An Innocent Victim?: The Portrayal of Anne Boleyn in French Drama, Art, and Literature of the 1830s

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Abstract
The 1830s in France saw a revival of artistic interest in and representations of Anne Boleyn, the second wife of King Henry VIII of England. This thesis traces Anne’s influence on artistic, dramatic, and literary works of the 1830s and focuses on how these portrayals differed from one another as well as contemporary and modern opinions of Anne.

Keywords
Anne Boleyn, French, drama, art, literature, Department of Languages Literatures and Cultures, COLA, European Cultural Studies

Subject Categories
European History | European Languages and Societies | Fine Arts | French and Francophone Literature

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An Innocent Victim?

The Portrayal of Anne Boleyn in French Drama, Art, and Literature of the 1830s

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Class of 2013

Undergraduate thesis signifying the completion of a B.A. in European Cultural Studies with Honors at the University of New Hampshire College of Liberal Arts.
Introduction

A mysterious beginning, a tragic end. A crown, an executioner’s sword. The love of a king, the taint of adultery and incest. The story of Anne Boleyn more closely resembles the plot of a soap opera than historical record. It is therefore not surprising that, since the sixteenth century, King Henry VIII of England’s matrimonial history has been a perpetual topic of study for historians as well as an inspiration for countless dramatists, artists, and writers. The six women who shared this real life Bluebeard’s bed are commonly defined in terms of the fates that they suffered at the hands of their royal spouse: divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived. However, Henry's wives contributed more to the course of English history than this schoolhouse ditty – none more so than his second wife, Anne Boleyn.

Anne was never supposed to be Queen of England. Though the date of her birth is uncertain, it is likely that she was the second daughter of a low-ranking nobleman and councilor to Henry VIII. She was no great beauty, but what she lacked in looks, she seemed to compensate for in wit and sensuality. Aside from the fact that she was educated on the Continent, learning French manners to the extent that at the English court “‘no one would ever have taken her to be English by her manners, but a native-born Frenchwoman,’” (Lancelot de Carles qtd. in Ives, 45) very little is known about Anne before the king began to court her. The only things more shrouded in mystery than Anne’s life are the circumstances surrounding her downfall and execution. Following approximately six years of passionate courtship during which time Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church in order to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, Henry remained married to Anne for less than four years before ordering her trial and execution on charges of adultery, incest, and high treason. Although Anne had not been a popular queen, due in large part to her role in the fall of her beloved predecessor, the majority of the public
believed her innocent of the charges against her. Nearly all of the trial records and evidence have been lost to history, the result of a concerted campaign to purge the kingdom of her memory in the wake of her execution. This has resulted in an even greater scarcity of primary sources than there otherwise would be and makes it impossible to judge Anne’s guilt or innocence for certain, though many historians continue to try.

What happened to Anne at the French court? Was she engaged to another man before she married Henry? Did Anne take a lover, or lovers, after marrying the king? Were Anne and her brother, George, engaging in an incestuous relationship? Was Anne guilty of high treason? Who masterminded Anne’s demise – her husband or his ministers? Despite the extensive scholarship about Anne Boleyn, the answers to these questions remain unknown as historians are limited to speculation, given the dearth of contemporary documents and the bias inherent in those that do survive. The realm of artistic expression, however, is not constrained by the historical record and so seeks to fill in the gaps, breathing new life into the ill-fated queen and providing answers (though perhaps not the correct ones) to the above questions. Eric Ives said it best in his extensive biography of Anne: “The limitations are galling, given the fascination Anne Boleyn and her story have continued to exercise over the years, and many have concluded that only artistic imagination will bring us to the truth” (Ives, 45). In short, art, literature, and drama can achieve for their audiences what history oftentimes cannot: a sense of comprehension.

When seeking out a topic for this thesis, I was drawn to the idea of examining Anne Boleyn’s life and death through French literature and art. It seemed to be the perfect opportunity to combine the two great passions of my life: English history and French literature. There was also the added bonus that the French, especially during the nineteenth century, had taken a
renewed interest in Anne Boleyn and had produced a wealth of plays, operas, novels, and paintings centered on her life and death.¹

The 1830s, in fact, marked a veritable renaissance for Anne Boleyn as a dramatic figure and will serve as the chronological limit for this study. From this decade arose, most notably, Italian opera composer Gaetano Donizetti’s chef-d’œuvre, *Anna Bolena*, and French painter Édouard Cibot’s 1835 painting, *Anne Boleyn à la tour de Londres dans les premiers moments de son arrestation.*² In examining these, as well as lesser known works of the decade, we will see that the overwhelming majority of artists and writers sympathized with Anne, who was educated at the French court and remained a Francophile until her death. Consequently, Anne is overwhelmingly represented as the victim of a tyrannical and unfaithful husband and even, to some extent, as a martyr.

*Anne Boleyn as a Historical Figure*

It may be helpful to provide context for the historical events commonly dramatized in the works we will be studying, particularly those regarding Anne’s relationship with Henry Percy and her downfall. Anne returned to England in late 1521 or early 1522 after spending over seven years attending Mary Tudor, Louis XII’s young queen, and Queen Claude, wife to Louis’s successor, Francis I. There were rumors that she would be betrothed to James Butler to settle a familial dispute over the Earldom of Ormond, but this plan never came to fruition and Anne had soon set her sights on a grander prize: Henry Percy, a member of Cardinal Wolsey’s household

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¹ French interest at this time was not limited solely to Anne Boleyn, but to all periods of English history as well as to all social classes. However, as Hill points out in her doctoral dissertation about the Tudors in French drama, the personal magnetism of this particular dynasty fueled the upsurge of artistic representations of Anne and her contemporaries.

² *Anne Boleyn in the Tower of London shortly after her arrest.* All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.
and heir to the Earl of Northumberland, a powerful peer in northern England. Most historians rely on evidence from George Cavendish’s *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* to recount the events of Anne and Percy’s courtship, as he was also a member of Wolsey’s household during that time. Despite some inconsistencies with the historical record, Cavendish’s account seems to support the theory that Percy began courting Anne when she was a lady-in-waiting to Catherine of Aragon. It is unclear to what degree the relationship escalated, but it was deemed inappropriate by the Cardinal who ended the relationship, presumably under royal authority. Percy was berated by both his father and the Cardinal and forced to renounce Anne and enter into an unhappy marriage (Ives, 63-65). He was questioned about the nature of his relationship with Anne before her marriage to Henry VIII to determine if there had indeed been a pre-nuptial contract between the two that would nullify the royal union. Forced to stand in judgment of Anne at her 1536 trial, Percy wrote to Thomas Cromwell, the king’s secretary and likely mastermind of Anne’s downfall, to vehemently deny that he had ever been betrothed to the queen and “would stick by that ‘to his damnation’” (Ives, 354). Percy died miserable and alone the following year.

While the episode with Henry Percy is characterized by many nuances and conflicting theories, the speculation that surrounds the circumstances of Anne’s death is even more abundant. Some historians, like Alison Weir and Retha Warnicke, date the beginning of Anne’s declining favor to her second miscarriage in January 1536. Henry took the miscarriage as a sign of divine displeasure and treated Anne accordingly. Anne, in turn, blamed Henry for losing the baby as she had been upset by seeing him with his mistress, Jane Seymour, one of her own ladies-in-waiting. Weir asserts that after this incident, Henry “had also closed the door on his second marriage” (Weir, 304). Karen Lindsey traces the beginning of Anne’s troubles to a time
earlier than her third miscarriage in her *Divorced, Beheaded, Survived: A Feminist Reinterpretation of the Wives of Henry VIII*. Interestingly, she pinpoints Catherine of Aragon’s death as the moment when Anne’s position became insecure, positing that it becomes much easier to dispose of a second wife when the first is not waiting in the wings (Lindsey, 108). Male historians don’t seem to give as much significance to Anne’s miscarriage, preferring instead to credit the policies and vendettas of Thomas Cromwell or Henry’s desire for Jane Seymour and a male heir with causing the violent downfall of Henry’s second queen (Ives, “The Fall,” 663). Whatever the cause, Anne was ferried to the Tower of London on 2 May 1536. The musician Mark Smeaton and the courtier Henry Norris were already being held there on charges of adultery with the queen. She was followed by her own brother George, Viscount Rochford, as well as two other courtiers, Francis Weston and William Brereton. Anne was held in the apartments that she had occupied before her coronation and tried on 15 May for high treason, adultery, and incest with her brother. She was sentenced to die at the hands of a French swordsman on 19 May and was interred in the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula at the Tower of London.

**Anne Boleyn on Stage**

The French theatrical adaptations of Anne’s downfall, specifically the 1831 translation of Felice Romani’s libretto, *Anne de Boulen*, from the original Italian and François-Henri-Joseph Castil-Blaze’s 1835 adaptation of the same work, tend to omit the alleged incest between the queen and her brother, as well as her adultery with Norris, Weston, and Brereton. Instead, Anne’s affair with Percy and Mark Smeaton’s infatuation with the queen assume more
significant roles in her demise. Henry VIII (Henri VIII) is also portrayed as being wholly responsible for plotting Anne’s disgrace, having fallen in love with her lady-in-waiting and confidante, Jane Seymour, renamed Jeanne. Donizetti’s score and Romani’s historical liberties reflect the spirit of romanticism, characterized by emotion over reason, inherent in the theatre during the first half of the nineteenth century (Ashbrook, “Anna Bolena,” 435).

