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## Zásady pro vypracování

Student se ve své bakalářské práci bude věnovat historicko-kulturnímu kontextu období vlády Jindřicha VIII. Kromě toho představí literární kontext historického románu a různé možnosti vytváření literárních verzí historie. Své analytické kapitoly bude věnovat postavě Jindřicha VIII. Podstatou analýzy není srovnání historie a fikce, ale toho, jak autorka primárního zdroje dosahuje jejich vyváženosti.

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## **Annotation**

This thesis focuses on the subgenre of historical fiction, the historical novel. The subgenre is examined through factual and fictional parts, and the aim is to discern the balancing process. The factual part is examined through anachronisms, research and historical data, whereas the fictional is focused on the emotional, artistic freedom and narratological parts of the subgenre. The practical part is focused on the primary source and delves into the balance between factual and fictional.

## **Keywords**

Henry VIII, anachronisms, unreliable narrator, artistic freedom, facts, fiction

## **Název**

Vyvažování faktu a fikce v historických románech

## **Anotace**

Tato práce se soustředí na subžánr historické fikce čímž je historický román. Faktické a fiktické části historického románu jsou zkoumány s cílem pozorovat, jak se v subžánru vyvažují tyto dvě domény. Faktická doména je zkoumána skrz anachronismy, výzkum a historická data, fiktivní doména pak skrz emoce, uměleckou svobodu a naratologii. V neposlední řadě, praktická část se soustředí na primární pramen a hodnotí vyváženost mezi faktickou a fiktivní doménou.

## **Klíčová slova**

Jindřich VIII, anachronismy, nespolehlivý vypravěč, umělecká svoboda, fakta, fikce

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## Introduction

The historical novel is one of many subgenres of historical fiction, and it has been around for hundreds of years; other subgenres are, for example, historical fantasy, detective stories or romance, and historical fiction has become recently popular, penetrating the mainstream media with shows such as *Shōgun*, *Bridgerton* or *The Crown*. Historical fiction and novels can vary in time and setting, creating a vibrant landscape from ancient tribes and empires to remembered wars and political affairs of the last century. The essence of the historical novel lies in the intertwined narrative of fact and fiction based on historical research. Sir Walter Scott is said to be the first to reinvent the subgenre through his blend of historical facts based on research and fictional complements and laid the foundation of the new historical novel for future authors. However, the historical novel has been, since its rebirth, plagued by anachronisms that blur historical reality by giving readers false assumptions, interpretations, and facts.

Margaret George has created a historical novel, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII with Notes by His Fool, Will Somers*, which follows the life of Henry VIII seen through his life with a second narrator, Will Somers, who reminisces about the events of Henry's life and guides the readers through the book. The uniqueness lies in the dual-narrative structure, which is, of course, fictional, yet Will Somers, the second narrator, is also a reader of the autobiography, which creates trust in what he says. This way, George can persuade readers to enjoy the interpreted depiction of Henry VIII. Will Somers is also a valuable device in balancing the factual and fictional dimensions of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, and his narrative role ensures the contrast to the fictional character of Henry VIII. To enrich her book, she deliberately uses anachronisms to dramatise and summarise; she uses modern language and idioms that did not exist at the time of Henry VIII. Although this blurs the historical accuracy, George took artistic liberties to create an emotionally alluring, relatable presentation of Henry's life.

The approach to the methodological part of the thesis is historical, literary, and narratological, as sources and historical criticism are utilised with literary analysis and narratology. The thesis can be split into the historical criticism and literary criticism part before the analytical part that follows. The historical criticism part will focus on what the historical novel Sir

Walter Scott reinvented it and what rules he set to be considered historical. Furthermore, historical accuracy, where the theories of Hayden White and G.R. Elton will be used to explain whether historical objectivity is possible and how historians should work with historical evidence in comparison to the writer of the historical novel who can simply interpret or fictionalise and anachronisms, where Georg Lukács, Sarah L. Johnson and others will be compared to create a typology of used anachronisms in historical fiction. The rules are later used to validate *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* as a historical work. The literary criticism part will focus on narratology, focalization and unreliability of narrators using theories of Mieke Bal, Ansgar Nünning, Zerweck and others to present how Henry, as an unreliable narrator, creates a fictional dimension that works with his interpreted personality.

The analysis of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* analyses the validity of the book as a historical novel by the ruleset devised from the theories of Johnson, Lukács, and others. Then, the nature of anachronisms is determined, and together with the focalization and narratology of the book, the balance between factual and fictional elements is examined, focusing on George's preferences. Unreliability and anachronisms are considered an aid to focalization in manipulating the reader, which George is explicit about.

The main research question states: How do historical novels balance historical factuality and fictional aspects together with artistic freedom, and how does narrative unreliability affect it? Further research questions should cover what constitutes a historical novel, for the thesis is focused solely on the historical novel, what are the most prominent types of anachronisms, and finally, how perspective affects unreliable narration and how unreliable narration is controlled to balance fiction. These research questions cover the foremost critical topics of this thesis.

## 1. Defining the Historical Novel

The methodological part of this thesis briefly explores the birth of the historical novel and establishes the core rules of the historical novel based on secondary literature, which are to be followed for the work to be considered a historical novel. Then, historical factuality is considered, and whether it is necessary to follow historiographical narratives absolutely or whether it is permissible for authors of historical novels to stray away from historiographical narratives to achieve artistically sound novels. Only then are anachronisms considered as harmful, necessary or beneficial as a literary device of the historical novel. Lastly, the unreliability of narrative theory is examined, and whether the narrative aids authors in

tackling anachronisms is examined. The narrator and perspective are essential literary devices for developing a historically sound narrative. The objective of this methodological part is to analyse the historical novel and to explore the foremost parts that represent what a historical novel is.

The origin of the historical novel is often attributed to Sir Walter Scott, as he used historical research to portray a historically plausible setting in *Waverley*. Many authors, such as Homer, Shakespeare, and Walpole, had written historical fiction before Scott did. However, they did not master the subgenre to such an extent and therefore, many agree that Sir Walter Scott was the first author to set an example with his masterful historical research and narration. Authors like Jerome De Groot, Brander Matthews or Sarah L. Johnson agree that Sir Walter Scott revolutionised the historical novel to such an extent that he basically reinvented the subgenre. Sarah L. Johnson writes that “in literary circles, Sir Walter’s *Scott Waverley* is generally considered to be the first historical novel.”<sup>1</sup> Brander Matthews claims that “it would be absurd to deny that Scott is really the inventor of the historical novel, just as Poe was afterward the inventor of the detective story.”<sup>2</sup> Lastly, Jerome De Groot claims that “Scott’s novel was massively, globally successful and influential; it introduced a new form, the historical novel; and it demonstrated the range, reach and breadth of audience that the new type of writing might reach.”<sup>3</sup> The popularity of *Waverley* was immense, travelling to several countries and popularising the subgenre across all social classes. From a historical standpoint, however, the subgenre was, at its core, still mostly narrative and artistic. Manzoni even criticised Scott for sacrificing historical accuracy for artistic freedom, and he preferred facts and well-researched historical periods.<sup>4</sup> The problematics of evidence-based writing in historical novels seem to have been there since the beginning of the creation of historical novels. And it is still pervasive to this day. The artistic freedom of writers and the historical accuracy of novels is a never-ending dispute. It is no secret that historical fiction, be it books, movies or TV series, is a popular genre of the general public, causing people to absorb potentially misleading information about a particular historical period, further rooting misleading information and normalising it.

