt, and claims that Anne was not very pretty, just charming :

She was petite in stature, and had an appealing fragility about her. Her eyes were black and her hair dark brown and of great length; often, she would wear it interlaced with jewels, loose down her back. But she was not pretty, nor did her looks conform to the

fashionable ideals of her time. She had small breasts when it was fashionable to have a voluptuous figure, and in a period when pale complexions were much admired, she was sallow, even swarthy, with small moles on her body. (*Six Wives* 151)

In addition, Anne used clothes to cover up two parts of her body that showed imperfections. She is said to have had “a large Adam's apple, ‘like a man’s’” (*Six Wives* 151) and “a large mole on her neck” (Marilee, *Englishhistory.net*), which she covered up by wearing dresses with a neckline that came up to her chin (Weir, *Six Wives* 152). Moreover, Anne appears to have had a second nail growing out of one of her fingers, something which was often described as a sixth finger or even as “a devil’s teat” by her enemies (*Six Wives* 152), and she would hide this by wearing extremely long sleeves (*Six Wives* 152). In other words, Anne was not a typical beauty, as Philippa Gregory portrays her, but depended mostly on her charisma: “Anne’s charm lay not so much in her physical appearance as in her vivacious personality, her gracefulness, her quick wit and other accomplishments.” (Weir, *Six Wives* 151) She was not very physically attractive, but she had confidence and a kind of sex appeal and knew just how to make men think she was extraordinarily beautiful (*Six Wives* 152).

## **Henry Percy**

Throughout the King’s courtship and upon his marriage to her, Anne claims she was virtuous and still a virgin. Yet, Anne was possibly involved with at least one other man before she married the King, Henry Percy, the son of the Earl of Northumberland. Although it is not certain whether they actually had an affair, or whether it was just flirtation, or perhaps courtly flirtation, certain people at court seemed to have noticed there was something going on between the two of them. One of these people was George Cavendish, Cardinal Wolsey’s secretary and biographer, who wrote some clear evidence of a betrothal between Anne and Henry Percy in his *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*: “there grewe suche a secret love

bytwen them/ that at lengthe they ware ensured together entending to marye” (30).

Additionally, the word *ensured* had a different meaning in Early Modern English, which is now obsolete. According to the *OED* it meant “[t]o give security to, pledge one's faith to (a person) for the execution of a promise” (“ensure, v.”). Consequently, Cavendish’s wording would contribute to the evidence that Anne and Henry Percy were in fact betrothed. In other words, regardless of the actual depth of the romance, according to Cavendish, the two were in a relationship with each other.

In *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Gregory describes the betrothal of Anne Boleyn and Henry Percy with Anne’s siblings Mary and George as their witnesses. They exchange vows and rings, and seal it with a kiss (99), which, in those days, made the betrothal official and as binding as a marriage (Weir, *Six Wives* 157). In Philippa Gregory’s novel, Anne is fully aware of this in the moment of her betrothal to Henry Percy. She exclaims that they are “betrothed in the sight of God and before witnesses. That’s as good as a marriage, isn’t it?” (*Boleyn* 100). Nonetheless, a betrothal needs to be made valid, usually by having sexual intercourse with the partner involved, or as Anne puts it: “A marriage can be overthrown for non-consummation, couldn’t it?” (*Boleyn* 100). When Mary reluctantly agrees, Anne adds that “[n]ot even the Percy family will be able to wriggle me out of it when Henry and I tell them that we are wedded and bedded” (*Boleyn* 100). So, Anne slips out at night to have sexual intercourse with Henry Percy, to make sure their marriage is complete and legitimate (*Boleyn* 100). However, there appears to be no evidence to support the claim that Anne and Henry Percy were actually lovers and thus consummated their betrothal. Although George Cavendish wrote about the two being in love, he does not mention the consummation of the betrothal anywhere in his work, neither does anyone else. This does not automatically mean that Anne and Henry Percy did not have sex to validate their betrothal. Nonetheless, it is probably unlikely, since sexual intercourse makes a marriage valid and, as Anne mentions in Gregory’s



novel, makes it “[d]one without possibility of denial” (*Boleyn* 100), so breaking up the two, had they been lovers, would have been virtually impossible, since, as Heather Thomas claims:

there was no "divorce" as such; no means of dissolving a legally valid marriage.