Before embarking on a thorough analysis of the major Anne-centric works of the 1830s, I think it is important to briefly note her dramatic influence in a lesser-known work that preceded Donizetti and Romani’s masterful rendering of the doomed queen’s final days. Les Trois Catherine, Scènes historiques du règne de Henri VIII, en trois époques was written by Paul Duport and Édouard Monnais and performed for the first time on 18 November 1830 at the Théâtre des Nouveautés in Paris. Dubbed “one of the most interesting examples of royal agony and tyrannicide” (Ledda, 594), this particular work focuses on Henry’s three wives who not only shared the same husband, but the same name: Catherine of Aragon, his first wife; Catherine Howard, his fifth wife; and Catherine Parr, his sixth and final wife. In her analysis of this work, Louise Alfreda Hill largely neglects Anne’s significance in the plot “since this is a play concerning the Cathérines” (Hill, 48). Hill’s assessment of the play in this respect is not incorrect, but incomplete. The importance of this work in studying Anne is not in her onstage role – since, as Hill states, she never appears onstage – but rather the striking effect of her dramatic presence despite her physical absence from the action. It is impossible to tell the story of Henry’s three Cathérines without at least some very strong allusions to his second wife. Duport and Monnais, however, go a step further, inserting Anne into the action and using other

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3 Henry Percy is renamed Richard, presumably to avoid confusion with the king, since they spend the majority of the play on stage simultaneously. Mark Smeaton is called Smeton in the Romani libretto, but his name is changed to Alfred in the adaptation by Castil-Blaze.

4 The Three Cathérines, Historical scenes from the reign of Henry VIII, in three periods.
characters to relay her words and recount her actions. Influential from the very beginning, Anne is first introduced in the second scene of Act I as Henry VIII’s “noble lady”\(^5\) (Duport and Monnais, I.ii.2) for whom he is planning an extravagant pageant. However, Anne appears noble only in the eyes of the king as the remainder of the play portrays the queen in a less sympathetic light than the rest of the representations that will be examined here.

The entire first act describes Anne’s increasing power over the king as she prepares to give birth to an heir “resembling William the Conqueror.” (Dupont and Monnais, I.iv.15)\(^6\) Her hold over the king is evidenced perhaps to the greatest degree when a despondent Henry curses his choirmaster for tearing up a piece he had composed for Anne, claiming he would have rather lost an army.\(^7\) Despite her instrumental role in their elevation, her family, including her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, continues to look upon her with anything but kindness. Norfolk assures Catherine Howard, his other niece, that Anne, in all of her pride and vanity, will favor Catherine’s marriage to the lowly Derham if only to reinforce her (Anne’s) own superiority.\(^8\)

Anne’s unpopularity with the public exceeds even that with her own family. In the tenth scene of the first act, she is confronted by a mob of people shouting “Long live the queen!” not for Anne, but rather for her predecessor Catherine of Aragon, who makes a triumphant appearance at court. When confronted by the obedience and goodness of his first queen, Henry confesses that the power of Anne Boleyn’s seduction, not his conscience, has been the reason for their separation:

This unfortunate Boleyn… I love her… as I loved you… and yet she is nothing like you: far from it! But what do you want? This is out of my hands. She captivates me, subjugates me, enthralls me. Even her imperfections, her coquetry,

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5 “…ma noble dame…”
6 “[E]lle est sur le point de donner au roi un héritier, qui aura du moins une ressemblance avec votre Guillaume le Conquérant.”
7 “Mon motet déchiré… Ah ! c’est bien mal à vous… J’aimerais mieux perdre une armée… Anne de Boulen, à qui je l’ai promis… qui va rire à mes dépens… Je suis au désespoir…” (Duport and Monnais, I. iii.14).
8 Duport and Monnais, I. ix.18.
her whims: everything about her becomes a weapon she can use to cause me unrest. I wanted to resist her, to control my passions… all in vain […] I feel that if I hadn’t satisfied my desires, I would become vindictive, cruel, remorseless… I would be the most horrible tyrant: perhaps I am… (Duport and Monnais, I.xii.23).

This description of Anne’s seductive capabilities alludes to the belief of many of her contemporaries that she had come to power by bewitching Henry, forcing him to discard his wife and betray his loyalty to the Catholic Church. (Such an allusion isn’t wholly unexpected as the title of the play implies more sympathy toward Catherine and therefore less toward the woman who supplanted her.) In the wake of Henry’s description of Anne, Duport and Monnais choose to reinforce her negative image by showcasing her skill in deception and manipulation. Catherine Howard approaches Anne, pleading with her to remember her station and abandon her suit of the king. Anne appears troubled, hesitating, then writes a short letter for Catherine to deliver to the king. Catherine believes the letter is one of farewell from her cousin to Henry and delivers it eagerly, hoping the king will accept it and return to his wife. The letter is, in reality, a reproach to Henry for “lacking in resolution and power” and an announcement of Anne’s intention to leave court (Duport and Monnais, I.xv.27). Anne knows this will incite Henry to action and thus uses her cousin’s innocence and devotion to the queen to hasten her predecessor’s fall from grace. By the end of the first act, Anne’s ascension to the throne is imminent, though Catherine of Aragon predicts that the celebration of her triumph will be short-lived. Through all of this, Anne never appears on stage; in the final scene of the

9 “Cette malheureuse Boulen… je l’aime…comme je t’ai aimée…et pourtant elle ne te vaut pas: qu’elle en est loin!!! Mais que veux-tu ? c’est plus fort que moi. Elle me captive, me subjugue, m’enchaîne. Ses défauts même, sa coquetterie, ses caprices, tout lui devient une arme contre mon repos. J’ai voulu résister, commander à mes passions…c’est en vain […] je sens que, si je ne me contentais pas, je deviendrai vindicatif, cruel, implacable…je serais un affreux tyran ; je le suis peut-être…”.

10 “[E]lle me reproche de manquer de résolution ou de pouvoir! elle veut partir…quitter ma cour dès aujourd’hui…”
first act, Henry appears at the door of his apartment and addresses someone, presumably Anne, who is not visible to the audience: “Well…look now… Anne de Boulen… am I lacking in power?” (Duport and Monnais, I.xx.30).

The second act is set in 1542, six years after Anne’s execution. Despite being long dead, Anne plays an important role in the drama unfolding around her cousin and Henry’s fifth wife, Catherine Howard. From the first scene, the audience is made aware that Anne is no longer the king’s noble lady; in fact, according to her uncle, her very memory displeases Henry. Later in that scene, it is revealed that Anne was executed and from this point onward, she is depicted in a more sympathetic light. Norfolk seems to pity his late niece, presenting her death more as a cautionary tale than divine justice for the crimes she committed against Catherine of Aragon. However, Duport and Monnais do not extend Norfolk’s pity to the point of implying Anne’s innocence of the charge of adultery. Though Anne professed her innocence until she met her end, Catherine Howard reveals that Anne had taken a lover after her marriage to Henry, committing a crime against her royal husband (Duport and Monnais, II.v.39). The shadow of Anne’s infidelity haunts Henry as he frets over Catherine Howard’s possible unfaithfulness. Quite enamored of the latter, he tries to assure himself that she would never betray him, but cannot rid himself of the thought that she may have more in common with Anne Boleyn than just being her cousin (Duport and Monnais, II.x.48). Catherine eventually confesses her love for Derham and proceeds to the scaffold, following in the footsteps of the cousin she had so disdained. The third act of the play is relatively devoid of

11 “Tiens…regarde…Anne de Boulen… ai-je manqué de pouvoir ?...”
noteworthy references to Anne as it focuses on Catherine Parr, Henry’s sixth and final queen, whose story bears little resemblance to that of Anne’s.

Duport and Monnais’ representation of the entirety of Henry VIII’s “cruel romantic life” was met great acclaim (Revue de Paris, 174).\(^{12}\) Though criticized for trying to dramatize perhaps too many historical episodes, the work was hailed as a triumph: its somber tone was balanced by the gaiety of the third act and the situations represented held the audience’s interest as each act marked the demise of at least one of Henry’s wives, and the play culminated in the king’s own death. Contemporary critics, however, failed to note the important role that Anne played in the intrigue of the play. Le Figaro mentions only her love affair with Henry during the first act--- dubbed “a little cold”--- and her unfortunate meeting with the axe recounted in the second act (Figaro, 1830, 2). The Revue de Paris and the Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires omit any mention of Anne in their reviews. This marginalization of Anne’s importance combined with the success of the opera, Anna Bolena, the following year has caused Les Trois Catherine to be forgotten as a valuable representation of Anne – as Henry VIII’s “least innocent victim” (Norvins, 539).\(^{13}\)

The image of Anne Boleyn depicted in Les Trois Catherine would soon be revised as a result of the artistic collaboration between Italian opera composer Gaetano Donizetti and librettist Felice Romani. Donizetti composed Anna Bolena to be performed at the Teatro Carcano in Milan on the opening night of Carnaval, 26 December 1830. Romani, garnering inspiration from Count Alessandro Pepoli’s Anna Bolena (1788) and

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\(^{12}\) “…la vie amoureuse et cruelle de Henri VIII.”

\(^{13}\) “Il produisit d’autres crimes sanglants, dont Anne devait être la victime la moins innocente.”
Ippolito Pindemonte’s *Enrico VIII, ossia Anna Bolena* of 1816\(^{14}\), completed the libretto in November of that year. In adapting these works, Romani chose to shift the central psychological struggle from King Henry VIII to focus instead on Anne Boleyn (see Hibberd, 10-11). The opera was the second of Donizetti’s four operas centered on the Tudor dynasty, following *Il Castello di Kenilworth* (1829) and preceding both *Maria Stuarda* (1834) and *Roberto Devereux* (1837). *Anna Bolena* marked a veritable turning point in Donizetti’s career, raising him from national insignificance to international success; it was the first of his operas to be performed in London (8 July 1831) and Paris (1 September 1831).

