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ALT Wars of the Roses: A Guide to the Women in Shakespeare's First Tetralogy (Especially Richard III) for Fans of Philippa Gregory's White Queen Series

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Since *The Other Boleyn Girl* made such a splash, especially with its 2008 film adaptation starring Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson, novelist Philippa Gregory has turned out book after book of first person female narratives, historical fiction of the era of the early Tudors and the Cousins' War. (See my comment below where Gregory insists that the "Wars of the Roses" is not historical to its time, even though this title has become standard for historians. It is also appropriated for several, different, condensed acting version of Shakespeare's plays, with the three *Henry VI* plays truncated to two.) Now, with film series of both *The White Queen* and *The White Princess,* we have what some consider a fuller pop culture alternative perspective on the women who intersect with the plays that first established Shakespeare's reputation, the tetralogy we know as the three Henry VI plays and *Richard III*.

I have long been a proponent of understanding the history behind the most often acted of Shakespeare's History plays, and have endeavored to explain the pertinent family trees to English students. The discovery, identification, and re-internment of Richard's bones has of course entered classroom discussion. I propose

that we can use the seething rivalry between women that becomes prominent, especially in Emma Frost's film adaptations of this set of Gregory novels, as a way to address some of the difficulties of teaching a single history play. For, in an undergrad Shakespeare survey, this is usually the case: we expose students to each of the genres and may end up choosing just one "representative" history. Though in some ways it may be atypical, I have gravitated towards including *Richard III* as that play.

One clue in the tone and approach of the first film series is *The White Queen's* subtitle: *Men go to Battle / Women Wage War*. We discover right off the starting blocks that the adaptations give intense focus to the ways in which women are married in order to produce a male heir. There are the love matches, the tactical unions, and graphic scenes of birth or still birth; there is forced sex (and in my abstract I ended this last sentence with): This makes us wonder whether we are in a fifteenth century *Handmaid's Tale* nightmare. I will return to a few examples of this premise momentarily.

Each of the Henry VI plays has a few prominent women, but like every Shakespeare play, students need to expect that the proportion of men to women in the cast is 12 or 14 men (of course playing up to 40 male characters) to two or three women and to understand the reason for this, that all female roles were performed by boy apprentice actors.

Dealing with *Richard III* in Historical Context

Gregory's four novels cover almost the same time frame as Shakespeare's tetralogy of the four plays, the 3 parts of *Henry VI* and Richard III. Gregory wrote the first-person account of Elizabeth Woodville's mother, Jaquetta of Luxenborg, out of sequence, after her two first volumes. Yet she places the four connected novels in historical sequence on her website. Shakespearean scholars have determined that he, too, wrote his three Henry plays out of sequence, with *part 1* following parts 2 and 3 (and likely co-authored). More recent complete editions of Shakespeare, notably *The New Oxford* and *Norton* have taken to print them in this new sequence of composition: *2, 3,* then *1 Henry VI*, which could be a bit maddening for the undergrad or for a traditionalist used to the sequence in order of their reign, *King John* first, followed by the four plays of the second tetralogy, then the 3 parts of *Henry VI* and *Richard III* (the first written tetralogy, with *Henry VIII* last, which is as the Folio presents them.

While some parts of *Lady of the Rivers*, the Jaquetta story, are perhaps Gregory's best writing and while Gregory herself has contributed a historical biography of Jaquetta to the volume co-authored with two others, Shakespeare tells this part of his history with three female roles, Joan La Pucelle, the young Margaret of Anjou, and The Countess of Auvergne. (Oh VERgna). In his fifth act of Part 1, Shakespeare manages a brilliant courting scene, where it is clear that the "Speak for yourself (John)" mindset originated. Suffolk woos Margaret on behalf of the king, yet both are falling in love with each other. Suffolk will soliloquize to us that he can betray his king, and in

later segments Margaret will openly mourn his death in front of King Henry VI in the most melodramatic way, cradling his severed head (*2 Henry VI*, 4.4).

Shakespeare, in order to shape his Part 2, places Margaret front and center and adds the witchcraft episode where, to dramatize Eleanor, Duchess of Gloucester's indictment he adds Margery Jourdain and the Wife of Simpcox. Gregory gives us a Jaquetta who "has the sight" but is careful enough to keep clear of Eleanor's more open courting of the dark powers. (She is haunted by the burning of young Joan. She relates a dream of her own husband on the throne; she encourages a conjuring scene.) It becomes too easy in both narratives for Margaret to frame Eleanor and then the good duke Humphrey, her husband's uncle.

The Larger Cast and Strong Women of *Richard III*.

Richard III is one of the earliest plays to insist on a dynamic range of strong women characters: Lady Anne, Queen Elizabeth, Duchess of York, and deposed Queen Margaret (the one character who exists in all four of the connected histories, even though her presence in *Richard III* is ahistorical). There are also the children's roles, "Girl" and "Boy," who are Margaret and her younger brother, Edward, Clarence's children. Then we will need either the same boy actors or another set, playing young Edward, son of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville (only for a brief while Edward V, and his younger brother, Richard, Duke of York the same name and title as his grandfather).

The White Queen books and film series depict each of the principal Shakespearean women but also gives expansive space to Elizabeth's families -- her mother's family, the first sons she had by Lord Grey, and her own growing brood of mostly daughters. Gregory and her adaptor Frost also depict as characters those only mentioned in Shakespeare (Jane Shore, Margaret Beaufort, as well as the young Elizabeth). Briefly: Shakespeare's Richard merely cries out Jane Shore's name (along with Elizabeth's) when he complains the two of them have used witchcraft to wither his arm:

> See how I am bewitched. Behold, mine arm
> Is like a blasted sapling withered up.
> This is that Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
> Consorted with that harlot, strumpet Shore,
> That by their witchcraft thus have marked me. (3.4.73-77)

Gregory has Elizabeth merely narrate the aftermath of her coming out of her confinement to discover that Edward has taken Jane Shore for his mistress. He's bought her a house; everyone knows about it. She marches to her husband and orders it to stop.

