

Female Power Relations in Philippa Gregory's Novel: A Case Study of The Other Boleyn Girl

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research aims to identify female power relations in the historical novel "The Other Boleyn Girl" by Philippa Gregory using Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. The study reveals female power relations in various dimensions including: the first dimension is superstructure of those who have the power to build a power relation for dominate base structure with historic bloc to create a complete power relation by taking over the two social structures. The second dimension are civil society and political society which hegemonic achievement comes into existence when control of two areas of the superstructure. The third dimension are a war of movements refers to coercion and physical struggle to occupy the highest status for women and war of position is a way to establish power relations by means a slow displacement of old values with alternative institutions, new methods of learning, and new class. The fourth dimension is hegemonic apparatuses which is a hegemonic apparatus is an important instrument for hegemonic achievement and the last dimension is counter- hegemony for hegemony is not completely achieved.

Keywords

The Other Boleyn Girl, Hegemony, Female Power Relations, literary work

Introduction

All branches of science need communication to link to one another. The fact that people live in society, in which socialization is on-going happening, communication is indispensable for connecting and carrying out various activities, including political ones. Political communication, which involves exchanges of political facts, attitudes, views, and experiences among social members, acts as an agent to stimulate interactions among them and enable them to live reasonably well in their society. Political refinement and culture, demands for benefits, as well as policy proposals all need various channels of communication to achieve common understanding and social collaboration (Chumpol, P., 2013).

Political communication comes in a number of media channels, and literary works are some of them. Literary works reflect the social and political conditions of the time the works are composed. It is true that literary works do not reflect all aspects of social and political reality. They do, however, reflect the outlook on social and political issues of the author as a contemporary member, and are worthy of study (Chaipunha, A., 2010).

Social and political issues are reflected in a number of literary genres, and one of them is historical novels. Studying historical novels provides a window to understand the outlooks of authors on social and political conditions at the times the novels were written. These events and social and political conditions must have been too fascinating for the authors to resist reflecting them in their own literary creations.

One author of historical novels is so well known for her well-researched work that she has been nicknamed "queen of historical novels". She has written 24 historical novels, almost all of which were made into movies or TV series. The best known one is *The Other Boleyn Girl* which won

the best novel of the year from the Romantic Novelists' Association. This writer is Philippa Gregory. Fascinated by English Royal history, Philippa Gregory, 64, published her first novel in 1987, and over the past three decades, her novels have been translated into many languages. Many of these works take place in 16th century England, a period of intense power struggles among noble families to claim the throne and exercise power behind it, as well as a period of divided faith. Gregory once mentioned her particular interest in this period in an interview with Telegraph, remarking that many events and people, particularly women, are never mentioned or forgotten due to patriarchal ideology (Matichon, Online, 2016).

Gregory's 24 historical novels reveal the strength and power of women in the then political world. This is particularly true of *The Other Boleyn Girl*. The researchers were particularly interested in conducting an examination on the power relations of women in intense social and political conditions, employing a critical theory and the concept of hegemony. The study may help shed light on how we look back on our own society, and how we might share space and exercise power for peaceful living in society. The objectives of this research to study identify female power relations as portrayed in the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory.

Literature Review

Gramsci's writings reflect his views on the political, economic and social conditions of the time. Especially in regards to the concept of leadership Which is the main conceptual framework for explaining the phenomenon in this research. Gramsci is one of the groups of the "new Marxist" continues Marx's legacy of thinking by focusing on the issue of "ideology" that aristocratic elites impose on other less powerful classes. Especially the working class

Until the working class did not see what they were taking advantage of from that upper class with the view that the media is a tool established by the capitalist elite to support the interests of the capitalists. For this reason, the "ruling class" can dominate the thinking of other groups of society. Accept the idea and reject the idea that is opposed to the idea of the capitalist ruling class in order to not rise to the existence of the system (Buephuen S, 2014).

Gramsci's idea of dominance has focused on ideology, particularly in its use as a guide to understanding the concept of "the structure of the lower society." and the upper society "(Base/super structure), where Gramsci emphasized the role of the superstructure. And pointed out the important difference between "Two types of society" within that upper structure consist of 5 dimensions including:

1. Superstructure and base structure with historic bloc.

Gramsci's focus was that he was one of the first Marxist thinkers to focus on the super structure, which was different from the idea of some traditional Marxists. Which gives importance to the lower structure as the main structure in defining Upper structure and it could be said that he himself was the one who reiterated in the political dimension. And the importance of the ideological struggle of the Marxist concept in the process change society to socialism (Bhudharaksa W, 2014). While the other part of the social structure is the occupation of the lower structure (Base structure) that emphasizes the philosophy of materialism, especially in the ideology.