The genius of *Anna Bolena* is found in the complicated nature of the romantic entanglements it represents. Romani and Donizetti collaborated closely to develop the three love triangles that define the plot and give rise to numerous scenes of dramatic confrontation: Henri VIII, Anne de Boulen, and Lord Richard Percy; Henri, Anne, and Jeanne Seymour; and finally Henri, Anne, and the musician Smeton (Ashbrook, “Donizetti and Romani,” 614-15). The opera is set in the last days of Anne’s life and opens with a group of courtiers speculating about the delayed appearance of the king and the queen’s resulting distress. It is apparent that Henri has fallen in love with someone else and all of the court is in agreement that “adversity has struck Anne de Boulen like lightning as just heaven’s vengeance for Catherine d’Aragon, who was banished from the throne” (Romani, I.i.3).\(^{15}\) The importance of this statement cannot be overemphasized as it justifies Anne’s death from the very first scene of the opera. Though the courtiers

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\(^{14}\) This is a translation of French playwright Marie-Joseph Chenier’s *Henri VIII* (1791).

\(^{15}\) “…l’adversité vient d’atteindre Anne de Boulen avec la rapidité de la foudre. Le juste ciel venge Catherine d’Aragon, bannie du trône.”
lament the unhappiness that has befallen their queen and fear for what the king has in store for her, they have not forgotten the role Anne played in ousting her predecessor. Her imminent downfall, at this point in the action, is thus presented as an unfortunate, yet just punishment for her sins. However, the next scene is responsible for shifting the tone of the opera. With the introduction of Jeanne Seymour, Anne’s rival, Anne, once the usurper, becomes the usurped. Jeanne recognizes and bemoans her role in the ruin of her mistress, even calling the queen “her victim” (Romani, I.ii.4). By the time Anne appears on the scene, therefore, the audience has been encouraged to forget the allusion to her culpability in Catherine of Aragon’s downfall, seeing only her distress and fear. The talents of the musician, Smeton, are enlisted to improve Anne’s spirits, but his tune merely highlights her misfortune and foreshadows the rest of the action: “Seeing you so sad and quiet, one might compare you to the innocent young victim who cries over her first love; forgetting the crown that encircles your head, we weep with you and lament it with just as much gloomy fervor” (Romani, I.iii.5). Smeton’s lines are important not just as foreshadowing of the remainder of the opera, but because they are the first instance in which Romani depicts Anne as an innocent victim. Anne is rendered more vulnerable as she confides her personal woes to the very person who has caused them: Jeanne Seymour. Addressing her lady-in-waiting in a maternal fashion, Anne warns Jeanne that “if ever the splendor of the throne were to be attractive [to Jeanne], [she should] remember [Anne’s] pain and not allow [herself] to be seduced by it” (Romani,

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16 "En vous voyant si triste et silencieuse, on vous compare à l’innocente et jeune victime qui pleure ses premières amours, et oubliant la couronne qui ceint votre front, l’on gémit avec vous, et l’on déplore une aussi funeste ardeur."
Iiii.5). It is clear that this advice is offered solely for Jeanne’s benefit, since Anne is still completely unaware that her confidante is her greatest rival. Seeing this, the audience is inspired to pity Anne further; she is ignorant of the fact that her husband’s perfidy has become well-established in her own household. In terms of plot structure, Jeanne occupies the same position as Anne did in *Les Trois Catherine*: a rival within the queen’s own household. Unlike Duport and Monnais’ depiction of Anne, however, Jeanne understands the horrendous nature of her crime and repents of it even while recognizing that her fate has been dictated by God:

…has she read my crime on my face? Alas! no… She held me tenderly against her chest, never guessing that she embraced her enemy…Ah! if only I could rescue myself from the abyss, flee from this place, and destroy the past! But no…My fate is irrevocable…decreed by heaven, just like our Last Day (Romani, I.iv.6).

Jeanne is motivated by her guilt to try and end her affair with Henri, but the king’s resentment of his current wife and his desire for her lady-in-waiting have made him paranoid and tyrannical. He accuses Jeanne of loving him only for his crown, going so far as to compare her to Anne, whom he despises: “Anne, too, only gave me her heart because she coveted the throne of England; she, too, desired the crown of the proud Catherine of Aragon… She succeeded, but she will soon see it sits unsteadily on her head” (Romani, I.v.7).

Jeanne trembles at this accusation of ambition and Henri vows that he will have her and punish Anne for having caused Jeanne’s unrest.

17 “Ah! si jamais la splendeur du trône avait pour toi des attraits, souviens-toi de ma peine, et ne te laisse pas séduire.”
18 “…a-t-elle lu mon crime sur mon visage? Hélas ! non… Elle m’a pressée tendrement contre son cœur, ne se doutant pas qu’elle embrassait son ennemie… Ah ! si je pouvais me sauver du précipice, m’éluger de ces lieux, et détruire le passé ! Mais non… Mon sort est irrévocable… arrêté dans le ciel, comme notre dernier jour.”
19 “Anne aussi, ne m’offrit son cœur que parce qu’elle convoitait le trône d’Angleterre; elle aussi, désirait vivement la couronne de l’altière Catherine d’Aragon… Elle l’obtint ; mais on la vit bientôt vaciller sur sa tête.”
At this point, Romani shifts the action to introduce the second major love triangle of the opera. Rochefort, Anne’s brother, encounters Percy, the love of Anne’s youth who has returned to England at the king’s bidding after a long exile. Rochefort informs Percy that his sister has since been crowned queen, but that her life is marred by unhappiness since her husband no longer loves her. As soon as Anne appears, Percy’s enduring love for her is evident and Anne becomes anxious that Percy’s overt devotion to her will cause her downfall. This fear is not unfounded as Henri, after lulling Percy into a false sense of security through his assurances of friendship, orders a henchman to report every exchange between the two.

The final love triangle (Henri, Anne, and Smeton) is introduced in the following scene. Smeton sneaks into the queen’s apartments to return a portrait of her that he had taken, but he is forced to hide behind a tapestry when he hears Anne and Rochefort’s voices. Rochefort implores his sister to give Percy an audience and she reluctantly agrees. She addresses Percy familiarly, calling him Richard, and asks him if he has come to censure her for betraying their love. The admission of their love affair and Anne’s confession that she betrayed Percy indicates that though she may not be guilty of adultery, she is not entirely innocent. However, it is also apparent that Anne, while recognizing her circumstances as punishment for her ambition, to some degree likens herself to a martyr: “I was cruelly punished for it [betraying their love], as you know… I sought the crown, I succeeded in taking it; but it is covered in thorns” (Romani, I.xii.15). The reference to the suffering of Jesus Christ is unmistakable and may serve as an inspiration for later representations of Anne’s “martyrdom.” Percy implores Anne

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20 “…j’en ai été cruellement punie, comme tu sais… j’ambitionnais une couronne, je l’ai obtenue; mais elle est entourée d’épines.”
to return to him, but she insists on the impossibility of this proposal as she is bound in
holy, yet unhappy, matrimony to her husband. When Anne vows that they will never see
each other again, Percy draws his sword and threatens to kill himself, causing Anne to
cry out and drawing Smeton out from behind the tapestry to defend his queen. Henri
enters, is convinced that he has irrevocable proof of Anne’s guilt, and orders her to be
arrested along with Smeton, Rochefort, and Percy.\(^{21}\) By the end of the first act, then,
Anne’s fate is sealed and she knows she will die. The chorus laments her fate, saying that
it is “crime persecuting innocence” (Romani, I.xvi.19).\(^{22}\) Anne echoes the same
sentiment: “…after my death, my innocence will be recognized, as well as the injustice of
my persecutor.”\(^{23}\)

Act II opens in a similar manner to Act I: Anne’s women lament Anne’s
imprisonment and abandonment by those who had been closest to her, most significantly
Jeanne. Those who do remain with Anne are completely loyal to her, a possible
inspiration for the depictions of Anne and her ladies in the paintings to be discussed
shortly. Once alone, Anne prays to God, recognizing her culpability in the downfall of
her predecessor, but believing that her punishment is more severe than her crime: “Yes,
the suffering of Catherine of Aragon must be avenged; and the just severity of heaven
condemns me to a horrible punishment…but is it not too dreadful?” (Romani, 21).\(^{24}\)

\(^{21}\) Romani chooses not to dramatize the charges of incest brought against Anne. Her brother is arrested solely for
conspiring to conceal Anne’s love affairs—not for being her lover.
\(^{22}\) “Le crime persécute l’innocence!”
\(^{23}\) “…après ma mort, mon innocence sera reconnue, ainsi que l’injustice de mon persécuteur.” The finale of the first
act adheres to the convention of Italian opera that calls for a “scène du jugement” in which all characters appear on
stage at the same time during the finale of the first or second act. The comparable scene in Chénier’s Henri VIII
(III.iv), on which the libretto is partially based, while incorporating the majority of the characters, excludes some
and thus had to be adapted to coincide with operatic convention and style. (See Sala, 488-89.)
\(^{24}\) “Oui, les tourmens de Catherine d’Aragon doivent être vengés; et la juste rigueur du ciel me condamne à un
terrible châtiment…mais n’est-il pas trop affreux?”
When Jeanne finally returns to her mistress’ side, it is to urge Anne, in the name of the king and of her rival, to profess her guilt in an effort to save her life even if she must forfeit her crown. At this point, Anne is depicted as a proud and honorable woman, refusing to buy her “life at the price of infamy”. This is the first instance in which Anne inspires the audience’s respect, rather than its unwavering pity. She demands her rival’s identity, but Jeanne refers to her only as “an unfortunate victim” (Romani, II.iii.22). The distressed queen curses her unknown foe and Jeanne, in anguish, admits that she has been the cause of Anne’s unhappiness. After succumbing to a fit of blind rage, Anne regains her dignified manner, pardoning her lady-in-waiting and promising her friendship to a woman whom she regards as yet another “unhappy victim” of her tyrannical husband (Romani, II.iii.23).