But the filmed version? Surprise! Elizabeth discovers Jane Shore in bed with her husband. She cannot even get any support when she takes the complaint to her brother. Then there is Young Elizabeth who is only mentioned, but negotiation for who will marry her looms large in the late part of the play. Richard in the famous act 4 scene 4 wooing scene asks his sister-in-law, her mother, to grant permission to marry his

brother's daughter. (Of course, we know that Shakespeare's Queen Elizabeth will spit back that he is responsible for murdering her brothers).

Margaret Beaufort is perhaps most obscured by the way Shakespeare writes his play. We have to know that Stanley, earl of Derby is her third husband, that late in the play Stanley has to pretend not to defect to Richmond (Margaret's son; he wins at Bosworth to be crowned Henry VII) because Richard is holding hostage Stanley's own son, George Stanley. Richard directly conveys his fear of her when he commands in 4.2, "Stanley, look to your wife." (He does not want Margaret Beaufort communicating with Richmond.)

There is another, perhaps obscure, and often-cut reference. Upon Stanley's first entrance in 1.3, Elizabeth greets him with an insulting reference to his wife:

QUEEN ELIZABETH: The Countess Richmond, good my lord of Darby,
To your good prayers will scarcely say "Amen."
Yet Derby, notwithstanding she's your wife
And loves not me, be you, good lord, assured
I hate not you for her proud arrogance.

STANLEY: I do beseech you, either not believe
The envious slanders of her false accusers,
Or, if she be accused in true report,
Bear with her weakness, which I think proceeds
From wayward sickness and no grounded malice. (1.3.20-29)

The fact that Margaret Beaufort (here in Shakespeare, The Countess Richmond) was tangential to Shakespeare but will prove useful to Gregory's strange and over-wrought disintegration in her later *The White Princess* should not be lost.

While the roles of Queen Elizabeth and Anne are central to development of Richard's wooer status in Richard, we have "overkill" in characters whose purpose seems merely to lament. First there is the Duchess of York, mother to Richard, Clarence, and Edward. Her husband took a prominent role in the Henry plays, but Shakespeare has not portrayed her until now. It becomes obvious, when we get to her presence in Act 4, scene 4, that her lamentation as one of the three voices raised to reinforce the atrocities of Richard is an important counterfoil to his pattern of brutal atrocities. She has a mother's perspective and yet will call him cursed from his womb. (And yes, Richard manages, in asides, to insult her back.) Shakespeare will not use that Duchess of York is a Neville and thus aunt to Warwick. Nor will he use the fact that Richard III and George Duke of Clarence, his older brother, have married sisters, Anne and Isabella, the daughters of Warwick.

Queen Margaret emerges in Part 3 of the Henry plays as menace to Richard Duke of York and his family. It is in York's humiliation scene where, stabbed, decked with a paper crown and shown a kerchief dipped in his dead son Rutland's blood, he cries out (Phillipa Gregory is fond of quoting this to describe Margaret):

> She-wolf of France, but worse than wolves of France,
> Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth!
> How ill-beseeming is it in thy sex

To triumph, like an Amazonian trull,

Upon their woes whom fortune captivates.

(*3 Henry VI*, Act 1 scene 4, 111-115)

Just after this, wounded York cries out:

O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide!

How couldst thou drain the life-blood of the child,

To bid the father wipe his eyes withal,

And yet be seen to bear a woman's face? (1.4.137-40)

(Since Robert Greene would soon after trash Shakespeare as "tiger's heart wrapped in *player's* hide," it might be productive to speculate: Did Shakespeare preserve Margaret's presence in Richard III to *spite* Greene? Did Shakespeare himself play Margaret in her late scenes?) I suspect that the strongest reason for her expansive role (and yes, she is often cut in productions) is that Margaret's purpose is to curse and Cassandra-like, *warn* those are yet to come under Richard's wrath. If we examine not just her role, but references other characters have to her, we see that Shakespeare means her presence to be a rhetorical device, a trope, that comes back in the pattern of those who are on their ways to their deaths. First Rivers, Vaughn, Grey; then Hastings, then Buckingham, all recall her warning from the earlier Act 1. Scene 3. Then there is her massive marshalling of the other women who are nearer to Richard as *mater dolorosa* characters. For in act 4, scene 4, it is her rehearsal of all the deaths Richard has caused her family that spurs her to recall to Queen Elizabeth and Duchess of York what they, too have lost. This allusion, grieving mother, *mater dolorosa,* is assigned to the scene

by Hugh Richmond when he observes that the play can be constructed around biblical history. Satan tempting Eve is wooing of Anne, Cain killing Abel is Clarence's murder, Slaughter of the innocents is the death of the Princes, and so forth. Richmond, of course is the warrior Christ.

Certainly, to aid in comprehending the sprawling *Richard III,* I use Margaret as anchor to the play's structure. I would also suggest some key scenes of the Henry plays as back story: the two wooing scenes, the scene of Margaret's humiliation of Richard Duke of York, the very next scene when two of his three sons experience the perihelion, and Richard's murder of Henry VI.

