

## Producing History

By Grace Wilsey

Anne Boleyn maintains a lively public persona in the modern world, despite the fact that minimal historical documentation of her character survives. Selected fictional and subjective accounts, including sixteenth century poetry and official letters written by the imperial ambassador to the court, provide the main historical basis for her character. She was a controversial figure in her own time due to the circumstances of public and personal strife surrounding her marriage to Henry VIII. This controversy comes across in the varying accounts of her persona that survive. The mystery surrounding her true character has inspired many writers to reinvent her character over the past five centuries, beginning with William Shakespeare and leading up to the recent television phenomenon, *The Tudors*.

Records kept by the English government provide a limited amount of factual information about Anne Boleyn. These records attest to the facts that she was born in 1500 and executed in 1536, that she was the second of three children born to Thomas and Elizabeth Boleyn, and after a lengthy courtship, that she was married to King Henry VIII in 1533; the same year of her coronation and the birth of her daughter, Elizabeth.<sup>1</sup> However, these facts do not describe her personality. They simply offer proof that she existed and give the main highlights of her life, which leaves ample room for interpretation. Many fictional works describe Anne's dark hair, which is the single descriptor known about Anne as no contemporary portraits of her survive from the Tudor Era. In addition, the only stable impression of her person is that she was intelligent and that she had been educated abroad.<sup>2</sup> Documentation of her work in church reform provides evidence of her wide influence as queen, though she is also thought to have been

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<sup>1</sup> E. W. Ives, 'Anne (c.1500–1536)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/557, accessed 4 Nov 2010]

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

unpopular in comparison to the previous queen, Katherine of Aragon. This information – now accepted as fact – among other pieces of information held together by assumptions, combines to form the personality of one of the most well-known queens of England.

This raises the question, why is Anne Boleyn the most well remembered wife of Henry VIII? One explanation could be that she was the mother of one of England's longest reigning monarchs, Queen Elizabeth I. However, recent depictions of her, such as the popular television show *The Tudors*, often focus on the scandal surrounding her three years as queen and her fall from grace. Her marriage to Henry VIII coincided with England's break with the Catholic Church and speculation often ties the two events together. To this day, her execution remains a point of mystery. She was tried and found guilty of treason for alleged adulterous relations with five men of the court, including the poet Thomas Wyatt, and her brother George Boleyn. Yet, she famously declared her innocence until her end.<sup>3</sup> Unlike Catherine Howard, Henry VIII's fifth wife who was also executed for having adulterous affairs, there remains no conclusive evidence of either Anne's innocence or her guilt. Thus, her character remains mysterious.

The mystery surrounding her person may likely be the cause for her constant reinvention. Few literary works addressing her character survive from her time. Yet, in the past two centuries, a pattern exists of brief surges in Anne Boleyn's popularity. The peaks most notably include: the mid-1800s, late 1960s to mid-1980s, and the early 2000s to present day. Undoubtedly, there may be works missing from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that simply did not stand the test of time. However, the pattern of spikes in her popularity is remarkable, given the sheer volume of fictional and biographical accounts of Anne released in short periods of time. This begs the question: Why is Anne Boleyn reconstituted in popular culture only at certain

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<sup>3</sup> Anne Boleyn, Love-Letters from King Henry VIII to Anne Boelyn: Some in Frech and Some in English, (London, J. Churchill at the Black-Swan and Pater-Nofer-Row, 1714) 37.

times? Arguably, she is more popular now than ever. What does this phenomenon say about modern society? How does this connect modern social issues with the past? In other words, why is modern society so fascinated with reinventing a woman who reigned as the Queen of England for only three years nearly five centuries ago? The answer to this question lies in the literary characterizations of Anne throughout various historical moments. Insight into Anne's journey through history provides a better understanding of her progression to popularity today, specifically in new media.