The resulting historic bloc is constantly changing and challenged during the development of human history according to the dialectical relationship. In this relationship there must be both positive and negative aspects. Which must develop to achieve the maximum consent when the consent is achieved, it must be developed further. Because there are still negative aspects that are inserted in society It is also an embryo that incubates, waiting to grow up to challenge or overthrow its original power (Korsuwandee R, 2015).

2. Civil and political society with consent and coercion.

Political society and civil society This Gramsci's concept are the one of the areas of the upper social structure. This is the area of a system of ideas, beliefs, ideologies, laws, arts and culture, which are not the relations of production or the economic structure in lower society.

The concept of "civil society" within civil society groups there are actors responsible for the formation, transmission and transmission of the set of ideas and beliefs required by groups/classes who seek to create a series of leadership. Including the various institutions in the society that is a source of relationships among people. The institution will create an ideological set-in line with the needs of groups/classes trying to create dominion. And serves to pass on and inherit the said ideology as well at the same time functioning in civil society is characterized by the absence of coercion and the use of physical force Rather, it is the use of power in the form of influencing, directing, or

manipulating the knowledge and thinking of people. To create the consent of people in society and create a conception of the world that is in the same direction according to the needs of groups/classes who try to create a vision of dominating power (Bhudharaksa W, 2014).

3. War of movement and war of position.

In the process of creating a state of dominance to happen. Gramsci had an advantage like waging war. The concept of War of movement and War of position has been adopted by explaining that Waging war to seize the area is an appropriate strategy for underdeveloped "civil society" states, which in such states have fragile political power. As well as various social forces.

The act of conducting war to seize the area is a coercion which will only work in the early stages. But this is not enough to create sustainable power. Because in taking action to create dominion over other classes, the elite who try to create dominion must fight to take over. "Ideological space, ideas, beliefs" of the people in "civil society" (Bhudharaksa W, 2014).

4. Hegemonic apparatuses.

The concept of the mechanism of dominating power Comparable to acting as a medium to convey ideologies or a system of ideas, knowledge, beliefs and values as a group of people trying to create a dominant power to communicate to people of different classes above civil society area. In order to create a feeling of mutual consent and willingness to comply with the needs of the ideological broadcast class. In addition, the mechanism of dominance also serves to raise awareness to give the possessed class a feeling that the interests of that class are favored by the ruling class or the elite trying to dominate. Without feeling the dominated class (Bhudharaksa W, 2014).

In which this mechanism of dominating power its can be said that it is anything that performs the function of a relay or pass the idea (Piyakulchaidej V, 2007).

5. Counter- hegemony.

Cholvanarag N., and et al, (2018) Said, that the implementation of incomplete dominance That is, it cannot create a state of dominance over civil society space, social politics, can create a state of dominance to a certain extent by occupying a particular social area, can create a state of dominating power close to the complete dominance during a period of time. But as time goes on, various factors arise that undermine the righteousness and reduce the feelings of consent of the dominated class towards the class/group Leader Causing in a later time the dominance of power was reduced all cases mean, group of operators to create a state of dominance. Inability to create complete leadership.

The dominance of complete power that the operator group creates the dominant power. Able to win the war, seize the space of thought by occupying the civil society space and that political society, people in society live normal lives. Without suspicion or questioning of the actions of the

leaders and no action is taken to express ideas that conflict with the main idea or ideology according to the group of leaders who create a state of dominance.

On the other hand, if the operating group creates a dominant state creating a state of complete dominance without success. Some of the people in society who know that the class/group is taking the lead in the interests of group/class of leading power a group of people who are aware of this

will show or expose any action to be "a response to the dominion" of the dominant class.

Research's conceptual framework

When synthesized Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and power relations, can be summarized as a framework for the study as follows as Figure 1