Gregory's *White Queen* volume begins at the point in Shakespeare's *Henry VI* part 3 when Lady Elizabeth Grey is making her suit to King Edward IV. Both Shakespeare's Act 3 scene 2 and the opening of *White Queen* document historical fact and show, in very dramatic ways, the attraction Edward has for Elizabeth. He's not so much listening to a widow plead for restoration of her dead husband's fortune, but seeing in Elizabeth a potential bedfellow. Shakespeare turns the scene comic and lays the foundation for why Edward's two brothers will find the Woodville family sinister. George (Duke of Clarence) and Richard Duke of Gloucester speak asides to each other which undercut the Elizabeth / Edward courtship. It is brilliant stage craft, and an important foundation for understanding what will emerge as a dominant tactic in Richard III, where two more "wooing" scenes sparkle with vituperative verbal sparring, stichomythia abounding. (Parenthetically, this *3 Henry VI* scene ends with Richard's longest of all soliloquies, in which he first clearly pronounces his sinister ambitions.)

Yes, there are other aspects of the last half of *Henry VI* part 3 that make it important to summarize as a lead in to *Richard III*. And sometimes I refer students to my review of the *Wars of the Roses* as staged by Alabama Shakespeare Festival. But we learn a great deal if we know how Richard's "Evil" is a result of witnessing his brother Edward IV woo Elizabeth Woodville. And we can appreciate better his own wooing of Anne.

What Shakespeare greatly reduces is given almost a fierce counter interpretation in Gregory. We have a more complete portrait of middle son Clarence marrying Isabel, Anne's older sister, defecting to Warwick, and more or less disintegrating into paranoia. Queen Elizabeth almost immediately sees how untrustworthy Clarence is. In Anne's narrative volume, Clarence willingly chooses death once Edward arrests him for treason, and chooses the method of death: drowning in the malmsey butt of wine. Gregory goes to some pains to whitewash Richard, just to be different, we presume. The "intrigue" over who killed the Princes thus gets extremely spun out.

The film depicts Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, labeled in history as Kingmaker complete with his family (wife and two daughters, the older of whom, Isabel or Isabella, married George, Duke of Clarence and who is absent in Shakespeare's version.) We get a vivid picture of the "sleeping" King Henry VI, and such a portrait of the large Woodville family that it fills in what in the later plays of the tetralogy, is only a brief sketch suggesting unexplained antagonism for the widow Grey (whose first husband fought for the Lancastrians) who would be so forward as to flatter Edward for attention. We also get Edward IV's growing family of daughters and the long awaited-

for first son through a series of birthing events—very emphasized in the films. There is one still birth and one in which Margaret Beaufort is a surprise assistant midwife, who holds Elizabeth's just born first male child for the longest time until it begins to breath and bawl.

(As I have hinted at above, Phillipa Gregory's *Lady of the Rivers* was written out of sequence, and though its history overlaps the early action of the first tetralogy, I may have to relegate to an aside the treatment of the mother of Elizabeth Woodville, Jacquetta of Luxemburg. She is there for the imprisoning then burning of Joan of Arc and is in proximity to the action that indicts good Duke Humphrey's Wife Eleanor for witchcraft, cautious to be careful of displaying any of her own powers of either foresight or magic, or possibly merely a reminder of the workings of the wheel of fortune. Alas, despite the excision of the richer history that puts Jaquetta close to Margaret Anjou, we get--in the film series, especially--a Jacquetta who is deeply invested in spells and curses. Even though the actress Janet McTeer gives important weight to the role, the string-casting and pieces of paper folded into potent curses diminishes her screen power.)

So, Margaret of Anjou is Shakespeare's anchor through the four plays. (Margaret gets her own volume in a Susan Higginbotham authored novel, *The Queen of Last Hopes: The Story of Margaret of Anjou.*) We do get enough of Margaret to establish her as briefly ascendant in Warwick's schemes. Warwick, having married his first daughter Isabel off to George, Duke of Clarence, and promising him further power if he aligns

against his brother and with Margaret, will then marry his younger daughter to Margaret and Henry VI's son, Edward, the Lancaster Prince of Wales.

Why do I suggest that a proto feminist novelist interested in uncovering the importance of the women's lives near the center of power reminds us of the dystopian *Handmaid's Tale*? George Duke of Clarence, as played in the adaptation is quite the creep; he forces himself on Isabel as if to strengthen a command to produce a male child or else. (Isabel's first is a girl; she also is mother to Edward. Both offspring become prominent in the *White Princess* sequel, but Edward will be presented as a simple-minded lad.) Shakespeare's Richard describes this Edward, son of Clarence: "The boy is foolish, and I fear not him" in 4.2.53. Isabel will die during what historians document as her fourth child-birthing. (But George thinks it is witchcraft.) Then, there is Anne's narration of her first night with her first husband. It is at the end of Gregory's year 1470 chapter of *The Kingmaker's Daughter.* She is fourteen, and all her older sister will tell Anne is that her first night of marriage, for her, it was horrible:

> "I don't know what to do," I say awkwardly. "I am sorry. Nobody has told me. I asked Isabel but she would say nothing. I couldn't ask my mother. . ."
>
> He sighs, as if this is yet another burden that has been put on him by this essential alliance of our parents. "You don't do anything," he says. "You just lie there."
>
> "But I . . ."