### **An Original Account**

Apart from legal documents available through British government archives, a description of her coronation appears to be the only genuine account of Anne Boleyn from her lifetime. "The Noble Triumphaunt Coronacyon of Queen Anne/ Wyfe Onto the Moost Noble Kynge Henry the VIII" was written by an anonymous author in 1533. This pamphlet consists of a detailed and dry description of the events of the coronation, the pageantry, and the guest list. Little description of Anne herself appears in the piece. The writer simply refers to her as the "queens grace,"<sup>4</sup> maintaining a distance from her as a regal entity. Thus, this piece would seem useless for the purposes of understanding Anne's person. However, it does make one very notable comment: "Queen Anne doth and shalte beare a new sone of y kynges blood/there malbe a golden worlde unto thy people."<sup>5</sup> At this point in time, Anne was already well into her pregnancy with Elizabeth, making the succession to the throne a natural topic for discussion. Notably, the passage makes Anne's popularity subject to her procreation of a male heir. This hints at later problems. Although there is no record of King Henry's anger at the birth of a daughter, many

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<sup>4</sup> Anonymous, The Noble Triumphaunt Coronacyon of Queen Anne/ Wyfe Onto the Moost Noble Kynge Henry the VIII, (London : In Fletestrete by Wynkyn de Worde, for Iohan Goughe, 1533) 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 8.

believe that after Elizabeth's birth and Anne's two subsequent miscarriages, the subject of succession became a major tension in the marriage. This short account of the event serves as a basis for later dramatizations of marital problems between the couple, in addition to standing as a general proof of her existence and coronation.

## **Letters**

Early in the eighteenth century, a series of love letters written by Henry VIII to Anne Boleyn were discovered. The letters span the course of their relationship and provide concrete evidence of Henry's affection. Several versions of these letters have been printed in limited releases, all placing them in different orders and timelines. Most versions also bookend the letters between a prologue, offering opinions on the courtship and ensuing marriage, and Anne's final letter to King Henry on the eve of her execution. Some of the letters are written in English and others in French. He refers to her as the "woman in the world I value the most," tells her "I am yours" and nearly always ends with "yours only" along with an illustration of her initials surrounded by a heart.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the King cared for Anne. These letters offer proof of his love for her, even if the romance wilted in the end. His honesty in his affections for Anne is emphasized by the fact that these descriptors appear in a personal letter, which is private form of expression often associated with emotional authenticity. However, they give very few accounts of her character apart from nonspecific phrases such as "your great humanity and favor,"<sup>7</sup> which is unfortunate, because a letter would have been a reliable source for access to Anne's character.

The most telling letter, the last and only letter from Anne to the King, always ends the collection. In this letter, Anne asks for mercy, but also appears resigned to her impending

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<sup>6</sup> King Henry VIII, Love-Letters from King Henry VIII to Anne Boelyn: Some in Frech and Some in English, (London, J. Churchill at the Black-Swan and Pater-Nofer-Row, 1714).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 13.

execution: “I will with all willingness and duty perform your command.” However, she also remarks that she is “altogether ignorant” of “your grace’s displeasure.”<sup>8</sup> In other words, she writes of her bewilderment as to why he has forsaken her and condemned her to death. She writes of the “infamous slander” against her and of a “desire that God will pardon your great sin.”<sup>9</sup> She asks for a lawful trial – insinuating that her trial was not lawful – and then, she closes with the phrase “your most Loyal and ever Faithful wife.”<sup>10</sup> This letter leaves room for interpretations and inferences depending on the reader’s sympathy with Anne, or lack thereof. As an authentic personal letter, it provides a convincing argument for her innocence. However, the letter cannot provide concrete evidence of her personality. A cynic may believe Anne to be manipulating the King in a final attempt for mercy. More likely, the letter is a sincere testament to her innocence and victimization. The letter does demonstrate her piety, with its constant invocations of God’s forgiveness. It also establishes her intelligence and education through its eloquence and adept phrasing. Beyond these interpretations, only speculation remains.

## Poetry

The primary evidence existing from her contemporary time provides an inadequate view in to Anne Boleyn’s character, making it necessary to examine fictional accounts. A wealth of fictional sources remains from her lifetime, most notably the poetry of Sir Thomas Wyatt. Wyatt was intimately connected to the Boleyn family, which has led many to speculate about a possible love affair between Anne and Wyatt before her marriage to Henry. Of the five men accused of adultery with the Queen, he is often singled out as the most probably guilty. However, these