However, it was possible to dissolve a marriage if it could be proved that the union had never been valid in the first place - hence the marriage could be declared "null and void". In all there were four grounds on which an annulment could be granted. Firstly if the couple were related within the forbidden degrees of kinship, secondly if the marriage had never been consummated, thirdly if one or both of the members had previously been contracted, and finally if one or both partners was under the age of consent at the time of the union. (elizabethi.org)

Yet, the two were split up by Cardinal Wolsey once he found out about the relationship in both Philippa Gregory’s version (*Boleyn* 104) as well as in Alison Weir’s account (*Six Wives* 157). However, Gregory’s Wolsey simply invalidates Anne’s claim regarding the intercourse:

‘It was a de futuro betrothal,’ the cardinal ruled. ‘A promise to marry in the future if possible.’

‘It was de facto,’ Anne replied unswervingly. ‘A betrothal made before witnesses, and consummated.’

‘Ah.’ One pudgy hand was raised in caution. The heavy cardinal’s ring winked at Anne as if to remind her that this man was the spiritual leader of England. ‘Please do not suggest that such a thing could have happened. It would be too imprudent. If I say that the betrothal was de futuro then that is what it was, Mistress Anne. I cannot be in the wrong. If a lady bedded a man on such slender surety she would be a fool. A lady who had given herself and then found herself abandoned would be totally ruined. She would never marry at all.’ (*Boleyn* 105)

Yet, historical sources, such as Alison Weir, don't even mention the possibility of Anne and Henry's sexual relationship, as the King only "ordered Wolsey to break the engagement", rather than any marriage (*Six Wives* 157). In short, Gregory's claim that Henry Percy and Anne were bedfellows after their betrothal is not impossible, but highly unlikely given the circumstances regarding and views on marriage in their days.

Additionally, even more striking is the observation David Loades makes about George Cavendish's record of the relationship between Anne and Henry Percy. According to Loades, Cavendish dates the romance back to approximately 1527 (114). However, evidence suggests that Henry Percy, also known as the fifth Earl of Northumberland, died in May 1527, which means the betrothal must have taken place long before that, as he was married to Lady Mary Talbot in 1523, straight after the breaking off his betrothal to Anne (Weir, *Six Wives* 158). In other words, Loades questions the accuracy of Cavendish's work: "so it is possible that the events narrated occurred in 1526, or that Cavendish's elderly memory was at fault in some other way" (115). As a result, there would, according to Loades, be "not a shred of evidence that anything so purposeful was going on" (115). Although both Philippa Gregory and Alison Weir claim the betrothal between Anne and Henry Percy to have taken place at a more logical date than George Cavendish, as early as 1523, Loades thinks it is unlikely for the romance to even have happened in the first place. On the other hand, David Starkey argues that "Cavendish's story remains plausible; indeed, bearing in mind his status as a reliable eyewitness to the events he describes, it is extraordinary that it should ever have been doubted." (xvii) He explains that

Percy's marriage to Mary Talbot did not take place in 1524. Indeed it was not concluded for at least another year, till August 1525 or August 1526. ... [But], [o]n the assumption that it went ahead in 1524 as planned, historians have dismissed out of hand the story, given by George Cavendish in his *Life of Wolsey*, of Henry's ordering

Wolsey to break off Percy's betrothal to Anne; there was no need for this, they argue, since, with Percy now a married man, any relationship with Anne must have long been over. (xvii)

So, Starkey thinks Cavendish's record of the affair between Anne and Henry Percy is chronologically accurate enough for it to have really happened (xvii). However, he excludes the fact that Anne and Henry Percy were at one point bedfellows: "Some have even thought – though it seems unlikely – that they anticipated the ceremony and slept together" (268). Moreover, David Loades also mentions that the archdeacon of Canterbury, Nicholas Harpsfield commented "on the bull allowing Henry to marry Anne, despite any unconsummated pre-contract" (78). So, Harpsfield also believed that the betrothal of Anne and Henry Percy had not been sealed by sexual intercourse. In other words, opinions on whether Anne had been involved with Henry Percy differ, but the evidence eyewitness George Cavendish and another contemporary source give is in favour of a relationship between the two. However, there is no record, nor evidence of Anne and Henry Percy having sexual intercourse to turn their betrothal into an actual marriage, which Philippa Gregory does claim in her novel.