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah L. Johnson, *Historical Fiction II: A Guide to the Genre* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2009), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Brander Matthews, *The Historical Novel and Other Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1901), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel* (London: Routledge, 2010), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Alessandro Manzoni, *On the Historical Novel*, trans. Sandra Bermann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 12

The introduction of core rules is essential to historical fiction since it moves between fictitious and factual, and it must exist only in the past. Therefore, this part of the bachelor thesis will be focused on establishing boundaries where historical fiction can exist and, more specifically, with the historical novel at its centre. It will explore the time, the plot, and the degree of fiction of the historical novel, all of which are essential to the standards of historical fiction.

Firstly, it is generally known that the period in which the historical novel takes place must not be contemporary with the author. The historical novels before Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* try to portray the age but are betrayed by their characters, who act and think contemporary to the age they were written in.<sup>5</sup> To understand the importance of why, for authors, it is necessary to create stories in earlier times, the definition of "age" is a necessity. For Lukacs, different age creates a barrier between the author and his historical work, and the barrier is a socioeconomic, cultural or historical event that establishes a distinction between the behaviour of the mass population before and after such event.<sup>6</sup> Albeit Lukacs does not use a unit of time as a distinction between ages, just by comparing historical, cultural, or socioeconomic events such as the Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution or French Revolution, which Lukacs mentions in his book, it is possible to create a general pool of time that is required to form age as a unit of time. Therefore, the age can be limited from ten to a hundred years depending on the change in cultural values and political and philosophical views of the new age. Similarly, other authors agree that the period between the creation of the novel and the portrayed age should be distinct enough to separate two different ages. In *Historical Fiction II*, the time that must pass for a novel to be considered historical must be at least fifty years. Additionally, the novel must be set before the middle of the last century.<sup>7</sup> In *An Approach to the Historical Novel*, it is stated that when authors realise how history is divided into ages that immensely differ, the historical probability, the rules to which authors should adhere, will help them create a persuasive setting.<sup>8</sup> To create historical fiction, where characters act differently from authors' times, is to actively seek either great events of history or to let time and technology transform society. While Sarah L. Johnson was remarkably specific with the time frame, all the authors that were presented do agree on entirely

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<sup>5</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London: Merlin Press, 1962), 19.

<sup>6</sup> Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 19.-21.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah L. Johnson, *Historical Fiction II: A Guide to the Genre*, 2nd ed. (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2005), 1.

<sup>8</sup> Harry E. Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction: Sir Walter Scott and His Successors* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt207g768.5>.

separating the authors' age from the age of the setting in the novel or timely anachronisms that would hinder a novel's legibility. On the one hand, Lukacs and Shaw work with the understanding of the word age in a similar manner where great historical events navigate the differentiation of time periods and on the other hand, Johnson ingeniously formed a time barrier in the upper limit of what Lukacs considers a difference in age, therefore mitigates the need of any great historical events.

Another factor when creating a setting is which history to pursue. Do authors have the right to write about the history of other countries? While it is not true that the history of any country is controlled accessible, issues such as different language, culture, unavailability of source materials or writing confidence might complicate writing about the history of others.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the decision is rooted in the ability and determination of the author to create something from a distant culture that has the possibility to fail entirely. Cultural differences in writing about something foreign may propose disagreement between the targeted culture and the author of the book, which might lead to the book's ultimate demise if not written and researched properly. Political differences also offer a reason why the book may not perform well; different political traditions may clash when fused together with the author's political views. There exist plenty of reasons why not to write about foreign cultures, yet authors still explore different cultures.

Secondly, creating a solid plot in the fictional-factual novel is a meticulous process, and since *Waverley* by Sir Walter Scott, who saw the potential of unimportant people in the background of history, the historical novel became the historical canvas full of opportunities to create new events. Lukacs argues that the historical novel shouldn't follow any essential historical events because it may not be a faithful representation of the time since great events revolve around wealthy and well-known people who do not necessarily represent the age the same way common folk would.<sup>10</sup> So it seems that for Lukacs and, respectively, Scott, the importance of the minor characters in history is more significant, for they were the moving power behind great events and, through their eyes, could make the plot interesting for the reader. Thus, the question of balancing minor characters and great events without sacrificing an enticing plot might arise. Baker, who quotes Percy J. Brebner, argues that the plot of any historical novel should evoke feelings in readers. It should bring the age to life and create space for our empathy while avoiding comparisons to modern times or to facts of the age, which could

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<sup>9</sup> Jerome de Groot, *The Historical Novel* (London: Routledge, 2010), 95.

<sup>10</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (London: Merlin Press, 1962), 42.

make the plot seem insignificant.<sup>11</sup> Both authors agree that great events are not central to creating a vibrant plot. Great events are double-edged swords; while great in evoking a specific age, they might foreshadow or even spoil future events in the book because they are known historical facts. When creating a compelling plot, it is necessary to find a balance in setting the plot at a reasonable distance from great events. Great events tend to be overly specific and far too extensive in research to portray comprehensively and reliably and not hinder the plot. Also, to distance the characters from great events is to, through them, describe the joys and sorrows that may be brought by the age, to distance them emotionally to create a feeling for the reader that he is still a part of history, yet might find himself wondering about the future. Furthermore, Baker adds that avoiding notable events gives the plot more prominence in contrast to great historical events such as wars, deaths or victories.<sup>12</sup> To create a solid, original plot is to follow unimportant characters that trail behind the great events of history, which, as Baker suggested, gives the plot more prominence while, as Lukacs argued, keeping the believability of ordinary characters.