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<sup>8</sup> Anne Boleyn, Love-Letters from King Henry VIII to Anne Boelyn: Some in Frech and Some in English, (London, J. Churchill at the Black-Swan and Pater-Nofer-Row, 1714) 36-37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

rumors most likely stem from his literary fame as a writer of amorous sonnets, in comparison to the other four accused men who were less artistically inclined. While Wyatt was ultimately cleared of all charges by the English court, many writers continue to fuel speculations of a hidden romance. In Anne Boleyn, A Gambit: with Fragments of Poetry by Sir Thomas Wyatt, Carol Winifred Bradley pulls portions from Wyatt's poetry attempting to draw connections between the two. Bradley includes this passage from Wyatt's poetry, "It is mine Anna, God is wot, and ever causes of my pain. Who love rewardeth with disdain; yet is it loved."<sup>11</sup> This excerpt seems to suggest that Wyatt was in love with Anne, but only if "Anna" refers to her, as Bradley speculates. Even if Anna does refer to Anne, there is no clear evidence of Anne's reciprocation. Ultimately, it is not surprising that readers conceive a romance between Wyatt and Anne; for it is tempting to try to understand the poet's mind. However, as a highly subjective medium that is often prone to exaggeration, poetry acts as a less reliable historical source than a letter or a historical account.

The untrustworthiness of Wyatt's poetry as a source did little to deter future writers. In 1896, the little known poet Lord Habberly wrote "Anne Boleyn," which tries to understand Wyatt's persona through characterizing Anne as the cause of his downfall. In "Anne Boleyn", Habberly fantasizes about the great romance between Anne Boleyn and Thomas Wyatt before her marriage to the King, characterizing Anne as a temptress that destroyed Wyatt. He represents Wyatt as the pinnacle of Renaissance artistry. In this case, Anne only functions to characterize the male subject. Habberly metaphorically describes their relationship at the end of the poem: "For proud dwellings all must come to hovel and slum. But on a shattered pane read this legend,

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<sup>11</sup> Carol Winifred Bradley, Anne Boleyn, A Gambit: with Fragments of Poetry by Sir Thomas Wyatt (San Francisco: The Bird in the Hand Press, 1972).

rude but plain... ‘In this house dwelt Anne Boleyn’.<sup>12</sup> He depicts Anne as the catalyst of Wyatt’s destruction. Thus, another interpretation of her person and her involvement with Wyatt came to life over three hundred years after Wyatt first took pen to paper.

## **Shakespeare**

Aside from her characterization as the harlot of Wyatt’s fantasies, Anne’s marriage to Henry VIII is the regularly dramatized portion of her life. William Shakespeare positively depicts her in King Henry VIII as the character Anne “Bullen” who is central in terms of plot, but minor in terms of lines. Her positive depiction occurs in two main points. First, Shakespeare portrays her as humble when she replies, “No, not for all the riches under heaven”<sup>13</sup> after being asked if she wished to become queen. This portrayal of her as passive in her ascension to the throne is plausible, but less commonly depicted. Most modern renditions of her story, such as the film *The Other Boleyn Girl*, characterize Anne as overly ambitious and a manipulative social climber. Also, in these modern renditions, her ambitiousness is punished by the depiction of her fall from grace and execution. In contrast, Shakespeare’s second positive characterization of Anne occurs at the end of the play as she gives birth to Elizabeth; leaving her character in a moment of triumph, rather than depicting her downfall. This play is unique from other fictional accounts as it fails to dramatize Anne’s execution. The positive take on Anne, as well as on King Henry, could conceivably reflect a change in public perception of the couple after the reign of Elizabeth I,<sup>14</sup> though it is impossible to know for sure. The fact remains that Shakespeare’s historical play about the Tudors excerpts the life of Anne Boleyn, omitting her downfall. It forever immortalizes her as a humble and deserving queen. If this play were a more prominent

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<sup>12</sup> Lord Haberly, Anne Boleyn and Other Poems, (Newton: The Gregynog Press, 1896) 4.

<sup>13</sup> William Shakespeare, King Henry the Eighth, (II, iii, 33).

<sup>14</sup> The play was first performed in 1913 after the reign of Elizabeth.

part of the canon, or if other fiction writers had subsequently forgotten her, this image of Anne could have become her legacy.