Moreover, according to Alison Weir, George Cavendish claims that the King commanded Wolsey to break up Anne and Henry Percy (*Six Wives* 157), and according to David Loades, Cavendish "dates [the affair] to a time after the King had become seriously interested, which would be some time in 1527." (114) However, the King appears to have shown his interest in Anne for the first time in 1526, but Cavendish describes the King confessing his secret affection for Anne to Cardinal Wolsey: "not yet beyng privye to the kynges secrett mynd allthoughe that he hade a great affeccion vnto hir" (35). In other words, Cavendish claims that the King did not yet openly show his love towards Anne (35), whereas, according to Loades, Cavendish's record does imply that the King was already "seriously

interested” in Anne (114). In addition, Philippa Gregory places the affair in 1523, which would be prior to Henry Percy’s marriage to Mary Talbot, and which would make sense if the King had not openly confessed his attraction to Anne, but according to Loades, he had already shown his interest in Anne at the time she and Henry Percy were separated (114). In short, the dating of the relationship between Anne and Henry Percy remains vague and therefore the evidence does not suggest any such thing to have happened. Yet, it is described vividly in Philippa Gregory’s novel (*Boleyn* 98-100), but the story seems to be based on insufficient evidence, and the betrothal cannot by definition be proven to have taken place at all.

### **Thomas Wyatt**

Another man whose love for Anne is mentioned in Philippa Gregory’s novel is the poet Thomas Wyatt. Although Wyatt was married, he openly showed his interest in Anne (Weir, *Six Wives* 159). Gregory describes the relationship between Anne and Wyatt to be based on different motives. In her novel, Wyatt does not try to court Anne very seriously in public, but she encourages Wyatt to spend time with her to make other men, including the King, jealous, and she even uses Wyatt to almost trick Henry Percy into marrying her. As soon as Henry Percy indicates that he is in love with Anne, and he runs outside to tell her about his feelings, Anne pretends not to notice him while she is “losing daintily and deliberately to Sir Thomas Wyatt” (*Boleyn* 93). Only when the two start quarrelling to get Anne’s attention she acknowledges Henry Percy and solves the quarrel by walking off with Percy: “Anne smiled at them both. ‘I have been so roundly defeated that I will take a walk and plan my strategy,’ she said and put her hand on Lord Henry Percy’s arm” (*Boleyn* 94). Moreover, Anne “encouraged Sir Thomas Wyatt and half a dozen others to hang around her so that the king learned to think of her as the most alluring young woman in the court”. (*Boleyn* 152) In other words, Anne uses Wyatt and his known interest in her to make other

men jealous and to improve her own image as the most beautiful and wanted woman in the English court. So, to a certain level, she gives in to Wyatt's advances, but only to the point where it will make her look better.

However, according to Alison Weir, Anne was not really interested in Thomas Wyatt because she saw "no brilliant future in it." (*Six Wives* 159) So, Anne thought nothing of the flirtations and considers them to be nothing more than "the polite conventions of the courtly affair" (*Six Wives* 159), but the King did not realise this and became utterly jealous. The King did not know "that Wyatt was far more interested in Anne Boleyn than she was in him" (*Six Wives* 160), and although Anne kindly asked Wyatt to stop courting her and focus on a friendship between them instead, "Wyatt went on hoping and dreaming, writing of 'the lively sparks that issue from those eyes, sunbeams to daze men's sight', and seeking her company." (*Six Wives* 160). The King, on the other hand, feared the worst and kept worrying about Thomas Wyatt. When Wyatt snatched one of Anne's jewels hanging out of her pocket on a piece of lace and stuffed it inside his own doublet, Anne asked and even begged for its return, but Wyatt kept it close and hung it around his neck. Anne did not think much of it, as the jewel was of small value only, and even forgot about it altogether. However, basing her account on George Wyatt's biography, Weir describes how, during a game of bowls with the King, Wyatt flaunted the jewel and made a joke about Anne the King did not like. As a result the King lost his temper and stopped the game (*Six Wives* 162). Instances like this reinforced the King's fear of Wyatt successfully courting Anne. It would appear Henry VIII's suspicions were later to be reformulated in Wyatt being arrested for having sexual intercourse with Anne in 1536. So, as opposed to Gregory's account of the affair, Anne pays no serious attention to Wyatt's flirtations. Although Gregory describes Anne using Wyatt's attention to make other men jealous, the historical account gives a less dramatised image and indicates that Wyatt was

more interested in Anne than Anne in Wyatt. However, the King continued to believe there is more going on between Anne and Wyatt.