> "You lie there and you don't say anything," he repeats loudly. "The best thing you can do for me, right now, is to say nothing. Most of all don't remind me who you are, I can't stand the thought of that . . ." and then he heaves up in the bed and drops on me with his full weight, plunging into me as if he were stabbing me with a broadsword." (*Kingmaker's Daughter,* 183-4 large print)

I have read online criticism by her readers that Gregory did not stress enough that these women were virtually child brides. But I think she gets her point off well enough. Margaret Beaufort conceived at age twelve, and Gregory paints her predicament in this way:

> Every night, he gets into bed beside me, and takes a handful of my nightgown as if it were not the finest Valenciennes lace hemmed by my little-girl stitches, and holds it aside so he can push himself against me. Every night I grit my teeth and say not one word of protest, not even a whimper of pain, as he takes me without kindness or courtesy; and every night, moments later, he gets up from my bed and throws on his gown and goes without a word of thanks or farewell. I say nothing, not one word, from beginning to end, and neither does he. If it were lawful for a woman to hate her husband, I would hate him as a rapist. But hatred would make the baby malformed, so I make sure I do not hate him, not even in secret. (*Red Queen,* 30)

Significantly, Gregory permits Elizabeth Woodville to resist the forceful sexual humiliation at the beginnings of their own narrated volumes, *The White Queen,* and *The White Princess,* respectively. For the older Elizabeth, we have had a lot of mutual attraction, but the moment Edward gets his Elizabeth alone, he turns aggressive:

> I am panting with desire, and then I feel, unexpectedly, a sudden rush of anger at the realization that he is no longer embracing me but forcing me, holding me down as if I were some slut behind a haystack. He is pulling up my gown as if I were a whore; he is pushing his knee between my legs as if I have consented, and my temper makes me so furiously strong that I thrust him away again and then, on his thick leather belt, I feel the hilt of his dagger.
>
> He has my gown pulled up, and he is fumbling with his jerkin, his hose; in a moment it will be too late for complaints. I draw his dagger out of the scabbard. At the hiss of the metal, he rears back to his knees in shock, and I wriggle away from him and spring up, with the dagger unsheathed, the blade bright and wicked in the last rays of the sun.
>
> He is on his feet in a moment, weaving and alert, a fighter. "Do you draw a blade on your king?" he spits. "Do you know treason when you do it, madam?"
>
> "I draw a blade on me, on myself," I say quickly. I hold the sharp point to my throat and I see his eyes narrow. "I swear, if you come one step closer, if you come one inch closer, I will cut my throat before you

> and bleed to death here on the ground where you would have dishonored me." (*White Queen*, Large Print, 43-4)

Sometimes it is challenging to read these sections without recourse to a tone that suggests the over-seriousness of the moment can also come off as parody. And perhaps that is what keeps us debating the contributions of Gregory. Despite Richard's theatrics to Anne in Shakespeare's wooing scene where Anne is given the ultimatum: "Take up the sword, or take up me," we can admire Shakespeare's rendering of dialogue for its dazzling language (1.2.169). Gregory likely would not have been conscious of it, but in fact her Edward / Elizabeth dispute *does* replicate a knife wielding scene by Countess of Salisbury in *Edward III,* the anonymous play of 1596 that has been attributed to Shakespeare:

> Resolved to be dissolved; and therefore this:
> Keep but thy word, great King, and I am thine.
> Stand where thou dost – I'll part a little from thee –
> And see how I will yield me to thy hands.
> Here by my side doth hang my wedding knives:
> Take thou the one, and with it kill thy queen,
> And learn by me to find her where she lies;
> And with this other I'll dispatch my love,
> Which now lies fast asleep within my heart.
> When they are gone, then I'll consent to love. –
> Stir not, lascivious King, to hinder me.

> My resolution is more nimbler far
> Than thy prevention can be in my rescue;
> And if thou stir, I strike. Therefore, stand still,
> And hear the choice that I will put thee to:
> Either swear to leave thy most unholy suit
> And never henceforth to solicit me,
> Or else, by heaven, this sharp-pointed knife
> Shall stain thy earth with that which thou wouldst stain,
> My poor chaste blood. Swear, Edward, swear,
> Or I will strike, and die before thee here. (*Edward III,* 2.2.167-187)

(Parenthetically, I had the opportunity to publish my review of the Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern's production of *Edward III* in *EMLS*; it has since been quoted in the *Oxford Shakespeare*'s prefatory material to the play.)

Gregory goes against established history in bold ways. She assigns to Queen Elizabeth the overt strategy of swapping a changeling for her second son, Richard Duke of York, preparing for the Perkin Warbeck events in a way that gives this historical pretender who threatens Henry VII in the later *White Princess* volume a totally invented yet now very believable credibility. She abandons any suggestion that historians record, that the murder of confined Henry VI was excessively bloody; Queen Elizabeth secretly witnesses a different way he is killed, jointly smothered by Edward and Richard. We also get clues that treat as overkill the young Princess Elizabeth becoming attracted to

Richard before Anne dies. "Young woman who gazes after male power figure" becomes the filmic, visual equivalent of the novels' long first-person meditations. The film version makes it quite clear that young Elizabeth and Richard sleep together, desiring each other. But around the scene is suspicion: Is Richard merely whoring her to make her undesirable to Henry Tudor (just in case he loses on the battlefield)? Shakespeare, of course, only uses young Elizabeth as referent, when is refining his tactic of "wooing scene" in the middle section of Richard's 4.4. The filmed version of Gregory's depiction of Anne Neville has a youthful and extremely short Anne conscious of her childhood acquaintance with Richard; it dramatizes a scene where he rescues her from being pawed to death just after the battle that has killed her husband Edward Lancaster (She's been trying to cry out, "I am the Kingmaker's Daughter!" It falls on deaf ears.)

Shakespeare's Richard famously flatters Lady Anne over the dead body of her father-in-law, while it shockingly bleeds afresh. (Shakespeare has staged the scene of Richard as sole murderer of Henry VI, which again Gregory cannot accept.) Shakespeare's Richard and Anne hurl verbal daggers at each other until Lady Anne cannot quite act upon Richard's ultimatum to kill him or marry him. Poetic rebuttal also emboldens Shakespeare's Queen Elizabeth in *Richard III*'s second wooing scene, in which the mother is able to extract herself from any promised marriage to her daughter yet leave Richard momentarily gloating that he has bested her. I frequently point out that these two wooing scenes anchor the two phases of the Shakespeare's *Richard III*: Richard in ascendency; Richard beginning his decline (perhaps still unaware of the rise of his adversaries).