Anne next appears onstage in Act II, scene vi, calling out to Henri and imploring him to “respect the dignity of [her] rank” by sparing her the public humiliation she is sure to face (Romani, II.vi.25). Percy tries to save the queen, but Henri reveals that Smeton had already confessed to an affair with the queen. Confronted by such blatant libel, Anne comes to her senses and vows to brave her husband’s power, allowing him “to condemn [her] to death, but not to infamy” (Romani, II.vi.26). She declares that her only crime was that of preferring a crown to true love. Percy calls for justice, though Anne holds that such a notion is nonexistent at her husband’s court. Henri retorts that

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25 “Tu veux que j’achète ma vie au prix de l’infamie?”
26 “Une victime infortunée…”
27 “Malheureuse victime…”
28 “…respecte la dignité de mon rang.”
29 Henri had previously assured Smeton that Anne would be saved if he confessed to their affair so Smeton’s confession was coerced from him.
30 “…me condamner à la mort, mais non pas à l’infamie.”
“justice ceased to reign in England only when a queen was forced to cede [Anne] her
place.”31 an overt allusion to Anne’s role in Catherine of Aragon’s doom (Romani,
II.vi.26). In a final attempt to save Anne’s life, Percy announces that she was his wife
before she married Henri and therefore could not have committed adultery against the
king. Seeing Percy make this sacrifice, Anne is fully convinced that heaven is justly
punishing her for having betrayed Percy for a throne full of “mourning, hopelessness, and
horror” (Romani, II.vi.27).32

In the ensuing scenes, Anne is found guilty and condemned to death along with
her brother, Percy, and Smeton. While awaiting execution, she suffers from fits of
delusion, a representation found in the historical record but seemingly exaggerated in this
work for dramatic effect.33 The depiction of madness had become a convention of opera
in the first half of the nineteenth century and, in this instance, served as the perfect
opportunity for a virtuoso performance by Madame Pasta, the original Anna.34 In this
momentous scene, the queen imagines that she is preparing for her wedding, but her
reverie is interrupted when the prisoners are summoned from their cells to be executed.
Her final farewells to her co-accused are interrupted by another bout of delirium, soon

31 “La justice n’a cessé de régner en Angleterre que lorsqu’une reine dut vous céder la place…”
32 “…le deuil, le désespoir et l’horreur.”
33 In the Tower of London, Anne was kept under surveillance by the wife of the Constable of the Tower. According
to this Lady Kingston, Anne would express great sorrow in one moment and then descend into fits of laughter the
next. In a letter from Sir Kingston to Thomas Cromwell, dated the day of Anne’s execution, he writes, “This
morning she sent for me, that I might be with her at such time as she received the good Lord, to the intent I should
hear her speak as touching her innocency alway to be clear. And in the writing of this she sent for me, and at my
coming she said, ‘Mr. Kingston, I hear I shall not die afore noon, and I am very sorry therefore, for I thought to be
dead by this time and past my pain’. I told her it should be no pain, it was so little. And then she said, ‘I heard say
the executioner was very good, and I have a little neck’, and then put her hands about it, laughing heartily. I have
seen many men and also women executed, and that they have been in great sorrow, and to my knowledge this lady
has much joy in death. Sir, her almoner is continually with her, and had been since two o’clock after midnight.”
34 Giuditta Pasta was one of the great voices of her time and enjoyed showing off this talent. In 1823, she had added
an aria to showcase her virtuoso singing to Castil-Blaze’s libretto for Otello, ou le More de Venise, opéra en trois
actes. See Cheyne, note 19.
ended by the sound of cannon to announce the king’s marriage to Jeanne Seymour. In her last moments of lucidity, Anne is depicted with the courage and grace of a saint.\textsuperscript{35} Addressing the absent royal newlyweds, she says: “Treacherous couple! in this solemn moment, I do not call vengeance upon you…I will descend into the tomb open at my feet with a pardon on my lips…Ah! let me find grace near the Everlasting Lord, and make me worthy of his mercy” (Romani, II.xiii.35).\textsuperscript{36} With that, Anne faints and all present declare that “a victim has already been sacrificed!” (Romani, II.xiii.35).\textsuperscript{37}

Romani’s libretto clearly supports Anne’s characterization as a victim without entirely neglecting the historical accounts of her ambition. The plot can almost be viewed as a cautionary tale, warning against such a sin. Anne recounts how she sacrificed true love for a crown of thorns, destroying her predecessor in the process. However, she never appears to be proud of having achieved her ambition, rather citing it as her most unfortunate mistake and accepting heaven’s punishment for it. The opera quickly achieved international success and was very well received in Paris; \textit{Le Figaro} declared that “all of Paris will want to see \textit{Anna Bolena}; it is not only an opera of the first order, sung with charm and perfection, but a beautiful tragedy depicted with both emotion and dignity” (\textit{Figaro}, 1831, 3).\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35}“For Anna it marks the point at which she comes to terms with her undeserved fate, an aspect not of weakness but of strength; it signals the dramatic climax of the opera.” See Hibberd, 7. I would like to thank Professor Sarah Hibberd of the University of Nottingham for sending me an English version of her article, “Traditions of Madness: \textit{Anna Bolena} in Paris,” which was not available online.

\textsuperscript{36}“Couple perfide! dans cet instant solennel, je n’appelle pas sur vous la foudre vengeresse… Je vais descendre dans le tombeau qui est ouvert sous mes pieds, le pardon sur mes lèvres… Ah! puisse-t-il me faire trouver grâce auprès de l’Eternel, et me rendre digne de sa clémence.”

\textsuperscript{37}“On a déjà immolé une victime!”

\textsuperscript{38}“Tout Paris voudra voir \textit{Anna Bolena}; c’est non seulement un opéra du premier ordre chanté avec charme et perfection, mais une belle tragédie jouée avec ensemble, sentiment et dignité.”
The success that *Anna Bolena* met in Paris served as inspiration for celebrated opera critic François-Henri-Joseph Castil-Blaze to embark upon his own adaptation of Romani’s libretto in 1835. Castil-Blaze had reviewed the first performance of the opera in Paris (1 September 1831) in *Le Journal des Débats politiques et littéraires*. In his review of 3 September 1831, Castil-Blaze summarized the opera in great detail, identifying many instances of historical license taken by Donizetti and Romani, but calling them justified by the “brilliant success” of the spectacle (Castil-Blaze, “Feuilleton,” 1-2).\(^{39}\) Clearly sympathetic toward Henry’s second wife, it seems as if the critic had a firm grasp on the historical context of the opera, taking issue with the representation of Anne’s delirium as she marched to her execution: “Another [example of poetic] license was to have made Anne Boleyn delirious at the moment when she walks to her death. Few women have shown as much composure, calmness, and serenity as this woman at the hour of her martyrdom” ( Castil-Blaze, “Feuilleton,” 2).\(^{40}\) His account of her final hours emphasizes her innocence and her concern for her young daughter. When Castil-Blaze returns to his initial objective – reviewing the opera – he has only the highest praise for the authenticity of the costumes and the actors’ execution of the score, even if the score itself was unremarkable due to its lack of originality. The review, while thorough and generally praising the success of Donizetti’s first Parisian venture, establishes a baseline for the changes that Castil-Blaze would make in his own adaptation of the opera.

Castil-Blaze prefaced his adaptation of *Anne de Boulen* with “Deux mots au Lecteur,” a short summary praising Donizetti’s original work, dubbing it “the most beautiful opera made in

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\(^{39}\) Hibberd justifies Anne’s delirium as “not the theme of the opera,” but “rather the development in her character from the beginning of the opera… Moreover, the final cabaletta, while a culmination of her emotion, does not signal the climax of her delirium, but a return to sanity; she is able to face her execution with dignity.” See Hibberd, 4.

\(^{40}\) “C’est encore une licence que d’avoir fait délirer Anne Boleyn au moment de marcher à la mort. Peu de femmes ont montré autant de philosophie, de calme et de sérénité, que cette reine à l’heure du supplice.”
Italy since Rossini’s departure” (Castil-Blaze, Anne de Boulen, 5), but also outlining the changes he made in his version of the opera. Though he refers to his work as a translation and the plot is basically the same, the extent of the additions and changes made to the original translation of the French are substantial enough to render it an adaptation, albeit a close one. The most noticeable change is that rather than being divided into two acts, as in the original Italian, Castil-Blaze splits the action into three acts; the first ends after Anne and Percy’s original encounter in front of the king and his cortege and the second after Henry discovers Anne, Percy, and Smeton in the queen’s apartment and orders their arrest. In doing so, Castil-Blaze shows the progression of Anne’s unhappiness and misfortune: she is transformed from a neglected wife reintroduced to her first love, to a victim of circumstances pieced together against her, and finally to a disgraced prisoner gripped by delirium in the face of her imminent demise.

Castil-Blaze identifies another noteworthy addition he makes to the work: verse. The initial French translation was written entirely in prose, emphasizing content and capturing little to none of the original Italian’s lyrical nature. Castil-Blaze, though keeping some sections in prose, writes the majority of the libretto in verse. He is clearly proud of this achievement and though he admits that his rhymes are poor, he adds, “one must admit that [they] are the best ever written in France for music” (Castil-Blaze, Anne de Boulen, 7). The auditory experience having been enhanced by this addition, Castil-Blaze attempts to improve the visual experience of his audience by elaborating upon both the set design and describing the costume design for each character.

41 “…le plus bel opéra fait en Italie depuis que Rossini l’a quittée…”
42 In an “Analyse de Anne de Boulen” produced in 1846, the opera is divided further into four acts.
43 “…on voudra bien convenir que ces vers sont les meilleurs que l’on ait jamais écrits en France pour la musique.”
Technical adaptations aside, Castil-Blaze also manipulated and amended the content of the original French translation. Perhaps one of his most significant omissions is the reference to Catherine of Aragon from the first scene of Act I in the original translation. By completely removing the notion of divine intervention to punish Anne for her usurpation of Henry’s first queen, Castil-Blaze renders Anne a more sympathetic character from the start. Henry’s persecution can no longer be linked, however loosely, to heavenly justice and Anne’s status as a martyr is validated. Catherine is only mentioned in the final act, when Anne is praying. She feels remorse for her treatment of Catherine and knows that she must be punished, but views her fate as much too cruel. Another interesting tactic employed in this adaptation is an earlier introduction of the king-queen-musician love triangle. Smeton, whom Castil-Blaze renames Alfred, makes his love for Anne known to the audience almost immediately. When Anne bids him sing in Act I, scene ii, Alfred asks for love to inspire his song in an aside. By beginning to develop Alfred’s infatuation earlier in the play, Castil-Blaze seems to assign him the importance that his role deserves. It will be his dropping of Anne’s portrait that the king takes as incontrovertible proof of his wife’s infidelity. Alfred’s confession will later (and more logically) be instrumental in condemning Anne not only to death, but to infamy.