Finally, the historical novel is a part of historical fiction, which moves on the axis between history and fiction and, to no specific degree, should have fictional elements. For Michael Williams, the fictional part of the historical novel brings forth emotions that might act as a focal point for evoking historical greatness and credibility contrastingly to historical facts that often neglect the atmosphere of the age.<sup>13</sup> Emotions, the soul of the story, create a basis for a relatable setting in the novel that is tangible historical evidence. Through that, emotions can freely express connections to the characters and world to bring the setting closer to the reader and allow him to familiarise himself with the semi-fictional world. It gives fiction an opportunity to exist in a place where historical facts seem far more important. The degree to which historical facts benefit historical novel is not clear, nevertheless it is required. To be considered historical, a historical novel should be created by research rather than created from memories or living witnesses.<sup>14</sup> It does not always apply since witnesses of the Second World War and victims of the holocaust live, but the research helps separate the authors' age from the novels' age and brings in verifiable facts. When relying solely on living witnesses, their accounts of events are always subjective, whereas data from research underwent criticism from experts and, therefore, are more objective. "A novel is rendered historical by the

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest A. Baker, *A Guide to Historical Fiction* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1914), xi.

<sup>12</sup> Baker, *A Guide to Historical Fiction*, xi.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Williams, "Opportunities in Historical Fiction," *The Catholic Historical Review* 8, no. 3 (1922): 360.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, *Historical Fiction II*, 1.

introduction of dates, personages, or events, to which identification can be readily given.”<sup>15</sup> However, it does not imply that fictitious elements harm in any way characters or events since fiction is inseparably intertwined with history in the historical novel. Moreover, when a topic is well documented, this creates an imaginative barrier, where the author feels pressured not to create fictional additions to the topic because it might seem unfaithful to the abundance of sources and historical records. Historical data creates a base structure of the story where authors can build upon it with fiction, the soul. However, excessive strictness of factual data from historical records could be deemed unimportant by conclusions made in part of an essay by Reid Mitchell. Historical data that follow certain methods which try to determine the validity of contradictions or ambiguities are rendered in historical fiction by allowing readers to find their own truths, or those uncertainties could be portrayed as mysteries.<sup>16</sup> Historians and novelists do seem to have similar jobs. They try to work with historical sources and determine what is relevant to their field of work. Additionally, novelists must contrast these historical facts and imagine a complete world with fiction as a part of it. In conclusion, it is certain that when applied correctly, fiction does not harm historical circumstances but allows them to be as distant or as important as needed. Similarly, historical data easily establishes the world of the novel and, by adding identifying data, as Nield suggested, creates a familiar setting.

By establishing principal pillars of historical novels, which consider time frame, plot, and historical circumstances, the ability to judge anachronisms based on historical accuracy emerges. The time frame in historical novels should not betray the age in which it is set and should adhere to specific rules to create a distinct world that could be considered historical. The plot requires a delicate balance of facts and fiction, where characters do not foreshadow and do evoke emotions. While distancing from great historical events, an author should be able to create a persuasive historical setting and, at the same time, should explore historical voids to weave fictional experiences and perspectives into the plot. All that is needed to create a vibrant world based on historical research. But is historical empiricism, the backbone of historical fiction, enough to reliably portray an age?

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<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Nield, *A Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968), xviii.

<sup>16</sup> Reid Mitchell, “Imaginary Evidence: The Historical Fiction of Alice Munro,” *Virtual Conference on History and Fiction*, archived May 9, 2008, [http://www.albany.edu/history/hist\\_fict/Mitchell/Mitchelles.htm](http://www.albany.edu/history/hist_fict/Mitchell/Mitchelles.htm).

## 2. Objectivity and Anachronisms

Objectivity is of utmost importance in history. People watch documentaries, read accounts of history and try to interpret them based on their newly found knowledge of who was wrong, who is evil or who won the great events of history. People, on the other hand, do not have the ability to be objective. But there exists objectivity in historiography. According to G.R. Elton, objectivity lies in the past because the past cannot be manipulated with and cannot be altered. Therefore, it regains all objectivity. Objectivity lies in historical events, not the evidence nor the accounts of history created by a historian, which can be biased. Objectivity does not lie in truthfulness but in the separation from the present.<sup>17</sup> Historical events written in historical evidence are, therefore, always objective until exploited by manipulation, assumption or interpretation. The subjective historical evidence holds objectivity of events, but the evidence itself is not objective since it has been created by humans, who lack the ability to be objective. It is clear, then, that all the accounts that have been ever written are subjective with the essence of objectivity, which rises from the events from which the records were created. To move closer to objectivity, one must not interpret historical evidence, and to record history in a more objective fashion would be to list historical events and evidence from which these events were formed without any interpretation or assumption. History books would be mere listings of events that have happened before, without any comprehensive explanations. It would fragment history, for every man is subjective in their own way. Therefore, every man would create their own historical reality based on these historical listings. For Hayden White, a “proper historian” avoids the goal of explaining why historical events happened by interpreting them and should quell their desire to interpret subjectively. Furthermore, historian mainly focuses on reconstructing and explaining the data available from historical evidence.<sup>18</sup> The proper historian, then, uses evidence of history, that is, records and archaeological findings, and tries to reconstruct historical circumstances concerning a particular piece of evidence, and although not to their own fault, they then impose onto the evidence their subjective findings, although for Hayden when explaining, it is more objective than interpreting, which try to precisely explain events of history. The difference between a historian and a writer of historical fiction is then the process of dealing with historical facts. Historians should not interpret, nor should they try to reenact, because according to G.R. Elton, it is impossible to reenact due to lack of reoccurring variables, people and

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<sup>17</sup> G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1967), 53–54.

<sup>18</sup> Hayden White, *Interpretation in History*, *New Literary History* 4, no. 2 (1973): 282, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468478>.

circumstances. Unlike in natural sciences, where reconstruction of an experiment is quite easy to verify the theory of a scientist, history cannot recreate experiments since precise reenactment of a particular historical event is lost in the past.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, the historian can only try to reconstruct, hoping not to stray too far from the objectivity he is striving to come close to. On the other hand, historical novelists are invited to fictionalise historical evidence; they are invited to interpret and use these techniques to evoke emotions in readers without distorting reality and causing anachronisms to emerge.

Anachronisms may seem inherently harmful to the factual content of the novels, yet it is an inseparable part of it. They are an eyesore to the readers who dedicated their time to the study of history. To explain whether all anachronisms are harmful, firstly, a typology of anachronisms must be created, and then it is necessary to comprehend that technological progress may have wronged or corrected past or future conclusions made by historians and archaeologists. This part will focus on whether anachronisms do have a place in historical fiction and how they emerged.