## **Biography**

Anne certainly remained in the public consciousness. In the early 1800s, biographies of her life began to appear, including Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn, Queen of Henry VIII written in 1821 by Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, a well-known historian and novelist. Benger's portrayal of Anne is exceedingly critical: "In the records of Biography, there is, no character that more exemplifies the vanity of human ambition than that of Anne Boleyn."<sup>15</sup> The biography portrays Anne as a social climber and blames her for the turmoil in the religious policy at that time. It incorporates many impossible quotes between Anne and her close relations, feigning insight into her intimate conversations and relying heavily on assumptions about her character. It is the first in a line of negative portrayals of Anne. However, as a scholarly biography, it holds a position of authority, despite its obvious fictional inventions.

Later on, after Benger's text began to circulate, the lesser-known biographer Benedict Fitzpatrick published Frail Anne Boleyn and Her Fateful Loves with Henry VIII in 1931. In the preface, Fitzpatrick responds to the fictionalizations in Benger's biography by stating "there is no invented dialogue in this book."<sup>16</sup> He claims greater authenticity for himself promising to avoid fictional invention in his biography. However, as the title of the book suggests, Fitzpatrick also projects a negative characterization of Anne. He begins by comparing Anne to her sister, Mary Boleyn, who was also a mistress to the King. Fitzpatrick writes that "Mary's characteristic

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<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Ogilvy Benger, Memoirs of the Life of Anne Boleyn, Queen of Henry VIII, (Philadelphia: Parry and McMillan, 1854) xi.

<sup>16</sup> Benedict Fitzpatrick, Frail Anne Boleyn and Her Fateful Loves with Henry VIII, (New York: Dial Press Inc., 1931).



frailty” did not compare to her “gifted sister.”<sup>17</sup> At first, he describes Anne as ambitious and talented. However, this characterization collapses by the end of the book, when Fitzpatrick describes Anne as desperate and defenseless; she becomes “frail Anne Boleyn.”<sup>18</sup> Towards the end of the book he writes, “It dawned on her that she was to be the chief victim offered for slaughter.”<sup>19</sup> This proves his assertion in the preface false, as he pretends to know her innermost thoughts and feelings. In many ways, he characterizes Anne as completely opposite to Bengler’s portrayal. However, whether a conniving social climber, or a “frail” woman, both portrayals are negative. These unforgiving interpretations may reflect the social climate prior to the feminist movement. Bengler (a female writer) criticizes Anne for being vain in her ambition and wrongheaded in her intervention in state matters. In response, Fitzpatrick characterizes Anne as weak and defenseless; seemingly unable to imagine a woman in a position of power. Both cases emphasize the concept of feminine involvement in politics as problematic.

The biographical works of the 1900s attempt to break from the dramatizations and social implications of the earlier biographies, instead grounding themselves in historical sources. In 1934, Philip W. Sergeant published Anne Boleyn: A Study. Sergeant claims to hold new information about Anne Boleyn from a first hand source, Eustace Chapuys, the imperial ambassador to the Tudor court. Chapuys detailed precisely the events at the court in his correspondence to the emperor of Spain, Charles V. Although this new source of information adds detail to the events of court in the 1530s, its depictions of Anne are extremely unforgiving; owing to Chapuys’s loyalty to his fellow Spaniard, Katherine of Aragon and her daughter Mary. Sergeant describes Chapuys’s writings as “malicious sneers”<sup>20</sup> against Anne. Though Sergeant

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 284.

<sup>20</sup> Philip W. Sergeant, Anne Boleyn: A Study. (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1934) 165.

acknowledges the bias of his source, he relies heavily on it in his work, making claims based on the opinions of a Spanish sympathizer and declaring Anne's competitiveness with Mary as her greatest fault.<sup>21</sup> Yet again, what promises to be a truthful account of Anne Boleyn based on historical fact, is tainted with negativity and bias. Unsurprisingly, many similar biographies written in the past century continue this pattern of characterizing her either in terms of victim or manipulator. The multitude of accounts to choose from, all claiming authority as biographical sources, leads one to ask: can a biography written out of the context of the historical moment reveal the truth?

Historian and Tudor period expert E.W. Ives took on this challenge and finally told Anne's story objectively in his biography Anne Boleyn, which was published in 1986. Of course, history can never be retold perfectly, but Ives claimed a wealth of factual evidence and primary sources including, but not limited to, the correspondence of Chapuys. Ives addresses the attempts of other biographers to unveil Anne's character: "we must finally be defeated in our attempt to penetrate to Anne Boleyn's inner character or her private personality."<sup>22</sup> He describes the futility of attempting to understand her personality due to the lack of evidence. Instead, he approaches biography through "the extrovert world in which she lived."<sup>23</sup> He steps away from her character and recreates the world in which she lived to understand her story.