Anne’s daughter, Elisabeth, is also given further mention in the Castil-Blaze adaptation of *Anne de Boulen*. In Romani’s version, Henri mentions her in passing, threatening to ruin her alongside her mother. He expresses the same sentiments in the Castil-Blaze edition, but in the next scene, Jeanne uses Elisabeth to urge Henri to act with clemency for Anne: “In the name of your daughter, in the name of Elisabeth whom you love, can you truly no longer love her mother,
can you destroy her? Do you dare?” (Castil-Blaze, *Anne de Boulen*, III.x.53). It is possible that Elisabeth takes on a slightly greater role in this later adaptation due to the influence of Pagès and Decaisne’s works (to be discussed later), which appeared at the Salon of 1833 and emphasized Anne’s role as a mother.

Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of Castil-Blaze’s adaptation is not what he changed, but rather what he kept the same: Anne’s ending. In his review of Donizetti and Romani’s representation, Castil-Blaze had taken issue with Anne’s delirium in the moments before her death. However, he maintains this aspect of the plot in his own libretto. Nevertheless, he does afford her the dignity of a more impassioned final speech, enhanced by his rhyme scheme:

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Couple infâme! [est-ce] au ciel, à sa vengeance,
Que je m’adresse ? non : l’innocence,
Quand son heure dernière s’avance,
Vous pardonne, et d’un Dieu de clémence
A, pour vous, imploré la bonté.
Le cruel, au milieu de sa fête,
Il attend qu’on lui montre ma tête !
Que ce gage sanglant enfin lui soit porté (Castil-Blaze, *Anne de Boulen*, III.xviii.62).
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This passage evokes the importance of the rhyme scheme in Castil-Blaze’s adaptation. His imagery is sharpened through the juxtaposition of “vengeance” and “innocence” as well as the offering of Anne’s “tête” as a bloody trophy at the “fête” celebrating Henri and Jeanne’s marriage. Although Anne still swoons before the final curtain, her dramatic presence in that moment is far greater than that in the Romani version, where the chorus, not Anne, is given the

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44 “Au nom de votre fille, au nom d’Elisabeth que vous chérissez, pouvez-vous ne plus aimer sa mère, pouvez-vous l’immoler? l’oserez-vous ?”

45 “Vile couple! do I address myself to heaven and its vengeance? no: innocence, when its final hour draws near, pardons you, and from a merciful God implores His kindness. That cruel man, in the middle of his celebration, waits for someone to present him with my head! Let this bloody trophy be brought to him at last.”
last word. Here, instead, Castil-Blaze leaves his audience with the image of a brutal beheading without having to violate the code of propriety (*bienséances*) that discourages onstage depictions of death.

The 1835 adaptation of *Anne de Boulen* is not ground-breaking in its originality. In fact, there are several sections that are nearly identical to the 1831 translation of Romani’s original text. Nonetheless, the fact that Castil-Blaze undertook such a project shows the continuing popularity of and demand for representations of Anne Boleyn during the 1830s in France. The changes that he made to the libretto reflect a measured effort to render Anne even more pitiable than the *Anna Bolena* of the Théâtre-Italien in 1831.

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*Anne Boleyn on Canvas*

![Figure 1: Anne Boleyn à la tour de Londres dans les premiers moments de son arrestation, Édouard Cibot (1835)](image)

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46 Castil-Blaze has abandoned the Italian convention of a “cortège sur scène” during the final words of the victim facing execution. Rather than having Rochefort, Richard, and Alfred present for Anne’s declaration, she is accompanied only by the chorus. (See Sala, 492.)
The success of *Anna Bolena* was an inspiration for many artists, including Édouard Cibot who produced perhaps the most famous painting of Anne dating from this period (see figure 1). As *Anna Bolena* was considered Donizetti’s chef-d’œuvre, so too was *Anne Boleyn à la tour de Londres dans les premiers moments de son arrestation* thought to be Cibot’s masterpiece. Exhibited at the Salon of 1835, this massive painting, standing at over five feet tall and nearly four and a half feet wide, was a focal point of the Salon. Cibot depicts Anne dressed in a lavender and burgundy gown, accented in cloth of gold. Her skin is pale and her hair a lighter brown than in most other artistic representations of the queen. She rests her head in resigned despair on the lap of her lady-in-waiting, who weeps into her handkerchief while holding onto Anne’s delicate hand. Cibot uses light to accent Anne, giving her an almost saintly glow that contrasts with the shadows that surround her companion. Reflecting the somberness of the painting, the Musée Rolin in Autun, France, which today houses Cibot’s painting, indexes the work under the terms “sadness,” “crying,” and “prisoner” and calls her a celebrated martyr in the Protestant culture. By placing a prayer book in the background, open to a picture of Christ’s crucifixion, Cibot tries to draw parallels between Anne’s martyrdom and that of Jesus: Anne must die to allow Henry to remarry and have a male heir, thereby saving the succession, just as Jesus had to sacrifice himself to save humanity from its sinfulness.

47 “CIBOT (Édouard), peintre d’histoire, de genre et de portraits, r. Geoffroy-l’Angevin, 7, né à Paris, en 1799, él. de Guérin et Picot. Ses ouvrages sont : Une femme blessée oubliant ses souffrances pour ne s’occuper que de son enfant qu’elle allaite, 6 p. 4 po. de haut sur 7 p. 6 po. de large, exp. en 1827 ; plusieurs études de femme, que l’on voit chez Brulon, marchand de couleurs, r. de l’Arbre-Sec ; Les Paresseuses, étude, tableau acheté par la ville de Cambray qui a décerné une méd. de bronze à l’auteur ; Judith se rendant au camp d’Holopherne, étude, ces deux derniers tableaux ont été exposés au Musée de Cambray en 1828 ; Jésus tenté par Satan, 9 p. 2 po. sur 7 p. 6 po. (Galerie Lebrun) ; Un portrait, exp. en 1830, au Lux.” Quoted from *La Dictionnaire des artistes de l’école française au XIXe siècle* (1831), p. 146. It is noteworthy that he is characterized a historical painter, with many studies of women included in his artistic repertoire.

48 “tristesse,” “pleurer,” and “prisonnier.” Indexation and description cited from Musée Rolin’s records received in an email from the museum’s director, dated 2 April 2012.
Cibot’s intent is clear: he seeks to portray Anne as an innocent victim, a prisoner of the husband who had once fought so hard to win her. Kneeling at the feet of her lady-in-waiting, Anne’s regal glow inspires pity in the viewer without sacrificing her queenly dignity. But what if Anne Boleyn is not the figure in the foreground? What if she is, in fact, the figure that Cibot relegated to shadows and whose face is hidden behind her handkerchief? Australian author Wendy J. Dunn makes a compelling case for this interpretation of Cibot’s work. She points out that the woman in the foreground wears her hair loose while the woman in the background has hers secured firmly under her headpiece. During Tudor times, only unmarried women were permitted to wear their hair loose in public – the sole exception being queens at their coronation. In the moment represented by Cibot, Anne was neither unmarried nor awaiting her coronation; Dunn therefore assumes that the kneeling woman is a younger maid. In addition, the author notes that the woman in the background is wearing black, a color known to be preferred by the doomed queen, and she posits that the badge worn at her chest is the Boleyn family crest. Lastly, Dunn points out that the woman in the background is more elevated, being seated on a chair or bed. The woman kneeling in the foreground places herself lower, possibly deferring to the higher rank of the woman in black.49

While Dunn’s theory sounds credible, her evidence is circumstantial and may be easily explained away. It is true that the kneeling woman’s hair has come loose from underneath her gable hood, but the fact that it is still in braids suggests that perhaps its exposure was accidental. On the other hand, the loose hair could be an overt expression of grief, like that of Queen

49 Summary of Dunn’s argument in “Anne Boleyn in the Tower by Edouard Cibot (Australia Day Book Giveaway Hop).”
Elizabeth Woodville in Shakespeare’s *Richard III*.\(^{50}\) In any case, Anne would not have been expected to abide by the customary coiffure of Henry VIII’s court within the privacy of the Tower of London. Dunn is correct in her assertion that Anne Boleyn frequently wore black; many contemporary descriptions support this fact. However, it would have been customary for the ladies attending her to wear black as a symbol of sadness for their disgraced queen. The design of the badge on the bodice of the black gown is incredibly difficult to distinguish; assuming it is the Boleyn family crest, it is not out of the realm of possibility that Anne would have gifted it to her lady to thank her for her loyalty. The final count of Dunn’s argument is especially interesting and perhaps most strongly supports the theory that the woman in the background is Anne Boleyn. Customs of precedence did dictate that those of higher social stature were to be more elevated than their inferiors. In the moment captured in this particular work, however, Anne is not a queen basking in all of her royal glory. She has been disgraced, imprisoned, and faces execution. Cibot may have chosen to paint her kneeling to reflect her humbled state and her submission to her fate.