The first category to be examined is, according to Lukacs, necessary anachronisms. They are stylistic anachronisms that do not convey content contemporary with the author. The expression of thoughts and feelings of historical characters with historical content and modern language, without which texts would be utterly illegible for most, is necessary for literary development within the story.<sup>20</sup> These anachronisms are an absolute necessity for any historical novel because, without them, stories would be left without rounded characters. The problem with anachronisms is that there are no rules to uphold. Therefore, managing language is up to the author and his sensibility of using slang or argot terms within the historical context. Additionally, it is crucial to balance not only fictional and factual, but now, when anachronistic fiction is added, it is vital to logically incorporate necessary anachronisms without sacrificing factual credibility. That said, assuming is part of fictional writing. Authors must assume how a character would express himself, and yet, in *Medieval Underpants*, it is the first rule never to assume. Assumptions are the first step in creating anachronisms. Be it material additions such as furniture or intrinsic values of character like expressions, customs or attitudes. To not research is to blunder.<sup>21</sup> The historical accuracy that Alleyn suggests reaching contradicts every conclusion that has been made up until now. The fictional, artistic

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<sup>19</sup> Elton, *The Practice of History*, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 62–63.

<sup>21</sup> Susanne Alleyn, *Medieval Underpants and Other Blunders: A Writer's (& Editor's) Guide to Keeping Historical Fiction Free of Common Anachronisms* (United States: Susanne Alleyn, 2012), 7–8.

part of historical fiction allows the author to connect the age with modern times; it allows readers to relate closely with the heroes of the stories. As Lukacs indicated, it is through necessary anachronisms that literary artistic freedom is highlighted. Why, consequently, should authors be bound by historical “accuracy” when, as is argued previously, fiction and fictional creativity fill the gaps of the historical void? In conclusion, while research is a necessity for historical fiction, necessary anachronisms don’t need to be stylistically accurate when the content they communicate is of the age and manner.

Secondly, harmful anachronisms are best at portraying the term historical inaccuracy of popular culture. They create false memories of history that sometimes can make their way into the mainstream. An example of this is horned Viking helmets. Harmful anachronisms can be further divided into subcategories. The first is the subcategory of logical structuring based on historical evidence. Based on research that should in no way be less expansive than that of historians, novel authors hypothesise, work on their intuitions, and fill the gaps where historians dare not to, and they are proven right afterwards by further historical or archaeological research.<sup>22</sup> This misinformation was, at first, rightfully called anachronistic since authors did not adhere to any historical or archaeological research and were devised solely on authors’ intuition or hypothesised from associations. Only later, by no fault of any, were they proven right. The lack of sources or technology could be the origin of why historical proofs were not proven. Historians may have hypothesised the same outcomes, yet by working with principally empirical evidence, they were unable to come to conclusions based on their research. This alone proves that the research of historical novelists is in no way subordinate to that of historians and that the former harmful anachronisms can become historically just. The difference is that historical novelists can interpret the data from historiographical sources without sacrificing objectivity. It is their duty to connect historical data in probable ways. The ability to weave facts and fiction based on logical structuring has proven beneficial as it paints a more complete picture of the age. The second subcategory is degenerative anachronisms. Anachronisms became degenerative because of underdeveloped research of the time. Facts, firstly truthful, based on research of the age, become anachronistic due to technological progress that eventually proved factual research of the age wrong. Works of the age then became anachronistic hatches due to the limitations of the historians.<sup>23</sup> Do critics then have the right to criticise novelists for the mistakes of others? Readers

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<sup>22</sup> Mark C. Carnes, ed., *Novel History: Historians and Novelists Confront America’s Past (and Each Other)* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Nield, *A Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales*, xxv.

unknowingly consume these novels with anachronisms, and with the authors dead, there is no possibility of correcting the errors. It is painfully clear how historical fiction is disadvantaged compared to historiography or other literary forms. Time is all-consuming, and therefore, old novels suffer stylistically. They become out-of-date regardless of degenerative anachronisms. It is imperative to consider whether the anachronisms of old novels hinder the artistic beauty of novels or if they make them worthless in the eyes of modern readers. The last subcategory is harmful anachronisms, which exist mainly as physical objects in the novels. The objects exist misplaced in time, such as furniture, garments, and technologies, to name a few. They did not exist in the times in which the novel is set and were mistakenly associated with the age. Other harmful anachronisms are anachronisms of attitude that relay attitudes, political views, gender and humanistic views of the author. In *Medieval Underpants*, these anachronisms are called “presentism”, and it is the inability of the author to isolate attitudes from the characters’ attitudes.<sup>24</sup> As was established earlier by a paraphrase from Lukacs, historical novels should not have characters that betray the age. This is particularly the case where the author should be aware of his character creation process. The worldviews of, for example, medieval characters should be quite limited; they should possibly believe in God and should not preach progressive political views. Greene adds to presentism with his typology of anachronisms with the subcategory of abusive anachronisms, where he states that while ignorance of history may be at play, it is more likely that authors assume ideological misinterpretation of history to deliberately avoid historical context.<sup>25</sup> While it was established that fiction brings forth relatability in historical fiction, ideologically charged misinterpretations should not have a presence in historical fiction, as they directly betray necessary anachronisms. They propagandise modern ideologically charged attitudes that in no way should have a presence in the past and the characters should have no knowledge of. Moreover, adding biased information based on political views falsifies the work by using ideologically related information and, therefore, might be considered utterly dishonest and manipulative. Another abusive anachronism is the process that authors use to soften brutal historical practices, so they force modern moral practices and standards to create a more acceptable environment for the readers. This practice may not be harmful from a moral standpoint but is nonetheless historical inaccuracy. Harmful anachronisms are a broad category of inaccuracies that, at a particular stage or all of them, were proven to be

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<sup>24</sup> Alleyn, *Medieval Underpants and Other Blunders*, 50–51.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas M. Greene, *Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies*, ed. Gary Saul Morson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 207–208.

historically inaccurate, thus viewed as damaging to the plausibility of the novels. They might not always impose a problem from a moral or ethical standpoint as they sometimes try to relate to the readers of modern times and create more palatable or familiar settings, but in the process, they lose historical accuracy and historical credibility.

Apart from a necessary and harmful anachronism, can there be a good anachronism that benefits the novel? Necessary anachronisms may be viewed as good, as they create room for feelings and ideas that might push the storyline. On the other hand, it is the bare minimum for characters to express themselves. Since that is the necessity, harmful anachronisms and ignoring historical evidence can create room for the necessity, turning historical inaccuracy into advancement in the plot. Another bare necessity which could be considered anachronistic is the personalities of historical characters. With any amount of historical evidence, it is impossible to reenact their personalities since they are lost to history. Their fictional attitudes, dreams and hopes are probable but invented. Stephanie Russo argues that deliberate anachronisms and presentism carry a positive value in historical novels. At the same time, these deliberate anachronisms create comparisons between the present and past that may bring provocative resonances, which will cause readers to question the familiarity and relatability of the past and their dependency on each other. However, improper use may be seen as forcefully and artificially modernising the past, which plays into the popularity of the young and catering to marketability.<sup>26</sup> Deliberate anachronisms may bring value in attracting younger readers with more familiar pasts and thought-provoking comparisons of societal issues. In more historically accurate novels, racism, for example, might be a societal norm, whereas deliberately anachronistic characters would condemn racist, albeit normal demeanour acting as a modern moral anchor. These comparisons deliver moral viewpoints questioning the superiority of modern societies with pervasive problems. Anachronisms, therefore, bear value in various ways, such as the complexity of characters, moral comparisons of the past and the present and legibility of texts.

