

Dear Reader,

I want to start by thanking all of you who share my love for history, and who enjoy the way that I tell the poignant and powerful stories from history. This has been an especially memorable year for me. The film of *The Other Boleyn Girl*, starring Natalie Portman, Scarlett Johansson and Eric Bana, opened in theatres in early 2008 to a good reception world wide and the renewed interest put the book to no 1 .on both *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* bestseller lists and went up to #3 on the *USA Today* list. At the same time I enjoyed tremendous success with *The Boleyn Inheritance* which came out in paperback in the previous summer and spent a lengthy 48 weeks on the bestseller lists. It is you, the readers whose love for these books makes them the success that they are – and I am grateful.

Now I'm looking forward to sharing with you my new novel, *The Other Queen*, which will be published on September 16, 2008. It is the culmination of detailed research on Mary, Queen of Scots, an iconic character that I have resisted for years. I always felt she was too grand, too beautiful, too doomed, too all round romantic and nonsensical for me to take much interest in her. Her reputation of marrying one man by arrangement, then another to irritate Elizabeth, and then finally the third who was probably her second husband's murderer seemed to add up to a woman of such disastrous judgment, that I could have no patience with her! Then I read two very interesting books, *My Heart Is My Own* by John Guy and *Bess of Hardwick* by Mary S. Lovell, and I saw that there was another way to look at Mary. Of all people I should have realized that the traditional, overly romantic picture of Mary is another version of the claim that women are unfit for power. Once I started to see Mary as a woman of power and political will, a different picture emerged for me.

Instead of focusing on the doomed French princess of the historian's myth, I chose to depict her long imprisonment in England as a guest-prisoner of the Earl of Shrewsbury and his wife, Bess of Hardwick. These three people and their intertwined relationships provided me with very dramatic and emotionally rich material. Bess, at first attracted to being lady in waiting to one of the greatest Queen's in Europe, soon saw that Mary was a threat both to her country, and to her home, as she watched the web of plots woven around the Queen and saw her own fortune and her husband's love destroyed by his growing adoration of Mary. Mary, in this novel is shown as a queen who saw it as her God given duty to lie, plot, enchant and risk the lives of thousands to regain her Scottish throne. George, the Earl of Shrewsbury was torn between his faithful allegiance to Queen Elizabeth, his love for his new wife Bess, and his reluctant and growing admiration for Mary. Ultimately he had to condemn her to death. When I discovered these historical characters and learned of their agonizing interaction I knew I had the basis for a wonderful novel.

I'll be touring to discuss *The Other Queen* in the United States in September and October. Please visit my website, www.PhilippaGregory.com for tour cities and dates. As always, it will be a great pleasure to meet you, readers, both new and established – and the many who say to me that usually, they don't like historical fiction! I will enjoy introducing you all to a book I think that you will love: *The Other Queen*.