I cannot pretend that my interpretation of Cibot’s painting is more authoritative than Dunn’s. We are both limited to studying the same canvas, neither of us having the advantage of knowing the artist’s original intent. Nevertheless, my interpretation is more widely supported by both contemporary and modern analysis of the painting. The *Journal des Artistes*, published on 12 April 1835 (the same year the painting appeared at the Salon), identified Anne as “kneeling, slumped over herself, with her head resting on the lap of the only woman permitted to

\(^{50}\) Queen Elizabeth enters with “with her hair about her ears” to announce the death of her husband, Edward IV, in Act II, scene ii.
accompany her” (C.V., 228).51 The review goes on to identify her companion who “hides her face in her sorrow so as to shift all interest toward the face of the unfortunate Anne Boleyn” (C.V., 228).52 If this interpretation had contradicted the artist’s intention, it is likely he would have clarified his vision of the scene. However, nearly every modern review I have encountered has highlighted “the contrast between the young queen, quietly contemplating death, and the grief, too deep to be witnessed, of the lady-in-waiting, who hides her face” (see Bann and Whitely, 146). It is therefore safe to conclude that the figure in the foreground is the despondent figure of Queen Anne Boleyn and the figure in the background a loyal companion.

In his assessment of Cibot’s work, Matthieu Pinette highlights the likelihood that the artist was influenced by Donizetti’s representation of Anne Boleyn: “[Anne] inspired numerous French artists during the first half of the nineteenth century; we can assume that the 1831 triumph in Paris of Donizetti’s opera, Anna Bolena, performed for the first time in 1830 in Milan, was to some extent responsible for this” (Pinette, 429-30).53 The theory that Cibot was influenced by Anna Bolena is rendered more credible by not only the Musée Rolin’s web site, which notes that the painting was created merely a year after the Paris debut of the opera, but also the catalog for a 1978 exhibit at the Heim Gallery in London, entitled “Forgotten French Art from the First to the Second Empire” as well as that of a 2010 exhibit at the National Gallery in London, entitled “Painting History: Delaroche and Lady Jane Grey.” 54

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51 “Elle est agenouillée, affaissée sur elle-même, et la tête repose sur les genoux de la seule femme à qui il ait été permis de l’accompagner.”
52 “La suivante, dans son chagrin, se cache le visage, de sorte que tout l’intérêt se reporte sur la tête de l’infortunée Anne de Boleyn.”
53 “Le personnage a inspiré plusieurs artistes français dans la première moitié du XIXᵉ siècle ; on peut penser que la création triomphale à Paris, en 1831 de l’opéra de Donizetti, Anna Bolena, représenté pour la première fois à Milan en 1830, n’y est pas étrangère.”
54 See “Musée Rolin, Autun : Anne de Boleyn.” musées Bourgogne ; “Édouard Cibot.” Forgotten French Art from the First to the Second Empire: Autumn Exhibition, November 23- December 22, 1978. no. 18; and Bann and Whitely, 146.
Cibot’s representation of Anne is often exhibited alongside the works of his celebrated contemporary, Paul Delaroche, who was renowned for his paintings depicting the Princes in the Tower, the execution of Lady Jane Grey, and the interrogation of Joan of Arc (see Jasmin, 253). Pinette notes that Cibot, like Delaroche, uses light to balance “the fragility of the victims and the heaviness of the atmosphere” (430). Cibot’s Anne is most commonly compared to Delaroche’s *The Execution of Lady Jane Grey*, exhibited in the Salon of 1834 (see figure 2). The Heim Gallery exhibition catalog notes that both artists achieve their effect using the “dual appeal of the depiction of a beautiful woman in distress and […] the rendition of sumptuous fabrics” (“Edouard Cibot,” no.18). However, if the two paintings are examined more closely, it is clear that their similarities transcend the technique used in painting fabrics. Delaroche’s Jane Grey,

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55 “…la fragilité des victimes et la lourdeur de l’atmosphère.”
dressed in virginal white, dominates the work as she kneels before the executioner’s block, blindfolded and assisted by the Lieutenant of the Tower of London. Her demise is depicted as being more imminent than that of Cibot’s royal subject. Jane’s executioner stands to the side, ax in hand and seemingly untroubled by what he is about to do. It would appear, however, that Cibot drew inspiration not just from the focal point of Delaroche’s masterpiece, but also from its emotional background. To the left of the helpless Jane Grey, two of her women are overcome by grief, one seeming to have collapsed under the weight of her sorrow and the other hiding her face and presumably weeping into the wall. The former bears a strong resemblance to the kneeling woman in Cibot’s painting: the style and color schemes of their dresses are nearly identical and both women share the same expression of resigned despair. The latter is nearly identical to the woman weeping into a handkerchief in Cibot’s painting. Both women are dressed in mourning black, accented with gold. Moreover, both of their faces are completely concealed, hiding not only their grief, but their identities. Considering the overwhelming popularity of Delaroche’s painting at the Salon of 1834, it is likely that Cibot did adapt the raw emotion of Jane Grey’s ladies to use as the focal point of his own masterpiece the following year.
Figure 3: Condamnation d’Anne de Boulen, by Mademoiselle A. Pagès (1833)

Figure 4: Adieux d’Anne de Boulen à sa fille, by M. Henri Decaisne (1833)

56 “PAGÈS (Mlle Aimée), peintre de genre et de portraits, r. de l’Abbaye, 3, née à Paris le 24 août 1803, él. de M. Meynier. A exp. au M. R. en 1822, Psyché enlevée par Zéphire ; Un portrait de femme. En 1824, Daphnis et Chloé ; Clotilde et Aurélien, tableaux de chevalet, et des portraits. En 1827, Une étude de femme et d’enfant, grands comme nature, et des portraits. En 1826, elle a eu à exécuter des tab. qui lui avaient été commandés par la M. d. R. et par le M. I. Elle a exp. en 1827, à la gal. Lebrun, pour l’extinction de la mendicité, deux tab. de chev. : La pauvre fille d’après une élégie de M. Soumet ; La grand’mère, d’après une ballade de M. Victor Hugo.” Quoted from La Dictionnaire des artistes de l’école française au XIXe siècle (1831), p. 525. Mlle. Pagès later married and took the name Mme. Brune. This profile indicates she was known for her representations of women and had used one of Victor Hugo’s works as inspiration for at least one of her works and so may have easily been influenced by other dramatic works, like Anna Bolena.
It is also likely that Édouard Cibot was influenced by two works that had appeared at the Salon of 1833: *Condamnation d'Anne de Boulen* by Mademoiselle A. Pagès (figure 3) and *Adieux d'Anne de Boulen à sa fille* by M. Henri Decaisne (figure 4). Both works were included in C. P. Landon’s *Annales du Musée et de l’École Moderne des Beaux-Arts*, describing all of the works that appeared at the 1833 Salon. These pieces appear to have been, though perhaps unbeknownst to the artists, displayed as companion pieces. Pagès and Decaisne emphasize the importance of Anne’s role as a mother to her daughter Elizabeth, something largely neglected in the works previously discussed here. Both paintings represent a moment – Anne’s final farewell to young Elizabeth – that has no verifiable foundation in the historical record and yet has the potential to evoke an extremely emotional response in their viewers.

Pagès’ *Condamnation d'Anne de Boulen* depicts Anne seated, dressed in rich furs with her hair worn loose around her shoulders (probably to Wendy Dunn’s chagrin), caressing her young daughter’s hair as her daughter clings to her sleeve. They are surrounded by three ladies, all grieving deeply, and a mournful gentleman who presumably holds Anne’s death warrant in hand. Like Cibot’s work, one of Anne’s women sobs into her hands, obscuring the grief on her face, while the others kneel and raise their eyes toward heaven. The description of this work

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57 “DECAISNE (Henry), peintre d’histoire et portraits, Paris, r. St.-Lazare, 3o, né à Bruxelles de parents français en 1799, él. de David, Girodet et de M. le baron Gros. Cet artiste a exposé : en 1824, Ecce homo ; Une famille indienne exilée ; Le Paria et le jeune Bramine ; Mort des neveux de Richard III ; divers portraits. En 1827, Milton aveugle dictant le Paradis perdu à ses filles ; Adieux de Charles Ier ; Une jeune fille à sa fenêtre ; Une jeune mulâtre tenant un enfant, (à M. Didot) ; Le Père malade, (à M. Binant) ; Le Mari malade ; Plusieurs portraits ; Marguerite de Valois sauvant la vie à un protestant, scène de la St. Barthélemy, ce tab. a été réexp. en 1830 au Lux. En 1826 à la gal. Lebrun, Un Souliote en embuscade ; Une jeune fille au pied d’une croix ; Un factionnaire grec trouvant sur le rivage le corps d’une jeune fille de Chios ; Intérieur d’une partie de l’ancienne église de St.-Julien à Tours ; Une femme portant du poisson. En 1829 à la S. d. A. d. A., Lady Francis implorant Cromwell son père en faveur des Stuarts ; Arabe lisant le Coran, tête d’étude ; et en 1830 au Lux., Scène amoureuse, (costume du règne de Louis XIII) ; Portrait de J.-B. Say, économiste ; Portrait de M. Gustave de Montebello ; et une Tête de prêtre arménien. Il a fait en outre divers portraits et des albums lithographiques. Cet artiste a obtenu une méd. à l’exp. de 1827, et tient atelier d’élèves.” Quoted from *La Dictionnaire des artistes de l’école française au XIXe siècle* (1831), pp. 185-86. Decaisne had a vast repertoire of historic paintings, including the deaths of Richard III’s nephews; the Saint Bartholomew Day massacre; and Lady Francis intervening with her father, Oliver Cromwell, in the Stuarts’ favor.
compares Anne’s fate to that of Mary Stuart, queen of Scots, (ironically condemned by Anne’s own daughter) and indicates that Mademoiselle Pagès’ painting is the first artistic representation of Anne’s “deplorable end”\(^\text{58}\) to appear on the scene in many years (Landon, 137). However, the description goes on to describe Anne, incorrectly, as the “first victim of the unbridled passions of Henry VIII”\(^\text{59}\) when, in fact, many, including his first wife, had previously been sacrificed to satisfy the king’s desires.