### **The King's 'Other Women'**

King Henry VIII is notorious for his many wives, but also for his great number of mistresses, Mary, Anne's sister, being one of them. Although Anne was aware of the King sleeping with his mistresses when she was pregnant, she did not approve of any infidelity by the King. This becomes clear when Alison Weir describes a situation in which Anne confronts the King: "However, Anne found out. Unlike Katherine, she was not reticent about such matters, and made a fuss" (*Six Wives* 256). On the other hand, Philippa Gregory describes the same issue: "'I won't have it,' she warned him. 'I won't tolerate it. She must leave court'" (*Boleyn* 379). But the King reproaches her and, according to Weir "Chapuy's says he told her she must shut her eyes, 'and endure as more worthy persons. She ought to know that it was in his power to humble her again in a moment, more than he had exalted her before'" (*Six Wives* 256). Furthermore, Gregory's Henry VIII reminds Anne of her place as he tells her that "'[a] better lady than you was treated far worse and never complained to me. As you well know'" (*Boleyn* 379). However, Anne decides not to let it rest, but to take control and decide which girls to present to the King as his possible mistresses instead. By choosing the King's new mistress herself, she can make sure it will be someone with the same interests, and who knows her place, preferably another Howard girl. Eventually, Anne sends Madge Shelton, her niece, over to the King, and she quickly becomes his mistress.

In Philippa Gregory's novel, this idea was first expressed by Anne's uncle, during her second pregnancy in 1534, and he advises Anne to put forward her own cousin. Madge has caught the King's eye, together with Jane Seymour, but Anne sees Jane Seymour as a threat and decides, as her uncle advised her, to help Madge into the King's bed in an attempt to

divert the King's attention from a rival and keep his interest and favour focussed on the Boleyn and Howard family:

"I've chosen the girl to divert him," my uncle said. "A Howard girl."

I felt the sweat break out on me. I knew that I had gone white when George suddenly hissed: "Sit up!" out of the corner of his mouth.

"Who?" Anne said sharply.

"Madge Shelton," Uncle said.

"Oh, Madge," I said, my heart pounding with relief and my cheeks blazing as the colour came rushing back. "That Howard girl."

"She'll keep him busy and she knows her place," my father said judiciously, not at all as if he were handing another niece over to adultery and sin.

"And your influence is undiminished," Anne spat.

My uncle smiled. "That is true of course, but who would you rather? A Seymour girl? Given that it is a certainty, isn't it best for us that it should be a girl who'll do our bidding?"

"It depends on what you bid her," Anne said shortly.

"To divert him while you are confined," my uncle said smoothly. "Nothing else."

*(Boleyn 395)*

However, once Madge gets into the King's bed, she seems to forget what she had been asked to do: "Anne raised an eyebrow and glanced at me, the only member of her court who knew that Madge had been appointed as the king's mistress by our uncle but only for the duration of Anne's confinement. Now it seemed that Madge was making progress on her own account" *(Boleyn 406)*. It appears Madge has gone out hunting with the King, but Anne's brother George is also with them, and she "knew that George could be trusted to protect Anne's interests" *(Boleyn 406)*. Yet, Madge manages to stay close to the king, and even in the spring

of 1535 she is still his mistress and constantly at his side: “The king is quite taken up with Madge who goes everywhere in a new gown for every day of the week” (*Boleyn* 418). He even gives her a locket, and feels caught when Anne walks in on him hanging it around Madge’s neck:

She opened the door and we saw, just as she opened it, Henry tying a locket around the blushing neck of Madge Shelton. At the sight of his wife he flinched but finished his task. “A little keepsake,” he remarked to Anne. “A small wager won by this clever girl here.” (*Boleyn* 424)

During the summer of 1535, a year after Madge was put forward, the King still looks at her during dinner, when he is sitting next to Anne, who “tried not to see that her husband’s attention was drifting elsewhere” (*Boleyn* 434). In other words, Anne agrees to putting Madge forward, fully believing that she will know her place and will only divert the King when Anne herself is pregnant, but Madge stays the King’s mistress longer and more seriously than Anne had anticipated.

On the other hand, according to Alison Weir, it was Anne herself who planned on putting Madge forward:

In February 1535, the King found a new mistress, thanks to his wife, who had now come to terms with the inevitable and reasoned that, if Henry had to have an affair, it should be with someone sympathetic to her, and not a member of the imperialist [Seymour] faction. She had therefore deliberately selected her cousin and lady-in-waiting Madge Shelton, who was the daughter of Lady Shelton; Anne persuaded Madge, who seems to have been quite amenable to the arrangement, to encourage Henry’s advances. In no time at all, Madge was in the King’s bed, where Anne hoped she would use her influence to make Henry a little kinder to his long-suffering wife. (*Six Wives* 277)