Gregory needs to keeps what happened to the two princes in the tower mysterious so that a concocted curse on their murderer/s can be prolonged. Assuredly, that angle of "Who killed the Princes?" is more in keeping with revisionist history and with Josephine Tey's playful and influential *Daughter of Time* than with those prolific "Tudor Apologists" -- that sequence of Polydore Vergil, Sir Thomas More, Edward Hall, Raphael Holinshed -- the historians upon whom Shakespeare had to rely for his dark portrait of a ruthless Richard. *The White Queen*'s visualization of the contention between the houses of York and Lancaster adds some spice to the individualized narratives. It not only tests the version commissioned by Henry VII the first Tudor; it almost prides itself on Alternative Facts. In doing so, the film series becomes a showcase that requires more intense grounding in Shakespeare's skewed sources than we may have previously assumed.

Simultaneous with the "who killed the Princes?" motif is the blatant changeling plot where Elizabeth narrates (and in the film we see) the mother select and muffle in scarves her changeling -- a true street urchin -- in order to send her second son abroad (instead of join his brother in the tower), thus boosting higher into truth what in the historical accounts is skeptical speculation for a "Perkin Warbeck" pretender plot that will be the centerpiece to the *White Princess* volume. (So, alternatively, we have Queen Elizabeth worry aloud, "Who killed my sons?" but who has to also speak semi-privately, "Who killed my boy?" (singular). Since Young Elizabeth sees the changeling swap, her loyalties get torn in more than two ways. Gregory also makes the young Elizabeth more

in love with Richard than history permits. And she gives young Elizabeth a presence at Anne's deathbed.

This is of course consistent with Gregory finding as many female / female antagonism plots as she can. And, of course, she goes overboard. Queen Elizabeth and Margaret Beaufort are writing to each other, presumably attempting to out-negotiate each other. In other places, sisters strike down sisters. Late in the *White Princess*, poor Margaret Beaufort is exposed for being the murderer of the York Princes. To prevent her brother-in-law Jasper Tudor from summoning her son the king to him on his deathbed, she smothers him with a pillow, despite knowing it will catch up with her: she's seen her hands turn the washbowl water red and run from the room. (Echoes of Lady Macbeth.) Nightmares abound. Near the very end of *White Princess*'s (true to the narrative, but gruesome, as played), we relive a different version of Richard's burial when Henry VII confesses that he permitted--even encouraged--Richard to be buried alive!

Gregory's two best novels are at the fringes of the first tetralogy, in my opinion. They are *The King's Curse* and *Lady of the Rivers. Lady of the Rivers,* set at the earliest years of the tetralogy, is narrated by Elizabeth Woodville's mother, Jaquetta. Through her eyes, we get to witness the burning of Joan of Arc and the humiliation of Eleanor, good Duke Humphrey's wife. Gregory presents Jaquetta with having almost more powers of witchcraft and placing spells than Eleanor. Her other important function is to

befriend Margaret of Anjou, at least until it is time to switch sides when her daughter thrusts herself in front of Edward IV.

Margaret [Plantagenent] Pole's story is first person narration of *The King's Curse.* Margaret of course does appear in Shakespeare's Richard. She is the daughter of Clarence, in the brief scene where she asks her grandmother why she weeps. The children have been lied to once, believing Richard's affection, and are lied to by aunt and grandmother as the scene continues into a chanted lament. In Gregory's novel, through Margaret's eyes, we witness the death (by sweating sickness) of Prince Arthur, while the young couple, this crown prince and Catherine of Arragon, then the gradual demise of Margaret's Pole family under the paranoid Henry VIII. Since Emma Frost's version of Margaret is put in her place by Elizabeth of York near the end of *White Princess,* when she is told to take up embroidery, it seems fitting that Cromwell's cruel treatment indicts her on her embroidering a Rose too Yorkish for Henry's tastes. The botched beheading of Margaret, told in her first-person voice, is one of Philippa Gregory's more thrilling endings.

Endings are in the Gregory first person novels, on the whole, much less satisfying than *The Other Boleyn Girl*, although perhaps I would elevate *The King's Curse,* where we get a thrilling perception of Clarence's young daughter, grown into the eldest of Henry VIII's victims*,* squirming away from her executioner, to no avail. We have to end Lady Anne's *Kingmaker's Daughter* volume before the battle of Bosworth Field, of course, and Gregory gives Anne the dream vision of her father Warwick's glory (but it is gruesome; she imagines him killing his own horse in order to prove to his

soldiers that he will stay with them and fight, not retreating from battle attempting to get to his horse as he is killed at Barnet Field).

Anne's demise as told by Gregory is far less satisfying as fiction than the thrilling ending of Jean Plaidy's *The Reluctant Queen* (aka Victoria Holt, aka Eleanor Hibbert), where we get through Anne's perception the sense that she is being slowly poisoned, and by Richard.) Gregory's *White Queen*'s narrator, Elizabeth Woodville, schemes and dreams of a Bosworth Field victory by Richard, even as she shows some diplomatic reaching out to Margaret. For Margaret Beaufort's volume, *The Red Queen,* Philippa Gregory has to resort to omniscient voice so that the blow by blow of how the battle at Bosworth turned out is given enough historical weight (and she disappointingly underplays the Stanleys throwing their forces to Henry -- Shakespeare's Richmond -- at the last minute.) She includes such sentences as: "Richard's cavalry had never seen such a thing done before. No one had ever seen such a thing before in England" (*Red Queen*, Large Print, 548). These outbursts and the accompanying details violate what Gregory, in the preface to her History volume, describes as her "recipe" or formula: to take each of her volumes just up to the point of climax, from a strictly first-person perspective. As I indicate in my annotation on the Gregory and Jones entry in my bibliography, Gregory's recipe includes "forgetting" the true history in order to keep a true first-person perspective (Gregory and Jones, 15).

