

# Media

## 'Fair looks and a kind heart' not enough

By C.S. Morrissey

"Divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived," is how I teach students to remember the fates of Henry VIII's six wives (Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn were the first two).

Christina Fahlman and Tia Glenn-Cooke are two of my students at Redeemer Pacific College who are learning about their Catholic faith, along with subjects like philosophy and Latin. The B.C. Catholic sent them to review *The Other Boleyn Girl* during their midterm break.

**Christina:** This film is set in the 1500s, during the years that King Henry VIII reigned over England.

**Tia:** The story of Henry VIII is a popular one right now, and I have been a fan of it since elementary school. *The Other Boleyn Girl* gives us a fresh perspective on it.

**Christina:** The Duke of Norfolk is the mastermind behind the plan to get Anne into the court of King Henry as his mistress, in order that he and the Boleyn family will remain in favour in society.

**Tia:** The film introduces Mary, the younger Boleyn sister, who catches the eye and heart of the notorious king first.

**Christina:** To Norfolk's delight, the king takes a fancy to Mary Boleyn, which then causes a rivalry between the two sisters.

**Tia:** The rivalry between Mary (played by Scarlett Johansson) and her older and more

ambitious sister, the famed Anne Boleyn (played by Natalie Portman)...

**Christina:** ...ultimately leads to the divorce of King Henry and Catherine of Aragon, the beginning of the English Reformation, and the eventual coronation of Anne Boleyn.

**Tia:** I went into the movie with my heart pre-hardened by a passionate distaste for Anne and a very strong devotion to Queen Catherine of Aragon.

**Christina:** Catherine of Aragon (played by Ana Torrent) is by far my favourite, although she is only shown on screen a few times.

**Tia:** I was really impressed by the unique attachment that had formed in me by the end of the film to each character, including Anne and the King (usually hard to love!).

**Christina:** One is really not too sure which character to side with. Each has his or her own faults and sins, as well as some strengths and likeable qualities, but Catherine's strength of character and dignity is incredible. I almost cheered aloud when she gave her speech to Anne Boleyn!

**Tia:** The opening scene sets the course for the rest of the movie: "To get ahead in this world you need more than fair looks and a kind heart."

**Christina:** I was glad that the movie focused more on the stories of the characters and their relationships than the Reformation in England against the Church, which resulted from the affairs of Henry and Anne.



Special to The B.C. Catholic

Redeemer Pacific students Christina Fahlman and Tia Glenn-Cooke cast a critical eye at *The Other Boleyn Girl*, the latest cinematic take on the King Henry VIII story.

**Tia:** I say, Yippee! for rooting the story in romance rather than politics ... mostly!

**Christina:** The movie had an opportunity to slam the Catholic Church, but it didn't. Thankfully those issues remained neutrally in the background, with the characters' drama in the forefront.

**Tia:** With a rating of 14A for sexual violence, I was a little hesitant, not wanting a great story ruined by semi-pornographic, Hollywood-ized scenes, but I was relieved. I was pleasantly surprised with the film's tastefulness. Yippee for no gratuitous nudity! (It was obvious which scene the 14A rating was written

for, and in less than probably 15 seconds, and with no graphic images, it was over.)

**Christina:** I enjoyed the movie, although I do have a weakness for historical fiction. As far as morals go, there really aren't any in the film, seeing that the whole story is based on adultery, selfishness, and lust!

**Tia:** Lady Elizabeth Boleyn (played by Kristin Scott Thomas) was a memorable character. Her character tends to keep the viewer on track morally, and is full of insight into the plot. She has a smaller supporting role, but as the only real constant in the cast, is one of the best, in my

opinion.

**Christina:** If you are interested in seeing what may have happened in England all those years ago, perhaps this movie will interest you.

Now that Christina and Tia have begun to seek beyond Hollywood's historical fiction to know more about King Henry VIII's six wives, I have referred them to Catholic historian Hilaire Belloc, who wrote memorably of Anne Boleyn in *Characters of the Reformation*:

"Anne Boleyn is the pivot figure of the English Reformation. It was through her that the political and social phenomenon called Protestant England came into the world."

"She was not, of course, the cause of the movement, still less the cause of its final result. Innumerable causes converged towards that. But the movement would not have been launched, would not have been directed towards the goal which it ultimately reached, had not Anne Boleyn so completely dominated the King of England as to compel him ultimately to break with the unity of Christendom; and though Henry remained deeply attached to the Catholic doctrine and practice until his death, once he had broken with unity, that is, with the papacy, there was a breach in the dike and the flood was ready to pour through."

C.S. Morrissey is an assistant professor of medieval Latin philosophy at Redeemer Pacific College. □



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refreshed...*

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