Moreover, Weir claims the relationship between the King and Madge to have been a “short affair” only (*Six Wives* 277), and Anne Clinard Barnhill claims about the same when she says that “for a brief period of about six months, Pretty Madge had the king’s attention.” (theanneboleynfiles.com) Additionally, Alison Weir dates the affair between the King and Madge back to February 1535 (*Six Wives* 277), instead of 1534. Additionally, Weir argues that during Anne’s pregnancy in 1534 the King did have a mistress, but it does not appear to have been Madge, as she “was probably one of the Queen's ladies, but her name is unknown.” (*Six Wives* 272) Moreover, Weir mentions that Anne was not pregnant at all when she put Madge forward, but became pregnant about a month after Madge became the King’s mistress: “By mid-March, though, she was in an altogether happier frame of mind, for she had discovered she was pregnant again.” (*Six Wives* 277) In short, Alison Weir argues that Madge Shelton had been the King’s mistress from February 1535 onwards, only a month before Anne’s pregnancy in March that year, but it was only a short romance. On the other hand, Philippa Gregory claims Madge’s relationship with the King to have started in 1534, during one of Anne’s pregnancies, and portrays the affair as a rather serious one, with Madge at the King’s side for over a year.

### **Anne’s charges**

Anne Boleyn was charged with treason, adultery and incest and was eventually decapitated on the Tower Green in May 1536 (Weir, *Six Wives* 335). However, the King had also accused Anne of being a witch, and having used sorcery to seduce him (Starkey 551). Philippa Gregory emphasises this idea of Anne being a witch several times, especially from her miscarriage in 1536 onwards, when Henry sends a midwife to spy on Anne (*Boleyn* 473). The woman is called the “with-taker” (*Boleyn* 474), and cannot be diverted from her task to inform the King about what exactly had happened:

“Don’t you know?” she asked me, her voice almost pitying. “Don’t you know that I am his servant already? That he sent me here to watch and listen for him? I was appointed for this from the moment that the queen first missed her courses.”

...

“This is my duty,” she said. “I have been doing it since I was a young girl. I have made a solemn vow to the Virgin Mary never to fail in my task.”

“What task?” I demanded wildly. “What duty? What are you talking about now?”

“Witch-taking,” she said simply. And then she slipped out of the door with the devil’s baby in her arms and was gone. (*Boleyn* 473-4)

This indicates that the King may have thought that a deformed foetus showed that Anne was a witch, as according to David Loades, in those days, people often used to “associate witches with monstrous births” (297). Moreover, Philippa Gregory stresses the gossip that emerges in the towns and cities: “the word was that her charge was adultery and witchcraft and no-one knew what else” (*Boleyn* 509). Although these accusations may seem to be nonsense and pure gossip, they appeared to have come from the King themselves, as “Henry was using the power of gossip, the voice of the mob, to pave the way to an annulment of the marriage, and a new queen” (*Boleyn* 509). During her trial, the peers expressed these charges as well, and said that “Anne had ill-wished Henry into illness” (*Boleyn* 523) and they “claimed that the ulcer on his leg and his impotence were her fault too” (*Boleyn* 523). These are all clear accusations of sorcery, and, even worse, William Stafford, Mary’s husband, claims that the King “rules that your sister is a witch” (*Boleyn* 524), and she and her alleged lovers are “enemies of the realm” (*Boleyn* 524). Although Gregory does not give an account of the exact proceedings of the entire trial, it is likely that witchcraft would have been one of the accusations towards Anne in her novel.

However, David Loades suggests that “fantasizing about a ‘deformed foetus’ has led to historians speculating about a link between Anne’s fall and an accusation of witchcraft” (297). So, he does not agree with this theory and says that a “sixteenth-century superstition that deformity in a baby was a sign of sexual misbehaviour by a parent” (297), which led the King to believe that Anne had been adulterous. Besides, as Alison Weir argues:

At that time, witchcraft was not an indictable offense; it was not until 1542 that an act was passed under Henry VIII making it a secular crime, and it did not become a capital offense until 1563, under Elizabeth I. Prior to that, the penalty for witchcraft had been determined according to evidence of actual criminality, with proof of evil deeds necessary to obtain a conviction. (*Tower*, 44)

The King probably knew this too, and had no real evidence to support this claim, so he “seems to have abandoned the idea of accusing Anne of witchcraft almost as soon as he had conceived it.” (Weir, *Six Wives* 305) As a result, “[n]o accusation that she had dabbled in the black arts was ever levelled against Anne” (Loades 298). Although the King did seem to have had suspicions that Anne was a witch, he did not charge her with this, unlike Philippa Gregory suggests.