Other biographies have been printed after Ives, yet his remains unique in its objective contextualization of Anne's life. Thus, Ives demarcates the divide between fiction and historical truth which must always exist. He reveals what other biographers failed to recognize: that it is impossible to know the innermost thoughts and feelings of a person long deceased. This revelation may account for Anne Boleyn's varying incarnations in literature, but it does not

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 123.

<sup>22</sup> E. W. Ives, Anne Boleyn, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1986) vii-viii.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, viii.

explain why she remains at the forefront of popular culture. It does not explain why many people continue to try and recover Anne's character when it is forever lost in history.

## **Six Wives**

It seems that with the more time that passes from Anne's historical period, the more popular she becomes; a paradox proven true by Tudor expert David Starkey's immensely popular 2001 television mini-series and subsequent book, Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII. In terms of time devoted to discussing her relationship with Henry VIII, Starkey privileges Anne over all of the other wives in the series, with the exception of Katherine of Aragon, who was married to the Henry VIII for over twenty years. Starkey tells her story according to the same unchanging facts reported throughout her biographical history, but embellishes them to read more like a historical novel than a biography. This embellishment causes the series to lose the authenticity associated with scholarly biographies. He writes the historical accounts and then comments upon them to add interest. He also openly admits to characterizing Anne negatively:

As far as Henry's second wife, Anne Boleyn is concerned, there was little need nor the opportunity for... fundamental reconsiderations of her character. This was because it has been Anne's fate to be vilified rather than idealized (and enemies, I feel, tend to be rather more honest than friends).<sup>24</sup>

He admits that he will portray her negatively because he believes that past negative characterizations are more likely to be correct. He also pardons himself for taking this stance against her character because Ives has written a "scholarly biograph[y]"<sup>25</sup> that has portrayed her accurately. In other words, since Ives has definitively described Anne through scholarship

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<sup>24</sup> David Starkey, Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII, (New York, HarperCollins, 2003) xxi.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, xxi.

already, Starkey is free to speculate about her. As a consequence, when Starkey dramatized Anne's story on television, he unknowingly facilitated a new resurgence of Anne Boleyn's popularity in the media.

### **Anne Boleyn Goes to Hollywood**

Dramatizations of Anne's life date back nearly to the inception of filmmaking. However, her film appearances almost always correlate with her depictions in new literary works. While her character only made one appearance in cinema in 1920 and none in the 1940s, two films with Anne Boleyn as a main character were released within three years of the publication of Sergeant's biography. Also, as she re-emerged in scholarly debate of the late 1960s through the 1980s in works such as Hester W. Chapman's biography Anne Boleyn, she made six major appearances in film and television after having gone unrepresented for a decade. However, this resurgence in her popularity ended in 1986; the same year that Ives closed Anne Boleyn's personality for debate. After the release of Ives's biography, Anne did not surface in film or television as a major character for fifteen years.<sup>26</sup>

When Starkey opened Anne's character back up for debate in 2001 with his television mini-series "The Six Wives of Henry VIII", he began a new trend in the media. After 2001, Anne Boleyn appeared in eight major television shows and movies in a nine-year span. Every time a new discovery or interpretation of her character emerged, Anne became a media sensation. From a media standpoint, she holds more popularity today than ever before. However, if Ives proved that she could not be characterized truthfully, then why did she suddenly become a popular figure to portray in the media? Unlike the filmmakers of the 1970s who focused most

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<sup>26</sup> Information obtained from the Internet Movie Database.

heavily on producing documentaries, the new generation of filmmakers strayed away from historical truth in favor of fictionalized entertainment.