I do give Gregory credit for incorporating into all three narratives of those last months of Richard's reign the detail I should have recognized as a brilliant appropriation of history: the solar eclipse of 16 March 1485, on the day that Anne Neville died. Even

Wikipedia includes this in Anne's sketch biography. How did I miss it, having taught Richard's Lady Anne for so long, even having once directed the wooing scene? Perhaps because there are just over 100 lines between Richard's line "Give out / That Anne my wife is sick and like to die" (4.2. 54-55) and his declaration "Anne my wife hath bid the world goodnight" (4.3.39). (And, of course he is busy ordering the deaths of his nephews.)

Anyway, there it is, in Gregory's three overlapping novels, stitching together the three narratives, although one might argue that, without the filmic rendering of it, the moment, revisited three times *Rashomon*-style, does seem to get lost in the shuffle: Margaret Beaufort, presented as obsessively prayerful, is looking for a sign favorable to her son. Elizabeth Woodville is monitoring the eclipse from a different perspective, but we get lost in the way her younger daughter Bridgett also tries to see God in the sky. We then cross cut to see Anne, on her deathbed, fading, just getting a report from the window. Of course, immediately after the report of Anne's death, in Elizabeth's narrative, we get the rumor that Richard may have poisoned her. Well, we will just have to put off any promise Elizabeth made to Richard. It will have to come down to who wins the battle.

Conclusion

For some readers the three closely connected novels make a nice puzzle. For others, separate volumes whose first-person narrators provide their take on a small slice of history turns into maddening overkill. Emma Frost's only option in the filmic

adaptation is to reconstruct the dramatic framework that culminates in the Tudor victory at Bosworth. This might anger Gregory, yet her main dispute with Shakespeare is not so much that he had no choice but to follow Tudor apologists, but that he dared to write a fictional garden scene (*1 Henry VI*, 2.4) explaining the plucking of symbolic white rose and red. Ever since, she complains in more than one public appearance or interview, this period of history has been labeled "Wars of the Roses." This, she is so confident, is ahistorical; she insists on "Cousins War." Rebranding it as such seems not to have caught on. Leanda De Lisle's blog post in the *Catholic Herald* shows the historian's aversion to this. And, of course, for American audiences, Kevin Phillips has entitled his history of the three much later wars, starting with the Commonwealth under Oliver Cromwell, *The Cousins Wars*, to show linkage between Americans and their English kin.

Critics have ridiculed some of the repetitive nature of the narratives. And, with *The White Princess,* the dramaturgy markedly devolves into coarse and parody-inducing melodrama. Some commentators of the series like to pick apart the oddities; some seem almost addicted to the characters as if this could be a long-running series. In fact, the two DVD disks of the 8 episodes of *White Princess* are labeled "The Complete *First* Season." The last episode ends where Gregory's volume ends; yet the film treatment portrays Elizabeth of York as evil incarnate. (I also think she is made up to look in her late episodes like an extremely sinister version of Ivanka Trump!) Predictably, the film adaptors have to give Elizabeth agency. Remarkably, it is she only who can speak

Spanish at the Spanish court when the Isabella is setting conditions on how daughter Katherine of Aragon will be allowed to marry Arthur.

It is Elizabeth who devises and sets the fire in the king's wardrobe, and it is presented explicitly as a tactic to allow her brother "Perkin" escape. It is she who selects a stand-in when Perkin is first hung. It is she, who once the first fake attempt fails, decides (an ultimatum being sent as secret communication, just to her, by the Spanish ambassador) that both her cousin and brother must die. (If we really know our history, we know this Spanish ultimatum to execute any who could by blood claim some proximity to the throne was true, yet it was hardly conveyed secretly, only to "Lizzie.") Add to this the utter devolution of Margaret Beaufort, and we get quite a dark progression. Maggie is given her sinister side, as well. "Love to the Death" is scrawled across the poster / film image for the series on IMDB: the music underscores its sick sweetness as Lizzie and Henry renegotiate their relationship.

It is clear that Philippa Gregory has moved on from her Tudor series. Likewise, a reading public has short attention spans. Most of the books of the series are available at discount through *Thriftbooks*. The early years of the "Alt Right" and "Alternative Facts" of the Trump White House have given way to a divided country. We have gravitated to teaching Shakespeare remotely, and the ways we answer questions or delve into historical background to teach a history play have shifted. Nevertheless, there is intrigue for the remakes of Shakespeare and the wider material related to characters he dramatized that invite our explorations.

Most students grasp without too much extra work that Shakespeare's Richard is *not* the Richard of History. Why not just read more history? We can get to that, eventually. (The Richard III Society site and their companion site for students, Wars of the Roses, would be a good start, as would Luminarium's Encyclopedia, maintained by Anniina Jokinen.) Yet I maintain that the pleasures and frustrations of identifying those fantastical fictional abuses of history are worthy diversions, especially in these times in which fictional portraits of historical and literary characters have become so popularized.

Sources

A. Philippa Gregory novels of most importance to Shakespeare's History plays, the first tetralogy:

The Lady of the Rivers. 2010. Jaquetta of Luxemborg; she marries Bedford and then Woodville; is sister in law to Catherine Valois, widow of Henry V, serves Margaret of Anjou when Margaret is queen, makes a lot of being descended from the River goddess (Rivers is an assumed title for the Woodvilles). Vivid recollection of Joan of Arc from her youth. At first befriends but then stays clear of Eleanor, Duchess and wife to Humphrey.