### 3. Narrative Theory: Unreliable Narration and Perspective

Historiographical works tend to be more narrative than not, and while probably more historically accurate, they also contain anachronisms or anachronistic features since they can only strive to be objective. Thus, we can conclude that anachronisms are indivisible from historical works be it historical fiction or historiographical works. The feature of

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<sup>26</sup> Russo, *The Anachronistic Turn*, 7.

anachronisms that can be possibly judged could be only the distance from the generally accepted historical narratives. The further away from the “truth”, the less viable anachronism is as a part of a story from the accuracy standpoint. For example, a mobile phone would be more permissible at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century than in ancient Egypt. That is why anachronisms cause discord between readers. The further away from the “truth”, the easier it is to spot them, and the harder it is to believe them. Well-written anachronism is then the one that is difficult to find and even more difficult to disprove. In conclusion, anachronisms have their roles in historical fiction. They can compare ages, contribute to emotional characters, and even lecture, though sometimes they seem to hinder the age in which the novel is portrayed, nevertheless since the beginning of the historical novel, they have been part of it.

The narration and characters of historical fiction in connection with anachronisms create an alluring dispute over necessary anachronisms. From the thesis, it is possible to conclude that characters, to be historically accurate, need to have knowledge of their position (social status, military rank, education); therefore, they would probably create an inaccurate depiction of their surroundings in relation to historical evidence. They are unreliable characters and narrators. To devise ways that historical fiction can defend itself against such imperfections, it is required to examine ways of narrating.

To examine relevant devices of narratology to this thesis, it is imperative to establish terminology on which it is possible to compare different theories. The only logical starting point is defining the narrator. The narrator is the centrepiece of my argument as it establishes the ability to comprehend the term focalization in the eyes of different authors. Furthermore, it will create a much clearer picture of why historical novels are prone to have unreliable narrators. Mieke Bal characterises the narrator as an abstract I that utters the linguistic signs and the I can morph into various characters and other Is in a story. Only the linguistic narrator constructs a narrative text.<sup>27</sup> She does not see the narrator as a specific person, be it author or character, but as a narrative device rooted in linguistics. For example, the narrator is a character named Johnny, as it is I in a story. The only difference between Johnny and I is the process that gives it a different perspective, the morphing abstract narrator. To contrast this abstract idea of the narrator with a more grounded and perhaps more comprehensible theory of narration, which tries to encapsulate perspective within the narrator, is to paraphrase Genette and his differentiation of narrators. Richard Walsh explores the possibilities of

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<sup>27</sup> Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 18–20.

Genette's differentiation of narrators, who characterise extradiegetic and intradiegetic narration. He captures that extradiegetic and heterodiegetic, third-person narration remains outside of the narrative world, whereas intradiegetic and homodiegetic, first-person narration is inside of the narration.<sup>28</sup> This differentiation of narratives by Genette offers the simple and quite effective distinction of narrators but fails to tackle more elaborate types. Fictional autobiography offers extradiegetic homodiegetic narrators. The main characters are able to narrate in first person, making them homodiegetic, while their older self, the narrator, stays outside of the story, making them extradiegetic. When, however, the main character does step inside the story by implying, "I would have done things differently", and proceeds to take narrative action, he shifts to intradiegetic narration. Mieke Bal's theory does not share this complication as its' narrator is abstract and filters perspective through focalization. This shows that for Bal, there is no strict separation between characters and narrators and that throughout the story, narrative perspectives change." Genette maintains that extradiegetic narrators, being outside any diegesis, cannot be characters."<sup>29</sup> This also applies to the autobiographical argument, where narrators can become characters by stepping inside their own narration as characters. The narrator, therefore, must be a more abstract entity to encapsulate all possibilities of narration. Mieke Bal's theory is much more adaptive concerning narrative possibilities as it structures the narrative theory around the linguistic narrator. Narrators in Mieke Bal's theory then cannot become anachronistic, as they merely mediate information from the characters, they are abstract ghosts outside of the story. Characters, apart from necessary anachronisms, are the result of history, fiction or a combination of both; therefore, they carry the ability to become anachronistic. She uses focalization to bring or shift the perspectives of narrators in the story. The approach to focalization is the difference that makes narrators grounded or abstract.

Perspective is tied to the narrator, who is uttering signs of language and a character on which the utterance is focused. They share an abstract connection that was redefined as focalization by Mieke Bal. She defines focalization as a vision between the narrator and characters or agents of narrative and the object of focalization. Focalization presents physical and psychological experiencing that is translated into narrative. It is an abstract connection that filters information based on knowledge of the agents of narration.<sup>30</sup> To apply focalization, one

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<sup>28</sup> Richard Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?" *Poetics Today* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 497–498, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1773184>.

<sup>29</sup> Walsh, "Who Is the Narrator?," 497.

<sup>30</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 142.

must consider the narrator, subject, and object of narration. The subject of the narration experiences the object, and the object causes a change in the subject of the narration. The change in subject is then focalized based on the type of narration and focalization, and that information is then narrated to the reader. Bal further discerns two main types of focalizations. Internal and external focalization. Internal or character-bound focalization follows various characters even if the narrator does not change. The external focalization is non-character-bound. It does not follow any characters and is based primarily on observable facts.<sup>31</sup> This ability to follow multiple characters exists in Bal's theory thanks to the abstract narrator, who is the final mediator of what is to be uttered in internal or external focalization. Furthermore, in external focalization, the narrator is the focalizer. If no character is present to perceive, the narrator takes over. "But the speech act of narrating is still different from the vision, the memories, the sense perceptions, thoughts, that are being told. Nor can that vision be conflated with the events they focus, orient, interpret."<sup>32</sup> However, Bal's theory would fail if it were put into a fictional autobiography. Internal focalization follows characters and filters information that is interpreted by an abstract narrator. In autobiographical fiction, the speech act of narrating contains memories and visions since it has a very concrete narrator. Therefore, in autobiographical fiction, the narrator, the abstract I of their younger self and internal focalization, can be broken by utterances such as "I don't know yet, that they will betray me." This is clearly uttered by the narrator's younger self compared to "I didn't know that they would betray me at the time." This clearly carries more information than the subject of the focalization could have known. Furthermore, the narration carries a connection to the memories, making the abstract narrator very concrete and also making the narrator unreliable since he is acting based on his own memories and by disrupting the story with his knowledge, he creates doubt.