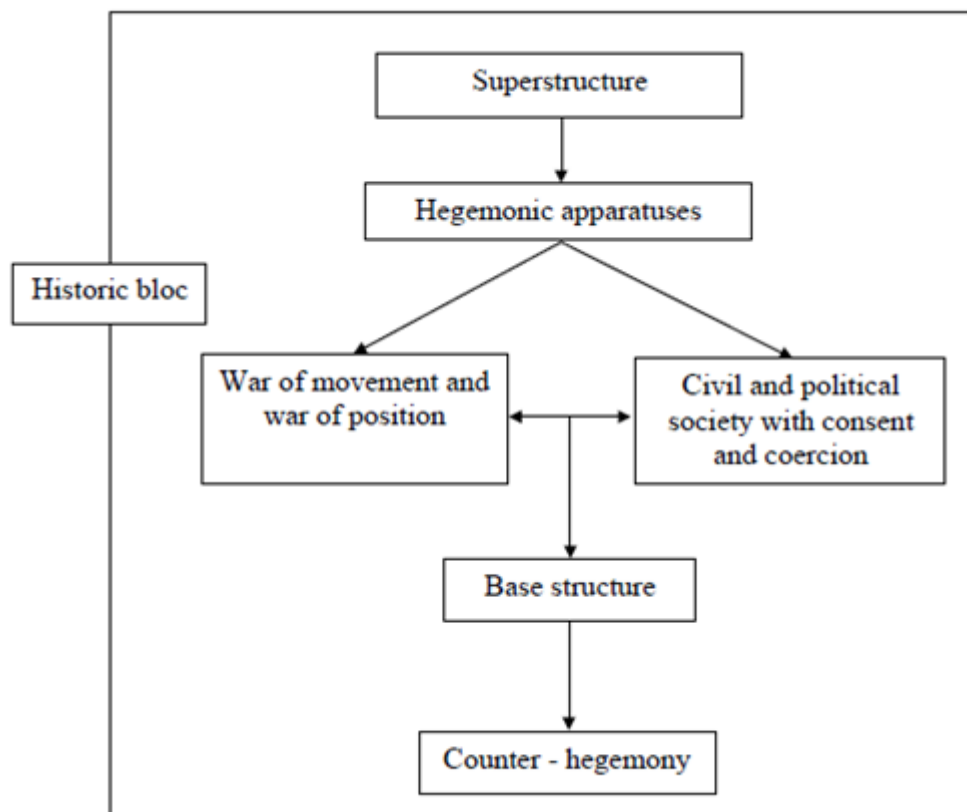


Figure 1: Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and power relations Framework

Research methodology

The research Female Power Relations in Philippa Gregory's Novel: A Case Study of *The Other Boleyn Girl* is a qualitative study the documentary using textual analysis through a hermeneutic approach with gather data including Plot, Character, Dialogue, Atmosphere Point of view and Style to appear from the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* translated into Thai by Montarat Singapore, 2nd edition, published in 2010 by Matchon Press. Then prepare data from historical novels relating to the study framework in 5 dimensions of Hegemony of Antonio Gramsci's concept and presentation by descriptive analysis.

Research outcomes

The study of the translated version of the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory was conducted following Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony and power relations, and other related research. The outcomes are presented in reference to the 5 dimensions of the hegemony of women, as follows:

1. Superstructure, and base structure with historic culture.

1.1 Superstructure

Superstructure refers to the structure incorporating politics, culture, ideas, consciousness, and ideology (Kaewthep K., 2004, p. 102-103) as a tool by people with power to dominate those without. In the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, the writer presents a character, Anne Boleyn, who used her beauty, body, grace, position, and sex to dominate a powerful King HenryVIII and obtain from him the power she seeks, the position of the queen, in his court. Initially, she is introduced to the English court waiting to the King's sister as a beautiful woman with grace and manners of a lady raised in the French court. These attributes attract the King's attention and stirs his desire to possess. Well aware of her seductive power over the King, she negotiates with him for the power she seeks, arousing him to the point of succumbing to her and his own desire. She exploits her superstructure to access power, using what the powerful

king wants from her. She seduces him and keeps him a distance, which eventually inflames his desire for her even more.

Anne even tells her sister, who is also the King's mistress, that she has to do something to stir the King's desire for her, but at the same time not granting what he wants. She also conceitedly raises her voice to the King when she is ignored by him, saying she will not accept any position where she does not know what she really is. The King, then, must decide whether to love her with his whole heart and soul, or not to love her at all, to have her, or not to have her at all. She will belong to him body and soul, or she will not belong to anyone. She definitely will not, however, agree to be with him unless her status is made perfectly clear. In response to her resistance to his desire to have her, the King pleads with her and promises her with all the pieces of jewelry in the tower since she has also given him everything. These illustrate how she uses the power of her body, grace, intrigue to gain the superstructure over King Henry.

Anne also prides herself in her need to distinguish herself from other women, to make herself striking, stand out in the crowd, and to be the center of attention. The King eventually yields to her and promises to marry her though he is still married to Queen Catherine of Aragon. Anne also mentions in a letter to her sister, Mary Boleyn, the King's Promise to marry her as soon as he is free, which is expected very soon, and that will grant her the position of Queen of England. Gradually, Anne manages to make herself accepted by the royal court as the King's only woman. She accomplishes this by inflaming his desire for her, but this desire cannot yet be satisfied.