The White Queen. 2009. Elizabeth Woodville; queen to Edward IV, mother of Elizabeth of York, Edward V, Richard Duke of York whom, in Gregory's version she prevents from joining Edward in the tower. Thus Perkin Warbeck is more than a pretender. This novel ends with Elizabeth hoping Richard wins the battle of Bosworth Field.

The Kingmaker's Daughter. 2012. Anne Neville; wife first of Edward of Lancaster, Prince of Wales, son of Henry VI and Queen Margaret of Anjou. Ends with her death March 1485, months before Bosworth. Gregory mentions in an interview she had thought to call this Kingmakers Daughter*s*, until late in the conceptualization. The film series makes up for lack of narrative attention to Isabel. Ending is Anne's death on day of eclipse (March 1485), then her dream of her father, who we learn here has killed his own horse as his display of purpose to his troops, at the battle of Barnet Field.

The Red Queen. 2010. Margaret Beaufort. Begins with her as a child bride (first marriage dissolved). First husband Edmund Tudor dies before her Henry is born, when Margaret is thirteen. She outlives a second husband and is married to Stanley, Earl of Derby, at

beginning of Shakespeare's play. Her volume ends just after her son Henry Tudor (Richmond) becomes Henry VII at Bosworth, with long accounts in omniscient voice of the battle.

The White Princess. 2013. Elizabeth of York. From just after Battle of Bosworth field 1485 when she is put together with Henry Tudor through the volume's end in 1599, with the execution of Edward Warwick (her cousin, and Clarence's son) and of Perkin whom Gregory makes the real Richard of York, her younger brother.

The King's Curse. 2014. Narrated by Margaret Pole (She is the "Girl" in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, asking why her grandmother weeps.) Although the film series of *White Princess* makes this daughter of Clarence and Isabel Neville a significant presence in that work's 1585-1599 time-frame, Margaret's own volume starts after this, recounts Prince Arthur's death, and is primarily about her own family and how she maintains allegiance to Henry VIII's first wife and his daughter. Gregory changes history to doctor what Margaret is accused of: embroidering a white rose. It ends with her botched execution.

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and provides a valuable resource for new division of the three *Henry* plays to two. Where the two children of Clarence are scripted, this text assigns the roles to young Richard Duke of York and Princess Elizabeth.

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Studies, vol. 13, no .3 (January 2008) 23. Paragraphs 11-15, http://purl.oclc.org/emls/13-3/revroses.htm.

Gregory, Philippa, David Baldwin, and Michael Jones. *The Women of the Cousins' War: The Duchess, the Queen, and the King's Mother.* Touchstone 2011. Gregory has a useful introduction. While each of the fiction volumes has a partial family tree, they are done best and most completely in this work of non-fiction. Gregory's biography is of "Jaquetta of Luxenbourg," with Baldwin authoring "Elizabeth Woodville" and Jones author of "Margaret Beaufort." One sub section of her Introduction is entitled "The Recipe" (17-18, in which she presumes to lay down her boundaries: tell a story chronologically, with no more fiction than the facts allow). Yet an earlier example shows some of this at work:

> This (the moment where Mary Boleyn thinks her sister Anne would escape execution) is a moment where I (speaking as Mary Boleyn) am absolutely convinced that my sister will survive, that my former lover Henry VIII will let her go. The tension and then pathos of the execution scene are based on the history but draw all their energy from the fact that it is written from the point of view of Mary, who is expecting a pardon not a death. To write this scene as a novelist, I had to "forget" what I knew of the history. (15)

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C. Films:

The White Queen. Originally on BBC One. A three-disk set, 10 episodes. Released 2013. JSU owns this on DVD.

The White Princess. 2017. Two disks labeled "The Complete First Season." 8 episodes. Aired on Starz. Accessed by Netflix subscription.

Shakespeare: The Hollow Crown: The Wars of the Roses (Second season title.) With Benjamin Cumberbatch as Richard, Judi Dench as Duchess of York. Aired on PBS in America, ending on December 25, 2016. Blue Ray disk.

Shakespeare: An Age of Kings. The BBC boxed set of 5 disks. Dis 3 contains *Henry V* in two parts and the First hour of *Henry VI*: Red Rose and the White. Disk 4 covers hours 2, 3, 4, of *Henry VI*: "The fall of the Protector," "The Rabble from Kent," "The Morning's

War." Disk 5 is the conclusion of *Henry VI*: "The Sun in Splendor," followed by two parts of *Richard III*: "Dangerous Brother," "The Boar Hunt."

Two full productions of the tetralogy stream at JSU:

Henry VI parts 1, 2, 3, and *Richard III,* presented by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Time-Life Television; produced by Cedric Messina and Jonathan Miller; directed by Jane Howell; [written] by William Shakespeare. Aired on PBS in the early 1980s; 2000 is likely the date it streams at *Ambrose Video*. Also on DVD. Ron Cook plays Richard.

Henry VI, House of Lancaster. Films Media Group, 1991, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=96572&xtid=2774. 150 min. Accessed June 15, 2017.

Henry VI, House of York. Films Media Group, 1990, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=96572&xtid=2775. 162 min. Accessed June 16, 2017.

Richard III. Andrew Jarvis preforms Richard III. Films Media Group, 1990, fod.infobase.com/PortalPlaylists.aspx?wID=96572&xtid=2776. 208 min. Accessed June 17, 2017.

The last three stream at *Films on Demand* and are part of the series *Wars of the Roses* (7 parts total), not to be confused with the Barton version. Clarence's children are eliminated from this production. *House of Lancaster* ends with news of the death of Suffolk, for which Margaret is mournful, cradling his severed head, nearly as scripted in Barton's version and matching Shakespeare's *2 Hen. VI*, 4.4. Last two lines are King Henry's, at end of *2 Hen VI*, 4.9.: "Come, wife, let's in and learn to govern better; / For yet may England curse my wretched reign."