Unreliability in historical novels is also pervasive thanks to anachronisms that may also create an unreliable narrator. When a narrator narrates about historical events that might have been slightly romanticised for artistic purposes, the reader might consider them unreliable, and the narrator might be viewed as deceiving, losing the reader's trust. However, the deciding factor is the reader, and whether they consider it unreliable narration or faulty research that would point to the author. There are different kinds of unreliable narration widely used, such as a narrator who keeps secrets, a narrator who is delusional or a narrator who misleads readers,

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<sup>31</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 148–149.

<sup>32</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 146.

and generally, they represent a wide pool of unreliable narration. The focus of this paragraph will be solely on unreliable narration in historical fiction. Nünning summarises unreliable narration as a range of definable signals that consider textual data and the reader's world knowledge. It is the difference between standards of normality and normalised views as it is distancing from the rules set by the author.<sup>33</sup> Anachronistic unreliability would, by this definition, be possible as readers are invited to comment, share and compare their own knowledge of historical data. Readers interpret the historical-fictional world created by the author, and while interpreting, they automatically compare the norms created by the story to those of their own. Whether the narration will be unreliable is determined by the conclusions drawn up by the comparison of norms. This theory is further supported by Zerweck, who agrees with Nünning that unreliability depends on values and interpretation of a text and adds that it is imperative to add cultural context as a variable for determining unreliable narration.<sup>34</sup> This means that when considering whether the narration is unreliable, the reader must add cultural norms and values tied to the story and the narrator to his interpretation. Moreover, when reading historical novels, readers should first take into consideration the values of the age and values of the social standing of the narrator and then consider unreliability based on his actions and events. However, this poses an uncertainty. When considering Nünning's and Zerweck's theory, it would mean that unreliability would depend on the reader's interpretative ability and his knowledge of historical and cultural knowledge. It is possible that readers without enough knowledge would misinterpret the narrator's action and consider it reliable. Unreliable narration could have a manipulative effect on readers, making a further distinction of reliability challenging. Mieke Bal considers focalization highly manipulative. She argues that by allowing the reader to know the feelings, emotions and thoughts of the character, the reader is much more likely to side with them. The characters have at least a more prominent possibility of manipulating the reader.<sup>35</sup> Character-bound focalization would aid unreliable narrators in manipulating the readers. Unreliable narrators differ in behaviour and decorum compared to the norms of the age. However, by sharing their reasons and thoughts with readers, they could cover their unreliability, manipulating the reader and making them ignorant of the unreliability.

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<sup>33</sup> Ansgar Nünning, "But why will you say that I am mad? On the Theory, History, and Signals of Unreliable Narration in British Fiction," *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 22 (1997): 101–102, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43025523>.

<sup>34</sup> Zerweck, *Historicizing Unreliable Narration*, 157, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/style.35.1.151>.

<sup>35</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 153–154.

The narrator in Bal's theory functions as abstractly as possible, only translating the external and inner actions of characters and, together with focalization, creating a narrative. The ability of the abstract narrator to mediate various characters at the same time proves to be convenient, yet it doesn't come without flaws. Overly specific instances of the narrator that frequently occur in historical fiction work hectically in Bal's theory, if they work at all. The focalization aids unreliable narrators, creating more challenging circumstances for readers to uncover unreliability and anachronisms. The narration does not help authors avoid anachronisms, nor does it help authors to adhere to specific rules of the historical novel.

Although historical novels have been around for an extremely long time, the shape of the historical novel readers are familiar with today has been created by Sir Walter Scott. His revolutionary approach to the subgenre, his research and his balance of fiction and history gave way to a popular subgenre ever since. The historical novel exists in a time different from ours, creating a barrier of age necessary for the subgenre. A difference in age is crucial because it lets both readers and authors explore history, understand it and perhaps even learn from it. Different cultures worldwide have cultures and histories that are so rich that the authors of the historical novel try to explore foreign histories, highlighting niches in a subgenre dominated by mainstream histories of Europe. When writing about great events, especially those in mainstream knowledge of the public, authors are tasked with creating captivating plots, and it can prove challenging to satisfy the readers. Therefore, authors should be able to manage distancing characters from well-known historical events to maintain the mystery of the age and spoiler-free continuity of the plot. Distancing the plot of the book from history is not an easy task. The equilibrium of historical data and fiction is subjective, but the story, the imaginative world and the characters should evoke emotions, which could be accomplished by weaving enough fictional drama to achieve that goal without sacrificing too much historical accuracy. However, historical evidence is not as objective as it generally seems to be. Historians, in order to create narratives based on historical evidence and historical records, force their subjective views on such evidence, creating historiographical narratives with the essence of objectivity, that is, the objective unaltered historical evidence. Historical narratives created by historians are reconstructions and explanations that are still based on subjective conclusions made by historians. Then, when talking about anachronisms and misinterpretations in historical fiction, it is not as direct as it seems to be. Anachronisms play a crucial role in creating a vibrant, thorough world based on history. They help authors create deep characters, which would not be possible if they were based solely on historical

research. Additionally, anachronisms could prove to be a lesson to the readers, connecting history and our world and showcasing modern problems and taboos. However, not all anachronisms should be approved in the historical novel. A great number of harmful anachronisms are being used as a consequence of inferior research, creating false presuppositions people tend to believe. People often compare their knowledge of history with that of an author. When comparing those norms, readers impose their knowledge on them, and when the norms differ, it could be a sign of unreliable narration. In historical fiction, in general, since it is set in a distant age, it is important to assess cultural values before making conclusions about the reliability of the narrative. The focalization creates another layer of exposition of the fictional world, shifting the perspective to characters, creating an intimate space between the reader and them, and possibly manipulating the reader into acceptance of their own values. The historical novel is a complex subgenre that has a set of rules that a work must meet to be considered part of this subgenre. The effort to distinguish those rules has led to this research, possibly creating a comprehensive set of rules.

#### 4. Practical Applications

The *Autobiography of Henry VIII* is commonly labelled as a historical novel, but for the purpose of the following analysis, it must adhere to the rules set by the research of this thesis, which is set on theories of several influential theorists to be truly historical. The rules add to the factual dimension of the book; it is, therefore, imperative to consider them. In the research part of the thesis, it has been set that a historical novel as a subgenre should be created in an age that is distinct enough from our age. It should be created from historiographic research. The *Autobiography of Henry VIII* was originally published in 1986, and the plot of the book revolves around Henry VIII and his life, making the age the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. “That child was my father, born when his mother was but fourteen. It was January 28, 1457.”<sup>36</sup> This means that by the rules of Sarah L. Johnson, who set the minimal time of fifty years, and by the rules of Lukács, who expects the historical novel to be distinct enough to recognise changes in society, *The Autobiography* passes both rules set by the authors. The distinction of the age is distinct enough from the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the author began preparation for writing the book. “The one against quacks and fortune-tellers? On their second offence they have one ear cut off. On their third offence they lose the other ear.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII with Notes by His Fool* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1998), 20.