Decaisne’s representation of Anne evokes more emotion, with Anne in the foreground, kneeling and clinging to her young daughter whose expression seems to be beseeching her mother to stay with her. The moment depicted is right before Anne must approach the scaffold; an executioner, as well as a waiting crowd, can be seen in the background. Anne’s expression appears to be one of defiance or resentment at having to abandon her daughter. This same look is mirrored on the face of some of her women, while others are clearly mourning their queen’s imminent death. As always, there is one woman who is concealing her face from the viewer.

Decaisne’s painting stands in marked contrast to Cibot and Pagès’ renderings of Anne in that her victimization is made more public. Cibot and Pagès both depict moments of private grief with few witnesses. Anne’s farewell to Elizabeth, as realized by Decaisne, is observed not only by her ladies, but also several male courtiers and what appear to be clergymen assembled to witness the queen’s execution. They appear on the right side of the painting, their erect, monumental forms and lack of expression contrasting with the evident grief of the figures on the left side of the painting.\(^\text{60}\)

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\(^{58}\) “…fin deplorable…”.

\(^{59}\) “…cette première victime des passions effrénées de Henri VIII.”

\(^{60}\) Decaisne’s painting may have inspired Gustaf Wappers’ 1838 *Anne Boleyn Says a Final Goodbye to her Daughter, Princess Elizabeth*. My thanks to Professor Janet Polasky, a specialist in Belgian history, who contacted
The reason for the resurgence in French artistic depictions of Anne during the 1830s is accounted for, at least in part, in the *Annales du Musée*’s summary of the works that appeared at the Salon of 1833. The analysis of *Condamnation d’Anne de Boulen* includes speculation about Henry’s motives for condemning a seemingly innocent woman to death, citing the possibility that he was trying to punish her licentiousness as a youth at the French court. This theory, together with the praise given to Anne, in the description of Decaisne’s painting, for her attempt to bring French charm to the English court, likely demonstrate a major reason for French fascination with Anne. She was a Francophile, having spent the majority of her formative years at the French court, and was instrumental in promoting French tradition and culture at the English court. If there could not be a French princess sitting on the English throne, there was at least a French ally.

It would seem that Cibot may have read the criticism of these two works in the *Annales* as he is not guilty of the faults Pagès and Decaisne were accused of committing. The former was censured for not having captured the mood of the situation at hand, appearing to be quite peaceful and perhaps even joyful in the presence of the daughter she is about to leave motherless. C. P. Landon, the author of *Annales*, advises Pagès that “in order to make the heroine captivate the audience, she must be shown to be calm, but grave, giving her a solid and courageous manner and not the nonchalance and pretentious abandon of a woman surrounded by admirers” (139). Cibot seems to have captured exactly that mood in his portrayal of Anne two years later. However, when one considers that the artist was herself a woman, it is perhaps necessary to reassess the mood of the painting. Anne’s perceived nonchalance is more likely a façade.

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several colleagues in Belgium regarding this matter. At this time, this is only conjecture and cannot be confirmed by scholars in the field.

61 “Pour que l’héroïne intéressât, il fallait la montrer calme, mais grave, lui donner une tenue ferme et courageuse, et non la mollesse et l’abandon prétentieux d’une femme entourée d’admirateurs.”
constructed for the benefit of her daughter. Surrounded by the emotion of her ladies, Anne is forced to remain reserved so as not to overwhelm the young Elizabeth, who would have been confused at such a commotion surrounding her mother. Decaisne is not criticized for the mood of his piece, having captured Anne’s reluctance and bitterness in leaving her daughter. Landon’s reproach rather stems from the proximity of the executioner to the scene happening in the foreground. The critic claims that this feature causes the painting to take on the air of a theatrical advertisement, effectively destroying the authenticity and composition of the piece. Cibot, on the other hand, is able to convey the hopelessness that comes with the imminence of death more tastefully, relying on the palpable sorrow and resignation of his subjects and subtlety of the crucifixion scene in the Bible to suggest Anne’s fate rather than the crude presence of an executioner’s blade.

Édouard Cibot’s representation of Anne Boleyn is the culmination of previous efforts to express the hopelessness of the doomed queen’s situation. Although he eliminates the presence of Elizabeth, and therefore the aspect of maternal loss, Cibot presents Anne as a martyr and is the sole artist who was able to capture the proper mood of both a woman contemplating the inevitability of her own death and the unmitigated anguish of her last loyal attendant. His success in doing so is likely the reason why *Anne Boleyn à la tour de Londres dans les premiers moments de son arrestation* remains the defining artistic depiction of Anne from the period while his contemporaries have faded into relative obscurity.

**Anne Boleyn in Literature**

The dramatic and artistic representations of Anne Boleyn discussed thus far have largely supported the notion that she was, if not an innocent victim, at least a victim. In 1837, however,
Paul de Musset produced a more complete image of Anne. Entitling the work simply *Anne Boleyn*, the author termed it a “biographical novel” (Musset, I: vi),\(^6^2\) claiming that such a designation presented fewer risks than writing a historical novel. Believing that “[f]ate inadvertently made a novel of Anne Boleyn’s destiny”,\(^6^3\) Musset attempted to keep his record of Anne’s life faithful to the historical record while also inserting the emotion normally omitted from those accounts (Musset, I: vi). The result is our most comprehensive chronological depiction of Anne’s life, beginning in 1514 with the marriage of Mary Tudor to French King Louis XII and Anne’s departure to France. The account concludes with the aftermath of her execution in 1536.

Musset’s work is especially important for the extensive psychological insight it affords into Anne Boleyn. In other works, we have seen merely the anguish of her final days, but none of the drive and ambition that helped her to achieve the highest rank in the land. The historical record indicates that Anne Boleyn was an extremely ambitious woman – a trait alluded to in both the Romani and Castil-Blaze representations of *Anne de Boulen*. However, in those works, the audience is never afforded a direct rendering of Anne’s ambition, witnessing only the negative effects of it. Although the majority of his text is written from a third person perspective, Paul de Musset offers a window into Anne’s soul through a series of letters that she writes to her confidante, Nancy, during her courtship with Percy and at the beginning of the king’s infatuation with her.\(^6^4\) Believing herself abandoned by her first love, Percy, Anne decides to use her feminine attractions to encourage and manipulate the king’s affections:

\(^{6^2}\) “…roman biographique.”

\(^{6^3}\) “Le sort a fait, sans y penser, de la destinée d’Anne Boleyn un roman.”

\(^{6^4}\) There are also numerous instances in which de Musset addresses his readers directly to clarify Anne’s feelings and actions.
I will pursue my course and I will succeed, I am sure of it. My head is mistress and has taken the advantage from my heart, which, I fear, would have forced me to make rash decisions... I realize perfectly the power afforded to women and I will use mine to its highest potential... The king’s flaws themselves increase my chances of success. Once they have succeeded in bringing about my elevation, Lord willing, maybe I will succeed in refining his inherently brutish nature (Musset, I: 125-26).

Anne’s ambition turns toward the bloodlust more commonly associated with her husband in her dealings with Thomas Wolsey, the Cardinal of York and Henry’s chief advisor during his divorce proceedings. After discovering that Wolsey pursued the king’s divorce in an effort to make an alliance with a French princess, Anne denounces the councilor and orders him banished from court. Henry, trying to appease her, says that he will order him executed at her pleasure. In a letter to Nancy, Anne writes that “...instead of being seized with fright and disgust in hearing this barbaric declaration, I felt the intense desire to bear the scepter in my weak hands; to share this tremendous power...” (Musset, I: 128). The draw of absolute power that Anne begins to feel puts her at odds with the status usually reserved for her sex: “I feel as if I have the genius and the strength of a hero; that my destiny raises me above my sad sex. I am the ambitious man, risking his life for his great plans and poets will celebrate my success or my fall” (Musset, I: 129-30). One wonders if Musset’s depiction of Anne in this stage of the novel was influenced by his association with his brother’s mistress George Sand, a female author now remembered by her gender-bending wardrobe, attitude, and ambition. Though Anne did not dress in men’s

65 “Je poursuivrai donc mon chemin, et je réussirai, j’en suis sûre, parce que ma tête est la maîtresse, et qu’elle a pris l’avantage sur mon cœur, dont j’avais à craindre les mouvements fort peu réfléchis... Je me rends compte parfaitement du pouvoir donné aux femmes, et je l’utiliserais de mon mieux... Les défauts mêmes du prince augmentent mes chances de succès. Une fois qu’ils auront causé mon élévation, Dieu aidant, je réussirai peut-être à polir ce naturel sauvage.”

66 “…au lieu d’être saisie d’effroi et de dégoût en écoutant ce langage barbare, je sentis un désir extrême de porter mes faibles mains sur le sceptre ; de partager ce pouvoir si redoutable…”

67 “Il me semble que j’ai le génie et la force d’un héros ; que ma destinée m’élève au-dessus de mon sexe plaintif, que je suis un homme, un ambitieux risquant sa vie pour de grands projets, et dont les poètes célébreront les succès ou la chute.”
clothing, she did seek to wield power and influence at the male-dominated English court just as Sand strove to make a name for herself in literary circles controlled largely by men.

Anne’s confidence is short-lived, shattered by the return of Percy, whom Anne had believed to have abandoned her. Their reunion, as in the works of Romani and Castil-Blaze, is full of emotion that can only be attributed to undying love, but de Musset significantly alters the situation by having Percy, while still wishing to remain in her heart, encourage Anne to take the throne since he is already unhappily married. Anne recounts her promise to pursue her destiny in a letter to Nancy, but vows to never stop loving Percy, placing her love for him above all of her ambitions.

The title of a modern adaptation of the novel, La dynastie Tudor: Anne Boleyn, la folle obsession du roi, best captures the plot of the story. De Musset describes Henry’s pursuit of Anne, the uncertainty of her affections and the difficulty in obtaining a divorce driving him near to madness. However, the author also depicts the changing tides of Henry’s passions, recounting how the madness with which he acquired Anne’s hand redirected itself to bring about her downfall. The second volume of the work focuses on the final stages of Anne’s ascent to the throne; Henry’s willingness to end the lives of his closest ministers, like Wolsey, acts as foreshadowing for his eventual plan to kill the woman for whom he had changed history.