## **Conclusion**

Even though Philippa Gregory based her novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* on non-fictional sources, and largely portrays the story in a historically correct way, she seems to have altered certain elements concerning Anne Boleyn’s love life, which deviate from reality as described by historians. For instance, Gregory portrays Anne as a very beautiful and alluring woman, while in reality she was not very pretty, at least, according to Tudor standards, and instead her charm and accomplishments determined her sex appeal and attractiveness. Moreover, Anne’s alleged romance with Henry Percy is portrayed by Gregory as a certainty, and according to

her, the betrothal was consummated, whereas in reality it is unsure if the affair has even taken place. Even if Anne was involved with Percy, it is highly unlikely they had sexual intercourse. Additionally, in reality the King only suspected Anne of having had sex with Thomas Wyatt, which stayed on his mind during their entire marriage, while Anne was not interested in Wyatt in that way. On the other hand, Gregory claims that Anne lead Wyatt on several times, to make other men, including the King, jealous and to make her seem like the most wanted woman at court. Furthermore, opinions towards the King's relationship with Madge differ as well: Gregory claims the romance to have lasted for over a year, and hints that it had become rather serious at one point, when in reality it appear to have been only a short liaison, which was nothing serious at all. Besides, Gregory dates it back to 1534, when historians suggest it had taken place in 1535, so the Gregory's dateline of Madge and the King's romance appears to be wrong. Lastly, Gregory implies that Anne was charged with witchcraft during her trial, when in reality the King seems to have dropped the idea and did not charge her with sorcery at all. All in all, Gregory seems to have twisted several facts concerning Anne's love life in her novel, but none of these elements seem to affect the course of the story.

## **Part II – Linguistic analysis**

## Introduction

Philippa Gregory's novel *The Virgin's Lover* describes a few years of the life of Elizabeth I, who ruled England for almost fifty years, from 1558-1603. She was a great ruler and she is renowned for her intelligence and wisdom. During her lifetime, she wrote numerous letters, poems, translations and speeches and is even said to have been a leader in linguistic change during the Early Modern English period (Evans 1). So, as there is enough evidence on the language Elizabeth used, she will be the focus of a linguistic analysis of Philippa Gregory's works. Although the evidence on Elizabeth's language mainly consists of data collected from letters, and not speech, spelling is in this case irrelevant. However, the records on Elizabeth's spoken language will help to determine to what extent Philippa Gregory uses the language Elizabeth I would have used. To do so, linguistic elements such as tense, aspect, the use of auxiliaries and superlative adjectives will be discussed. In other words, to what extent does Philippa Gregory use Early Modern English to represent Elizabeth I's speech?

## Tense

Early Modern English verbs, like Modern English ones, have two tenses: past and present. Terttu Nevalainen describes the present tense to be "unmarked" (92) in both periods: "verbs appear in their base forms in the present tense, and person and number are singled out only in the second- and third-person singular" (92). However, "the past tense and the past-participle forms of the [regular] verbs were formed by means of the regular *-ed* suffix in Early Modern English" (92). But, the irregular verbs showed "a great deal of variation" (93), as "[m]any common verbs such as *bear, begin, break, get, give, help, run, speak, take* and *write* [have] more than one past tense and at least two past-participle forms in the Early Modern English [period]" (93). For instance, Nevalainen mentions the verb *help*, with three different past participles "*holpen*", "*holp*" and "*helped*" (93). According to Edmund Weiner,

there are four main reasons why the past tense and participles of strong verbs show this variation:

- i. patterning the past tense on the past participle (as in *tore* after *torn*);
- ii. adapting the past tense or past participle to verbs with a different pattern (as in *slung* after *sung*, etc.);
- iii. patterning the past participle on the past tense (as in *sat*)
- iv. dropping the –en suffix of the past participle (as in *sung* as opposed to *ridden*).

(*Oxford English Dictionary Online*)

So, applying the options the *OED* has given, the sentences in (1) and (3), uttered by Philippa Gregory's Elizabeth, could also have looked like those in (2) and (4).

(1) 'Have you given him a time to see me and Cecil?' (Gregory, *Virgin* 958)

(2) Have you gived him a time to see me and Cecil?

(3) 'Why has he not written to me?' (Gregory, *Virgin* 916)

(4) Why has he not wrote to me?

Although sentences (2) and (4) are only optional, it would be logical that the novel contains some sentences showing this kind of variation. However, Gregory does not use any of the Early Modern English variants on past tenses or past participles.

### **Aspect**

The two English tenses can be divided into several aspects in Modern English: simple, perfect and progressive, the latter two being formed by adding a specific auxiliary to the main verb (The Survey of English Usage 6). But, "[t]he expression of tense, mood and aspect is perhaps still the most important difference between Early Modern and Modern English." (Van Gelderen 172)

For instance, where Modern English would have the progressive aspect, constructed with a form of the auxiliary *be* and an *-ing* suffix, EModE would conjugate the lexical verb without the progressive construction. For example, Philippa Gregory's Elizabeth utters a construction which was not common in EModE in (5). So, she would not have said *are you going*, but probably something along the lines of *go you*, changing the sentence to (6) instead.