Justin Chadwick's *The Other Boleyn Girl* opened in 2008, offering a prime example of this trend. Based on the bestselling novel by Philippa Gregory, the story appears to pull from Fitzpatrick's interpretation of Anne's life as it emphasizes her relationship to her sister, Mary (played by Scarlett Johansson). Natalie Portman's performance as Anne Boleyn comes across as manipulative, jealous, and scheming in comparison to her good and simple sister. The film does not pursue historical accuracy. It changes most of Anne's early history, and only portrays the accusation of her adultery and incest with her brother; ignoring the four other suitors. Most importantly, it depicts Anne as deliberately manipulating Henry VIII (Eric Bana) into annulling his marriage to Katherine of Aragon (Ana Torrent) and into breaking with the Roman Catholic Church. Everything in the film illustrates Anne's scheming, which is spurred by sibling rivalry. Ultimately, the anti-heroine's inability to produce a male heir foils her plans. Accusations arise of her having sexual relations with her brother, George Boleyn (Jim Sturgess), which she nearly does in her desperation to conceive a child. In the end, she receives her ultimate comeuppance with a brutal execution scene. Though visually lush, the film overly simplifies its characters and narrative. Thus, it would seem that *The Other Boleyn Girl* remains insignificant; a Hollywood flop centered on depictions of sex, and box office returns based on star power.

However, it is important in one respect: though it portrays Anne as the anti-heroine, it emphasizes her as a *feminist* anti-heroine. Throughout the film, the female characters drive the narrative. In this case, Anne causes Henry VIII to break with the Catholic Church. As there is no definitive historical basis to define Anne Boleyn's character, Chadwick exercises his freedom to build the entire narrative around the understanding of Anne as a strong, independent – albeit evil

– freethinking woman. The value in the film lies in the context of modern feminism. Anne’s historical ambiguity provides flexibility for modern interpretations, however farfetched they may be.

The Showtime television series *The Tudors*, which aired from 2007 to 2010, differs strongly from the less popular *The Other Boleyn Girl*. While equally visually extravagant (portraying endless displays of jewels, feasts, and beautiful actors), *The Tudors* relies heavily on historical fact. It represents the political turmoil of the time in complex detail following a historical reality that could come straight from Ives. The show also refuses to take a strong stance on the character of Anne Boleyn, played by Natalie Dormer. Neither the schemer, nor the innocent victim, Dormer portrays a much more complex and human character compared to past depictions. The show demonstrates her education and intelligence by showing adeptness at languages and by having her take part in political debates with Henry (Jonathan Rhys Meyers), yet it never portrays her as forcing his hand in any direction. Anne is sympathetic and passionate, but not shown to any extreme. She follows a depiction more similar to Ives than Starkey, without embellishment or exaggeration. Dormer provides a more believable version of Anne than Portman’s simplistic rendition, which may be why Dormer’s version is the more memorable of the two.

*The Tudors* marks a new way of looking at history. It breaks from traditional literary history and presents the past as a visual world to be vicariously experienced. The show fails to stray away entirely from melodramatic dramatizations, but despite these over dramatizations, it succeeds at breaking down the complex political world of England, France, and Spain during the Tudor Dynasty. The show makes Anne Boleyn’s historical context understandable to the general public in a way never seen before. However, though historical accuracy in dramatic renditions

may be a promising new way to experience history, it still depends heavily on the literary form. The show clearly draws from Ives in its characterization of Anne and in its realistic depiction of her historical context. It even portrays Eustace Chapuys (Anthony Brophy) as a main character and shows Henry writing his famous love letters to Anne. It is merely an extension of literary tradition, a hyper-real history book. Similarly, *The Other Boleyn Girl* pulls from stereotypes of Anne Boleyn created by Bengler and Fitzpatrick; giving the old types a modern twist.

## **Conclusion**

Anne Boleyn lived in a time of great political strife making her infamous character a prime subject for interest and speculation. Some characterizations are more realistic than others, and many times her persona changes based on the needs of a contemporary audience. Every time she reemerges, historians discover more pieces of the historical puzzle; such as Sergeant finding Chapuys's correspondence or Ives creating a more complete understanding of the historical time. Even Starkey claimed to offer new information about Anne's childhood. Each new biography and characterization builds on the last and claims itself as the most valid, which reflects the process of producing history. History is never only a set of indisputable facts. It is a lost and unrecoverable moment. The process of discovering Anne's personality is the action of recovering history. As Ives explains, some things are impossible to fully recover; yet, the biggest mysteries draw the most attention. This desire for knowledge and understanding keeps Anne as a lasting figure in popular consciousness. The further time passes from the historical moment, the more mysterious her figure becomes, creating an endless process of loss and recovery.