In Volume Two of de Musset’s novel, it appears that Anne’s outlook regarding her future has changed. Seemingly having forgotten Percy, Anne is depicted as a woman humbled by the love she bears for her king: “When I think of the acclaim that I have received from this passion and the impact that it has had on all of Europe, and of the crown soon to rest on my humble head,
I am ashamed that all I have to give in return is my loving and devoted heart’ (Musset, 2: 11). Her parents, the Count and Countess of Wiltshire, want more in return. On the eve of Anne’s secret marriage to Henry, they urge her not to forget about her family and scold her for not already having profited more from his affections (see Musset, 2: 42-43). Her father intends to use his daughter to gain a prized position on the king’s council, while her mother is concerned only with finding a suitable home away from court so she won’t have to suffer the indignity of being outranked by her daughter at court. It is in this scene that readers catch a glimpse of the extreme pressure that Anne was under and the extent to which she was her family’s pawn in their struggle for dominance at Henry’s court.

Anne’s brother, George, is her only true ally at her husband’s court, but his fidelity and affection will be outweighed by his wife’s implacable hatred for Anne and her desire to bring about her sister-in-law’s ruin. Both this fraternal affection and this blind hatred play an instrumental role in Anne’s downfall. It will be George’s wife, Lady Rochford, who inspires the Seymour family to put forth Jeanne as a candidate to supplant Anne in her husband’s affections. She conspires with Jeanne’s brother, Edward, to secure Jeanne a place in the queen’s household where she quickly catches the king’s eye. George is the first to notice this unhappy event and vows to be vigilant in protecting his sister’s interests.

It is perhaps most important to note the three dimensional character the author has created for his protagonist. Limited neither by the theatrical unities (time, place, and action) nor the painter’s ability to capture only a fleeting moment in time, de Musset is able to further develop Anne’s character through his work. He is clearly an ardent admirer of Anne, calling her “the

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68 “Quand je songe aux témoignages éclatants que je reçois de cette passion, à ses retentissements qui ébranlent l’Europe entière, à la couronne prête à se poser sur mon humble tête, je me sens honteuse de n’avoir à donner en échange qu’un cœur aimant et dévoué.”
ultimate woman,”69 (Musset, 2: 87) but he does not refrain from highlighting some of her lesser qualities, namely her overt ambition. However, even this vice is justified in time:

In the eyes of the world, I will appear an ambitious woman. Those who write the history of this reign will say that one of Catherine’s maids of honor was able to incite the king’s passion, and, through many difficulties, take the scepter in her hands. But what historian of good faith wouldn’t throw his writings in the fire if the truth came from the pit where it is buried to highlight his errors? Percy, you, at least, you know that ambition is not my dominant passion. You know the regret with which I saw the king clear the path before me that led me to where I am. You couldn’t resist Henry VIII even though you’re a man. Once loved by this prince, I had only two options: I had to be a queen or a concubine; am I guilty for having accepted the crown? (Musset, 2: 121)70

In the first volume of the novel, she is conflicted about the course she should take, at turns confident in her choices and frightened of their consequences. Anne’s coronation in volume two marks a transformation in her character: “She was as affable and cheerful as ever, but the absent-mindedness of the young girl had given way to the gravity suitable to her status as queen. Her imprudence and frivolity had entirely disappeared” (Musset, 2: 66).71 As queen, she seems to truly love the king, but is doomed by the passion of other courtiers and the scheming of her sister-in-law, neither of which she has the power to curb. She is also powerless to prevent the waning of her husband’s ardor, “the noble pastime of the chase having become tiresome for him” (Musset, 2: 109).72 In her final hours, she expresses concern for those around her, imploring her

69 “…une femme par excellence.”
70 “…Aux yeux du monde, je passe pour une femme ambitieuse. Ceux qui écriront l’histoire de ce règne, diront qu’une fille d’honneur de Catherine sut enflammer le roi, et porter ses mains sur le sceptre à travers mille difficultés; mais quel historien de bonne foi ne jetterait au feu ses écrits, si la vérité sortait du puits où elle est enfouie, pour lui signaler ses erreurs? Percy, vous, du moins, vous savez que l’ambition n’est pas ma passion dominante. Vous savez avec quels regrets j’ai vu le roi ouvrir devant moi le chemin qui devait me conduire où je suis. Vous n’avez pas pu résister à Henri VIII, et pourtant vous êtes un homme. Une fois aimée de ce prince, je n’avais plus que deux partis : il fallait être une reine ou une concubine ; suis-je coupable d’avoir accepté la couronne?”
71 “…Son humeur était toujours affable et enjouée; mais l’étourderie de la jeune fille avait fait place à la gravité qui convenait à la reine. L’imprudence et la légèreté avaient disparu entièrement.”
72 “… le noble délassement de la chasse devient pour lui une fatigue…”
husband to let his “anger fall on [her] alone” (Musset, 2: 187). If any one work could capture the most likely essence of Anne Boleyn, it is probably this account of “the life of a beautiful and honest woman” (Revue Étrangère, 1837, 618).

Conclusions

It is the twenty-first century. Why should we care about the cultural significance of a sixteenth-century Englishwoman in works of early nineteenth-century French drama, art and literature? At first glance, the works previously discussed may seem irrelevant, especially if we consider how far removed we are from the era in which they were created. However, judging by recent trends in book sales, television ratings, and box office numbers, one might think we have returned to 1830s France. Anne Boleyn, and Tudor mania in general, is everywhere. Both the fiction and nonfiction shelves in bookstores are packed with Anne-centric literature, from David Starkey’s Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII (also a TV documentary) to Philippa Gregory’s The Other Boleyn Girl (made into a feature film in 2008) and Hilary Mantel’s recent award-winning novels, Wolf Hall and Bring Up the Bodies. The Tudors, in which Anne Boleyn was a central figure for two seasons, was one of the most popular series on the Showtime network from 2007 to 2010. In England, Anne has also been brought to life in a multi-colored portrait by Stephen Whatley, painted in 2000 and on display at the Tower of London. In 2010, Howard

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73 “… que votre colère tombe sur moi seule.”
74 “... la vie d’une belle et honnête femme.” In a rather derogatory review, L’Artiste credits Musset’s peculiar writing method with the thorough nature of his account of Anne Boleyn. “M. Paul de Musset, connu dans le monde littéraire par quelques douzaines de romans fort inconnus, s’est avisé, depuis quelque temps, d’une méthode assez singulière. Il cherche un nom historique propre à éveiller la curiosité; puis, quand il l’a trouvé, ce qui n’est pas fort difficile, il se met en quête de vieux mémoires, de vieilles chroniques où ce nom soit cité. Cette investigation laborieuse une fois achevée, M. Paul de Musset prend la plume et il écrit […] il se met à suivre pas à pas les événements que la biographie de ses héros lui fournit. Seulement, pour obtenir deux volumes, il dit en cent paroles ce qu’il trouve exprimé en deux. Et voilà toute la méthode !” (See L’Artiste, 1837, 218-19.)
Brenton wrote a play entitled *Anne Boleyn*, performed at Shakespeare’s Globe. This work has been performed every year since then, most recently by the Boston University College of Fine Arts. Perhaps most significantly for this study, in autumn 2011, the Metropolitan Opera House staged Donizetti’s *Anna Bolena* to much acclaim, with Anna Netrebko in the role of Anne Boleyn. As cultural history repeats itself with this current revival of interest in the second wife of Henry VIII, it is important to look back on the role of earlier works – especially those discussed above – in influencing our modern representations of Anne Boleyn, at turns a master manipulator and an innocent victim. It was perhaps Paul de Musset who said it best in his preface to *Anne Boleyn*: “It is unnecessary to look for what is called, though I don’t know why, local color. Styles have changed a thousand times since Anne Boleyn, but human passion has stayed the same” (Musset, vii). That is why Anne Boleyn, the historical queen and the tragic heroine, will always be relevant. She’s the dream of artists and writers: celebrated enough to draw interest yet shrouded in enough mystery to be molded into any desired artistic figure—a noble queen, a wanton harlot, a devoted mother, or an innocent martyr. Though it is unlikely that any of us will ever be in the same circumstances as the doomed queen, by discovering her story, we help write our own.

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75 See http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/theatre/on-stage/anne-boleyn
76 “Il ne faut pas chercher ici ce qu’on nomme, je ne sais pourquoi, de la couleur locale. Les costumes ont mille fois changé depuis Anne Boleyn, mais les passions humaines sont restées les mêmes.”
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Acknowledgements

The idea of writing a senior thesis is daunting; the task itself even more so. This work is the product of countless hours of research and writing and more sleepless nights than I’m willing to admit. It’s been a labor of love and could not have been completed without the support of many people within the UNH community and elsewhere.

Thank you to the staff at the Musée Rolin for accommodating my requests for information about the Edouard Cibot painting of Anne and sending invaluable accessions information that is not readily available to the public.

My thanks go out as well to Professors Catherine Peebles of Humanities, Georgeann Murphy of English, and Nadine Berenguier of French for voluntarily increasing their already substantial workloads and agreeing to participate in my thesis defense committee.

I would not have been able to write this thesis without the continuous academic and financial support of the Hamel Center for Undergraduate Research, especially Dana Hamel, whose generous contributions to the Hamel Center have provided funding for this project as well as countless others.

Lastly, I’d like to thank my thesis advisor and friend, Professor Barbara Cooper, for her endless academic and moral support throughout this endeavor. I can’t even begin to express my gratitude for the myriad of sources she has steered me toward or the number of drafts she has painstakingly read and helped me to improve. Professor Cooper has encouraged me to be a thorough researcher and an effective writer and does not let me settle for anything less than perfection. I could not have asked for a better role model and I will be forever appreciative of everything that she has done to make this project a success.