<sup>37</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 316.

This part, with the example of the old, brutal laws, divides the ages according to Lukács. Furthermore, Johnson adds that to be considered historical, the author of the book should create overwhelmingly from research rather than from living witnesses. Since it is impossible to find living witnesses from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, it is clear that George used historiographical research as her source. Nevertheless, George extensively researched the subject. “My research took the form of doing a great deal of reading – of contemporary accounts of Henry VIII, of which there are luckily a large number, and also of the works of scholars analysing this material.”<sup>38</sup> This shows that George extensively researched the subject of Henry VIII and even incorporated sources at the end of the book for readers to do their own research. In the About the Author section at the end, it is said that it took the author fifteen years to research Henry VIII as a person.<sup>39</sup> This alone shows the dedication of the author to adhere to at least one of the rules of the historical novel, whether she was aware of them or not.

Secondly, it was established that writing about the history of other countries is permissible, even encouraged, as it brings other cultures to another large body of readers in the author’s country. Margaret George was born in the United States of America, and since her fourth birthday, she has frequently been travelling. She has been gifted by being introduced to several cultures, broadening her world views.<sup>40</sup> This prerequisite and her love for reading and books, in general, created an optimal author for writing about foreign histories. And rightfully so, because she became six times a New York Times bestseller with each of her novels. This introduced the “history” of Britain’s King Henry VIII to a whole new audience.

Thirdly, creating an enticing plot where emotions can pierce the factual pretence of history and evoke emotions in readers is not an easy task, especially when dealing with great events of history. George decided to create a story about the notorious King Henry VIII, creating a challenge for herself. Henry VIII is known for having many wives and killing some of them, and he is also known for his troubles with the papacy and for creating the church of England for the purpose of annulling his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. These are undisputed facts that must be part of the fictional autobiography and could possibly spoil the reading process. In this case, George does not follow the unimportant people but the extravagant and wealthy king. Keeping the reader’s interest could prove difficult to maintain, but George created an unknown dimension in this well-known topic. To keep the plot enticing and flowing, she

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<sup>38</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 935.

<sup>39</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, “About the Author.”

<sup>40</sup> Margaret George, “Author Bio,” [margaretgeorge.com/about-margaret/author-bio/](http://margaretgeorge.com/about-margaret/author-bio/) (accessed March 10, 2025).

presents the well-known facts through the King's intimacy. "What I intended doing on my side was to continue to disconnect the Church in England from its fountainhead in Rome, using Parliament as the instrument of destruction."<sup>41</sup> While the process of excommunication is relatively short, only a few pages long from the birth of the idea from the mind of Cromwell to the execution of the plan, "You must not think that all this happened quickly, or that nothing else transpired while Parliament sat."<sup>42</sup> the emphasis is on the thoughts and feelings of the King. This is also a case of distancing from the great events, albeit not literally, the psychological distance taking the readers further away from the factual, historical world of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which readers already know, to the deep psyche of the King, showing his fear of the God, doubting himself and even having nightmares from the idea of being the head of the church, the concept of revolution pointed towards the Rome. "In the midst of my dreams come wheeling figures of monks and nuns. Some looked at me accusingly."<sup>43</sup> "These thoughts held me captive, tortured me, as surely as if I had been chained to a pillar in a dungeon."<sup>44</sup> The psychological distancing works for two main reasons. By purposefully focusing on the emotional part, which Brebner views positively, the reader is distanced from the historical empiricism of the bureaucracy and conflict between the Rome and England, which the reader could research on their own. George creates a separation from the factual and creates a mystery of the mind, the reader becomes invested in the person of the King rather than the great event, which is the excommunication and the Church of England. Additionally, the moderate psychological distance from the excommunication set by George creates a seamless transition as the readers are close enough to imagine vivid scenes from the event, such as uncertainty, fear, or dissent of the public. Furthermore, Baker advised avoiding great events of history in order to achieve the greatness of the story itself.<sup>45</sup> The *Autobiography of Henry VIII* cannot avoid such events altogether without sacrificing parts of Henry's life. George did, however, limit the great events, for there are many, to give way to the main character to live. The coronation of Henry VIII, or the marriage to his first wife, Catherin of Aragon, was each limited to a few pages only. "Warham anointed me, and the oil was warm and pleasingly scented. Then, after my vows, he placed the heavy jewel-encrusted crown on my head, and I prayed that I might be worthy of it, might preserve and defend it. When he said Mass, I vowed

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<sup>41</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 316.

<sup>42</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 316.

<sup>43</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 313.

<sup>44</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 583.

<sup>45</sup> Baker, *A Guide to Historical Fiction*, xi.

to do only good for England, upon peril of my immortal soul.”<sup>46</sup> This is the description of the process of coronation. Following this, George again describes how this great event affected Henry VIII and his feelings, ambitions and whole personality. As George demonstrated, avoiding great events doesn’t have to be absolute. She understands that coronation or the excommunication could be overpowering; therefore, she compressed it into short parts of the story. However, she discerns its importance so as not to hinder the significance of the events, and she extensively creates reflective and contemplative portions of the texts, which are important for character development. In conclusion, George has masterfully compressed great events to balance other parts of the text, she was even able to distance her characters from the events using psychological distancing to create a space for emotions and uncertainty of future events, even in such a well-known topic. The plot revolves not around great events but about the maturing of Henry VIII as a prince, the King and a husband. That is why the plot is still enticing, even with King as a main character and the court as a setting.

Lastly, to delve into the fictional factual structure of the book is to look for historical evidence and the artistic freedom of the author. As has been evident, George created a book from extensive research based on historiographical sources, which is the backbone of the structure. The life of Henry VIII was thoroughly examined, and on the basis of the factual structure, George created a persuasive character for Henry VIII. The factuality shows itself here, as Nield stated. “A novel is rendered historical by the introduction of dates, personages, or events, to which identification can be readily given.”<sup>47</sup> The historical part of the novel, the structure on which artistic freedom can be built, is ever-present in this novel. The coronation of Henry VIII in 1509. “I chose Midsummer’s Day for our Coronation. Midsummer's Day, 1509.”<sup>48</sup> This aligns perfectly with the historiographical sources, such as Henry VIII in 100 Objects. George also adequately described relics and people attending the coronation. Kendall describes the coronation with William Warham, the Archbishop of Canterbury who crowned Henry VIII, he also describes the coronation throne.<sup>49</sup> Another example of factual structure could be the names of historical personages such as Thomas More, Pope Clement VII, Henry’s wives Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and others who make appearances or are referred to in the book. The historical events in this book are a natural progression, and although they are not detailed by means of historical evidence, they nonetheless form a

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<sup>46</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 113-114.