1.2 Base structure

The base structure refers to relations gained by beauty, physique, charming manners, and irresistible passion for women. The study reveals power relations dominated by lust and sexual desire, which is uncontrolled or checked by common sense, consciousness, ethics and fairness in spite of the fact that the dominated are in a higher or better status than the ones imposing the superstructure. This is clearly represented by the scene when the King gives Anne rubies to placate her when she feels ignored after he shows more carding to his queen. This is a gesture of surrender to her exercise of the superstructure of her charm and sexual seduction, from which he receives in return more than just her sweet smiles.

.....Henry's failure to resist Anne's exercise of her superstructure is clearly further depicted in the scene when the King sobs on her hands after Anne screams at him and refuses to join him in celebrating Christmas at Greenwich.

1.3 Historic culture

Gramsci's historic culture is used to explain power relations through control over both the superstructure and base. When the superstructure and the base are under one hand in a particular time, historic culture is formed, thus creating a complete hegemonic state in that particular society (Bhudharaksa, W., 2006. P. 35). The forming of historic

culture in the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* starts at the Boleyn's well guarded family meetings on family affairs, family secrets, and the carrying out of the plan to bait King Henry using the two Boleyn girls, Anne and Mary, as political pawns. A question is raised about whether the girls are at the reproductive age and with the mother's confirmation of their readiness, they can be put on a tray and served for the King, who hopes to produce a long-awaited heir to the throne, thus ensuring the power of the Boleyn women.

The events mentioned above displays the connection between power groups. Though new power groups are formed, an alternative historic culture will always emerge. This conforms to the dialectic critical theory, which believes that all things are ever changing and evolving (Bhudharaksa, W., 2014. p. 170-171).

2. Political society with consent and coercion

Hegemonic achievement comes into existence when control of two areas of the superstructure, civil society and political society, is accomplished. The ratio of relations between the two societies is not essential in determining the dominance of one over the other. The control of power, however, depends on the dominance of one over the other between consent to power and power coercion. These two areas of society are the center of power, and also influence counter hegemony, which, in other words, is a strategic area to counter the old structure (Korsuwandee R., 2015, p.34).

2.1 Civil society

Gramsci's civil society consists of the areas where certain classes struggle to achieve and retain dominance and consent over other classes through an agent who forms ideas and beliefs as dictated by the power-seeking class. Civil society is composed of the family institution, religious institutions, and mass media (Bhudharaksa W., 2014. p. 125). The emergence of the idea of civil society in the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* is portrayed through another secret meeting of the Boleyn family concerning the King's infatuation with Anne during the day and with Mary during the night, an opportunity for the family, led by Uncle Howard, to use the two girls as political pawns to (politically) benefit himself and the family. The ideas are fostered and receive the consent from the family members.

2.2 Political Society

The relations of people in political society are defined by coercion through state mechanisms such as the military, and law enforcement by means of courts of law, the police, and the government. In the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, the idea of political society is illustrated, to name a few, through a new draft of the marriage law aiming to declaring the marriage of King HenryVIII and Queen Catherine of Aragon null and void, the announcement against which the queen retaliates by petitioning to the Pope in Rome. This prompts a new law stipulating that all conflicts in England be adjudicated under English laws only, ending papal

authority over England in the novel, legal coercion is carried out through courts of law, the military, police, and governing bodies to build political legitimacy for the dominant power group.

3. War of movement and War of position

In military terms, war can be won when strategic locations or essential resources are seized. However, in hegemonic war, the group striving for power must seize ideology and beliefs of the people in civil society in order to receive their consent (Bhudharaksa W., 2006. p. 37-38).

3.1 War of movements

A war of movements refers to coercion and physical struggle to occupy the highest status for women, that is to be able to produce an heir to the King, and to be the queen. In the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Anne is described often as holding her bulging belly, while being officially appointed the queen of England, explaining the superstructure seizing the highest position any woman can have, a path to strengthen and sustain power relations for oneself and one's family.

3.2 War of position

A war of position is a way to establish power relations by means a slow displacement of old values with alternative institutions, new methods of learning, and new class of intellectuals with consent from civil society (Korsuwandee R., 2015, p.36). In the novel, a war of position is operated by the superstructure power-striving group to deliver the ideology, which paves the way for the King to have an heir by marrying a Boleyn girl, and to dispose of Queen Catherine of Aragon. In other words, a war of position is a strategy employed by the lower hegemonic class to counter, challenge, and accept new ideology (Bhudharaksa, W., 2014. p. 146).