Film versions of just *Richard III* have also been recorded by Laurence Olivier and Ian McKellen.

Al Pachino's *Looking for Richard* and *NOW: In the Wings on a World Stage* featuring Kevin Spacey as Richard are contrasting approaches to capturing highlights interspersed with commentary. American Film Institute has released a DVD of the silent *Richard III,* said to be the earliest surviving full-length film.

ADDENDA:

A note on Shakespeare's use of Cousin: In *Richard III*, Richard addresses Buckingham no less than four times as "cousin." We should know that this form of address is loosely used in Shakespeare to mean different relatives. Richard addresses each of his nephews as cousin, and Duchess of York addresses her grandchildren as cousins. When Gregory insists on Cousins War, it is not this generation she is referring to, but the immediate grandchildren of Edward III.

Neither Shakespeare nor Gregory seem all that interested in fact that Richard's brother's wife is the older sister of Buckingham's wife, Katherine Woodville. Of course, Richard has in-law relationships with his other brother's wife, for Richard's Anne and Clarence's Isabel are sisters. But Susan Higginbotham remedies that with both a historical volume on the Woodvilles, and an entire novel devoted to the last of living of the Woodvilles. Most of this work, *The Stolen Crown*, is narrated in Katherine's voice (though we do get a few chapters narrated by "Harry," Shakespeare's Buckingham.) I find it a refreshing and richer treatment of some of the same characters. (And she also does the death of Anne on the day of the March 16 1485 eclipse -- better, I think, than the three versions Gregory weaves together.)

Woodville as sponsor of Caxton and English Printing: I learned another fascinating tidbit from history by researching for the paper. Anthony Woodville, Elizabeth's brother, financed the printing press brought to England. It is he, Anthony

Woodville, who gets his name on the caption when he and Tyndale present the King a copy of Chaucer that is so famous as an engraving. Aniina Jokinen posts the image on her profile of Anthony Woodville, second duke of Rivers, at her luminarium dot org encyclopedia profile of Woodville (Jokinen). He does not get much attention in either Gregory or Shakespeare. He is one of the three (Rivers Vaughn Grey) whom Richard III first executes.

Additional scholarship and other novelizations: The Gregory novels are part of a wider trend: In *Wolf Hall* and its sequel, *Bring Up the Bodies*, Hilary Mantel's invents a Thomas Cromwell perspective to depict the excesses of Henry VIII. The prolific Eleanor Hibbert, writing primarily under the pseudonym Jean Plaidy has written 11 novels in her Queens of England series, 14 titles in her Plantagenet Saga, 11 others as her Tudor Saga, and that does not begin to account for all her work. Susan Higginbotham authors historical novels of Elizabeth Woodville's sister Katherine (who married Buckingham -- and that's why Shakespeare's Richard calls him "Cousin"! --) and of Margaret of Anjou. Gregory and Higginbotham even follow up their novelized versions with non-fiction accounts of the Woodville and Beaufort families. There are other women historians who have made strong contributions, and Gregory always makes a point of including a non-fiction reading list. She acknowledges her wild take on Perkin Warbeck would not have been possible without Anne Wroe's true scholarship. I have persuaded close friends to become interested in her brand, but have also discovered that some could not get past her excesses, or that they found them interesting for two or three novels, but quickly became satiated by the formulaic

pattern. Gregory has a wide readership, but to me her brand seems to be as cursed as it is embraced. I find times when her on-line presence—recorded appearances, interviews—website clips—conveys a sense that "I alone" am the novelist who uses history best. Yet I think she is also enthusiastic to inspire future generations of what she considers herself, a radical historian. (This is based more on what the department of History at University of Suffolk was emphasizing when she studied there, not what she alters so unacceptably that real historians cringe.)

About the author:

Joanne E. Gates has taught Shakespeare and other specialties at Jacksonville State University in Jacksonville, Alabama for over thirty years. Her published performance reviews, including Alabama Shakespeare's *Wars of the Roses* and *Edward III* produced at Atlanta Shakespeare Tavern are on line at *Early Modern Literary Studies*. She contributed to Bernice Kliman's *Approaches to Teaching Hamlet* and has presented on Shakespeare at Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association and at the Teaching Shakespeare interest group of Popular Culture Association of the South.

A version of this paper was presented at South Atlantic Modern Language Association, November 5, 2017. It was also presented at JSU the following week.

Abstract:

Since *The Other Boleyn Girl* made such a splash, especially with its 2008 film adaptation starring Natalie Portman and Scarlett Johansson, novelist Philippa Gregory has turned out book after book of first person female narratives, historical fiction of the era of the early Tudors and the Cousins' War. (Gregory has an aversion to calling it "Wars of the Roses" but seems to be the sole voice against that classification.) With the film series of *The White Queen* released in 2013, we have what some consider a fuller pop culture alternative perspective on the women who intersect with the plays that first established Shakespeare's reputation, the tetralogy we know as the three *Henry VI* plays and *Richard III*. The first film series incorporates action of Gregory's volumes *The*

Lady of the Rivers, The White Queen, The Red Queen, The Kingmaker's Daughter and directly overlaps Shakespeare's action in his first written tetralogy. A later series, *The White Princess*, was developed and released on Starz, 2017. We can use the seething rivalry between women that becomes prominent, especially in Emma Frost's film adaptations, as a way to address some of the difficulties of teaching a single history play. If, indeed, the historical novelist has accomplished her task, she will send the reader to the richer historical sources, just as the student of the history plays will want to know how and from what the dramatist has shaped his story. The detailed sources consulted for this paper include comments on films available in the JSU Library.

Keywords:

William Shakespeare, Philippa Gregory, The White Queen, Wars of the Roses, Richard III. Emma Frost, Historical Fiction.