(5) 'Where are you going?' (Gregory, *Virgin* 980)

(6) Where go you?

Moreover, the Modern English perfect aspect also did not exist in EModE, but was replaced with a simple past instead. Consequently, Elizabeth would not have used the present perfect, like in (7), but rather a past simple, like in (8).

(7) 'As I have said.' (Gregory, *Virgin* 959)

(8) As I said.

In short, Philippa Gregory abides by the Modern English aspects, rather than adopting the Early Modern English system.

### **Auxiliaries**

Auxiliary verbs in Early Modern English differ from those in Modern English, as they "are introduced or expanded, but neither simple auxiliaries nor sequences of auxiliaries are as elaborate as in modern English" (Van Gelderen 172). In EModE there is a discrepancy between the auxiliaries *be* and *have*, as the first was primarily used with certain intransitive verbs, for instance with verbs of motion, whereas the latter was commonly used with certain transitive verbs. This difference is no longer important in Modern English, but made a big difference in EModE (Van Gelderen 172). So, Elizabeth would probably not have said the sentence in (9). Instead, however, she would have used a form of *be*, like in (10), as *come* is an intransitive verb indicating motion.



(9) 'I have come to you.' (Gregory, *Virgin* 762)

(10) I am come to you.

Furthermore, in Modern English, the verb *can* indicates a granted permission, and, according to Charles Barber, the auxiliary *can* "most often indicates capacity or capability, but it sometimes carries its earlier sense of 'know' or 'know how to'." (197) He gives the example of "you can go" (197), which, in EModE means "'you have the physical ability to walk', not 'I give you permission to walk'" (197). Instead, the verb *may* was often used in EModE to indicate "permission, wish and possibility. It is also used, however, to signal capability or physical power, where today we prefer *can*" (197). So instead of saying (11), Elizabeth would probably have uttered something like sentence (12).

(11) 'You can sleep in my room, Kat,' she said. (Gregory, *Virgin* 988)

(12) You may sleep in my room, Kat.

Additionally, Early Modern English knows several ways of forming a negative sentence. One of these is the use of the auxiliary *do*, which was "generalised in the Early Modern period." (Nevalainen 108) However, according to Elly van Gelderen, "[i]n questions and negative sentences, *do* is not obligatory." (172) In other words, the introduction of the negative *do* has started, but it is not yet used by everyone, so it is not yet standardised. Queen Elizabeth did not use *do* to construct a negative sentence, during the 1590s only 16.1% of her negation existed of sentences with negative *do*. Although the use of *do* is on the rise, as the "*CEEC* [*Corpus of Early English Correspondence*] shows a steady rise and reaches 25.7% in the 1580-1600 period" (Evans 75), Elizabeth's usage "declines from 20% to 11.8% in [her] post-accession correspondence" (Evans 75), which "moves in the opposite direction to the *CEEC* trend" (Evans 75). Yet, Mel Evans gives an example of a sentence with and another one without negative *do* in sentences (13) and (14), respectively.

(13) 'bridleless colts do not know their rider's hand' (75)

(14) ‘you know not how to use it’ (75)

However, based on Evan’s data, (15) and (17), said by Philippa Gregory’s Elizabeth are likely to be incorrect, and should resemble (16) and (18) instead.

(15) ‘they do not know you’ (Gregory, *Virgin* 719)

(16) They know you not.

(17) ‘we do not announce our betrothal’ (Gregory, *Virgin* 950)

(18) We announce not our betrothal.

In short, Philippa Gregory does not use any EModE auxiliary constructions in her novel *The Virgin’s Lover*, she uses the Modern English variants instead.

### **Superlative Adjectives**

Early Modern English has, just like Modern English, as system of using adjectives. However, Modern English adjectives “have forms for the comparative (*-er*) and superlative degrees (*-est*)” (Nevalainen 98), whereas in EModE there are three different ways of forming adjectives for comparison. Consequently, superlatives can be formed using either “the synthetic variant using terminal inflection, *-est ...*; the analytic variant with periphrastic *most...*; and the double form, which compares two methods” (Evans 143), the same methods can be applied to comparative adjectives, which get an *-er* ending, or *more* added to them, or both (Nevalainen 98). Although the third option is used in EModE, it, as Merja Kytö describes is “of sporadic use only; the real rivalry is between the inflectional and the periphrastic form proper” (qtd. in Evans 143). This is illustrated by the fact that “double negatives are also marginal in Elizabeth’s correspondence, comprising 2.2% of all superlative forms” (Evans 155). On the other hand, Terttu Nevalainen explains a rule of thumb for the two remaining options: “short, mono- and disyllabic adjectives are usually compared by means of inflectional endings, and longer ones periphrastically with *more* and *most*” (98).