4. Hegemonic Apparatuses

An hegemonic apparatus is an important instrument for hegemonic achievement. Hegemonic apparatuses work by fostering consciousness. They act as an agent in delivering a set of ideology, knowledge, beliefs, and values desired by power-seeking groups to seek consent or approval from other groups (Bhudharaksa, W., 2006. p. 38). In the novel, seductive manners, temptation, intrigue, secret meetings and delivering messages are used to target King Henry VIII, and Anne, as a pawn in the superstructure group, delivers the messages to charm and delight King.

5. Counter Hegemony

When hegemony is not completely achieved, that is the group is unable to firmly dominate civil and political societies, the hegemony operation may be countered with several actions, including displaying doubt, or obvious opposition from other groups, or revolt to seek power for

themselves (Korsuwandee R., 2015, p.38). In this novel, Anne is accused of controlling the King with magic, and her older brother is accused of being her helping hand, and their crimes are deemed too profound and horrendous to be addressed in the same hearing Anne's other horrendous crime against the King is that she is unable to produce an heir for the King, who also wants another queen. Her brother is then beheaded while Anne is watching from her window and she, in her black clothes with a bright red skirt, is later beheaded by an executioner from France Her incomplete hegemonic operation also contributes to the powerful and undependable King, who is merciless enough to dispose of his guiltless queen and behead his new queen (Gregory P. 2008, p. 751). In this novel the female power relations are challenge and countered and then seized back by the old power group, the force male supremacy.

Discussion

The study of Philippa Gregory's historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* reveals women's struggle for power, position, and status through sex, ambition, and intrigue only to meet a tragic fate in which this hard-sought power is eventually stripped away by the male supremacy. The study findings from *The Other Boleyn Girl* can be used as guidelines in studying political-historical literary works focused on power struggles between men and women.

This findings of the research can be used as guidelines for studying political novels relating to female power relations, of which the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* by Philippa Gregory is like a social and political world in miniature. It displays social and political contexts and people particularly women struggling for power in male dominated world. It is with great hope that this novel will guide people in this contemporary world, both men, and women, to be aware of what has happened in the past, and to join hands in creating a more harmonious and equal society in the future this contemporary world.

In which the power relations of the women received it's a power that is not permanent. It is the power that comes from the obsession of men only. When the time comes, the men will turn to reclaim their power. So, the power relations of the women received Will not exist in a social context. In order to create equality between the sexes of society, we should create equality of human existence with ignorance of gender and interest in equality rights. Do not use sex as a negotiation of power and society will be at peace.

In the superstructure dimensions as pictured in the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* was found to be consistent with the research conducted by Wanus Piyakulchaidej (2007) entitled Gramsci's hegemony concept and ideology which revealed two interpretations of the ideological concept. The first is the ideology relating to the superstructure and the second is the ideology that gives rise to political resistance. Therefore, it (the second interpretation) is hegemony-related, since it an operation attempting to occupy the superstructure for power enrichment.

The war of position as portrayed in the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* was found to be consistent with the

research Political concepts in literary works composed King Vajiravudh conducted by Yuma Pratchayakul (2015). The research revealed the political view on and adherence to absolute monarchy among the elites, who attempted to protect the monarchy from the changing world. The ideas were repeatedly portrayed in his works as occupying an idealistic sphere, which is the superstructure.

The dimension of counter- hegemony pictured in the novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* was found to be consistent with research entitled Taksin and his hegemonic attempt conducted by Wacharapol Budharaksa (2006). The research reasoned that his failure to achieve hegemony was due to his inability to occupy the whole sphere of civil society in spite of his occupation of the political realm, and his largely accepted populist policies. In the historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl*, a woman in the superstructure wields power over other power groups, but fails to obtain complete consent from them, resulting in their violent revolt against her.

The study also revealed similar results with research entitled Exercise of power by the elites in the novel *Animal Farm* by George Orwell. The research revealed repeated counter - hegemony, by one power group who establishes their authority over the existing power. The power relations is never ever-lasting, but rotates or is replaced by another power group striving to gain back their lost power or establish new power over other power groups (Cholvanarag N., and et al, 2018).

Suggestions

To provide a study of Philippa Gregory's historical novel *The Other Boleyn Girl* should study based on other political theories should be conducted on this novel, in addition to study based on concepts developed by Antonio Gramsci and the same issues should be studied in other media, including a greater variety of concepts and theories.

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