Yet, Elizabeth seems to divert from these figures, as her “rate of inflection with monosyllables [is] at 81.8%” (Evans 145), but for the disyllabic adjectives her rate of inflection is only 19.2%, and for the adjectives existing of three or more syllables, her rate is even at 0% (Evans 145). Moreover, Merja Kytö’s data suggests that 79% percent of all disyllabic adjectives are formed by periphrasis (qtd. in Evans 145). Overall, Mel Evans says “periphrasis is Elizabeth’s preferred strategy and accounts for 61.1% of all superlative forms” (144). In other words, Elizabeth mostly uses superlatives formed with *most*. Despite Evans’ examples of Elizabeth’s usage of all three structures in (19), (20) and (21), Elizabeth’s sentence in (22) would have most likely looked like (23) in reality.

(19) ‘Your dearest chamber’ (143)

(20) ‘My most dear brother’ (143)

(21) ‘Your most necessariest weapons’ (143)

(22) ‘I would be one of the greatest princes in Europe, one of the richest.’ (Gregory, *Virgin* 838)

(23) I would be one of the most great princes in Europe, and one of the most rich.

Although Philippa Gregory does use *most* in combination with adjectives, for instance in sentences like (24), where, according to Modern English grammar, and inflectional ending cannot be added to this adjective.

(24) “And you think that the most important business of the kingdom is the leadership of the church.” (Gregory, *Virgin* 674)

In other words, Philippa Gregory does use adjectives with periphrasis, but they appear to adhere to the Modern English system, rather than the EModE one.

## Conclusion

Although on a historical level, Philippa Gregory's works seem to be largely correct, on a linguistic level she does not show as much resemblance to Early Modern English in her novel *The Virgin's Lover*. Firstly, the verbs used in the novel do not fully abide by Early Modern English rules, as the past tense and the past participles do not show as much variation as can be expected, and the progressive and perfect aspects Gregory uses were not yet fully developed in sixteenth century Early Modern English. Secondly, Gregory's use of auxiliary verbs resembles the Modern English system, rather than the Early Modern way: Early Modern English shows a discrepancy in the use of the auxiliaries *have* and *be*, which is not present in Gregory's writing; the auxiliary *can* is used to indicate permission, rather than adopting its Early Modern English meaning *know* or *know how to*; and Gregory's Elizabeth uses a negative *do* more than she would have done in reality. Lastly, the distribution of superlative adjectives with periphrasis seems to adhere to Modern English rules, rather than the Early Modern English system.

To conclude, Philippa Gregory does not use the variant of English Elizabeth I would have used during the sixteenth century, as she uses Modern English systems in her novel *The Virgin's Lover*.

### **Part III - Concluding Remarks**

## Concluding Remarks

To sum up, Philippa Gregory's novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* seem to be historically accurate for the biggest part, yet Gregory deviates from certain facts, like Anne's physical appearance, her suitors before the King, and the love life she shared with the King after their marriage. Although Gregory interprets these events differently from the historical facts, they are only minor elements and do not lead to significant changes in the course of history.

Nonetheless, some of the changes might be explicable, though speculated. For instance, Anne's beauty seems to be more important in Gregory's novels than in the non-fictional works of historians. One explanation might be that, due to the modern ideal, women need to be as slim and as beautiful as possible, so a modern audience might not want to read about an averagely pretty, or even a plain girl. Instead, they want to read about the dazzlingly beautiful girl who, thanks to her beauty and charm becomes Queen of England.

Moreover, Anne's sexual intercourse with Henry Percy and the flirting with Thomas Wyatt as Gregory proposes could also be the result of what is considered normal in the modern world. Seduction and sex are omnipresent in today's society, and as a result, Gregory might have used these elements to make it more appealing to a modern reader. In other words, Gregory dramatised some historical facts in her novel, perhaps to satisfy the modern audience, which appears to be hunting for sex and scandals.

On the other hand, Gregory's linguistic deviation is more prominent in *The Virgin's Lover*. Although she aims for historical accuracy, her aim was probably never to replicate the original speech, but to stick to modern register instead. This makes her novels easier to understand to a modern audience, and also eliminates the chance of the story becoming unintelligible to a modern reader, who might not have studied Early Modern English. So, Gregory abides by the register of Modern English, probably to make her novel more understandable to a modern audience.

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