<sup>47</sup> Nield, *A Guide to the Best Historical Novels and Tales*, xviii.

<sup>48</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Paul Kendall, *Henry VIII in 100 Objects* (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 2020), 30.

factual structure of the book. It is thanks to the persuasive use of facts and a verity of them that George could have portrayed Henry VIII as she did. The artistic liberties are based on a solid structure which evokes the age without any complications. The great events of Henry's life are subtly used, yet the events are powerful enough to create a solid background for his thoughts to run clearly and to express his otherwise hidden inner feelings to the readers. That is precisely where George used her artistic freedom, the fictional part of this historical novel. To evoke feelings, George gave the readers access to the mental state of Henry VIII. "I had meant us to sit before the fire, exchange confidences, gain confidences, foster camaraderie. But he was not warm, despite his amiable manner. I felt his coldness, stronger than I felt the heat of the fire."<sup>50</sup> In this exchange between Henry VIII and Thomas More, it is evident that the ability to recognise feelings serves the purpose of compassion. Henry, although demonised in mainstream media as a wife killer, gluttonous, arrogant spender of wealth, is here portrayed with compassion. To achieve this, George had to use fictional thoughts, worries, and fears to picture Henry VIII as more ordinary and more relatable. "I had entered the King's chamber a second son and future priest; I left it as heir apparent and future King. To say that everything changed thereafter is to say what any fool could know."<sup>51</sup> Shortly after his brother's death, Henry VIII became an heir to the throne. The flow of sudden changes and his overpowering feelings picture the future King as an ordinary, helpless boy, creating relatable emotions that most readers could recognise. In that lies George's ability to use her artistic liberties to her advantage against the overwhelming number of historical evidence of Henry's life accounts. The fictional parts of this book aren't as evident as they might seem because the historically factual structure attracts the imagination, whereas the fictional psychological parts seem necessary and natural, seamlessly flowing as a part of the narrative. The intention behind this book was made clear by the author herself. "She had never seen such a thing done but became convinced the king was a victim of bad PR and she should rescue his good name."<sup>52</sup> This is primarily evident in the fictional, emotional parts of the book. George does not try to cover up her intentions but instead, she presents Henry as she imagined him. A human is created due to difficult occurrences in his life. A tabula rasa formed by his experiences throughout his life. George gave reason for his madness later in life. "Gently I pulled the blanket aside, just to see her face once, to make her mine, before consigning her to the earth forever. It was no human face that I uncovered, but that of a monster. It had but a single eye; no nose, just a gaping

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<sup>50</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 230.

<sup>51</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 54.

<sup>52</sup> Margaret George, "Author Bio," [margaretgeorge.com/about-margaret/author-bio/](http://margaretgeorge.com/about-margaret/author-bio/) (accessed March 16, 2025).

great hole; and mushroom-like, puffy lips, over a mouth with teeth.”<sup>53</sup> The fanatical search for a suitable partner that would give Henry an heir might have been any. But George created, through her research and her interpretation, a man who was deeply hurt by the loss of his children. Both parts of the book, factual and fictional, complement each other in a supportive way, where the factual structure creates vibrant imaginary scenes, making sure the fictional part has a solid ground to lean on.

So, it seems that George, to some extent, has upheld the rules of the historical novel. It is distinct enough that it is easy to distinguish the age of the novel from ours as it takes place in 15<sup>th</sup> century England, and it has been created from extensive research over the span of fifteen years. Furthermore, the societal markers that Lukács based on his distinction of the age have changed. Although George is not English, she was born in the USA and raised in several other countries; she managed to devote herself to the culture of England of the 15th century and present it in a feasible way to the readers with a focus on Henry VIII, his family and the court. The plot focuses on the less significant parts of Henry’s life in the eyes of history, keeping the great complicated events brief and easy to digest, therefore distancing itself from them and focusing on the hidden emotional aspects that align with Ried Mitchell and Michael Williams. Lastly, the novel has a solid factual structure rooted in research on which George based her interpretation of Henry VIII. The fictional part of the novel has profound psychological and emotional aspects that play in favour of Henry VIII and his affable portrayal devised by George.

The historical portrayal of the age of the 15<sup>th</sup> century came from historiographical sources. George even listed several sources that have been used in preparations to write *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*. “If you would like to do further reading and research of your own, I include here some of my sources for the various areas of his life.”<sup>54</sup> George lists the biographies of Henry VIII written by A.F. Pollard, J.J. Scarisbrick and Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Further lists sources about young Henry VIII, such as Neville Williams, and about his wives by Garrett Mattingly, to name a few. She names just a part of her bibliography that was used for the writing of the book. By listing her sources, George invites readers to research the topic and compare their outcomes with the outcomes made in the book, not fearing the critique that might have risen from the findings of others that might have disproved her

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<sup>53</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 197.

<sup>54</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 935.

research. The focus here would be on anachronistic scenes such as the meeting of Henry and Catherine, after the coronation disguising and the birth of a deformed baby. “We were to invade Katherine’s room, to burst in suddenly with great fanfare of trumpets, to pretend to be Robin Hood and his men abducting the fair maidens. Then, after a mock struggle, we would dance by torchlight. Suddenly Katherine went pale and reeled against me. She clutched her belly.”<sup>55</sup> “Scarisbrick does not mention anything even remotely important to Katherine’s pregnancy; he mentions various disguises as a celebration of the coronation.”<sup>56</sup> Additionally, Hayden White was against interpretation as it acts on subjectivity, and proper historian should only be reconstructing based on historical research.<sup>57</sup> Authors of the historical novel are, compared to historians, urged to interpret their findings. They must fill the gaps between the evidence available and create a cohesive, logical and legible structure. In that, fiction based on subjective interpretation is imagined. Although it is true that novelists can strive to be more faithful to the commonly recognised historical narratives, it is absolutely impossible to be objective or even as objective as the utmost objective narrative possible since novelists act on interpretation rather than on reconstruction. Even though Goerge was acting on historical research and reconstructions of historians, she still was acting on an interpretation of the subject, the personality of Henry VIII. Even from historical research, or even from the impossible conversation with Henry VIII, it would be futile to reconstruct his personality since it cannot be known how genuine or false a person is; therefore, interpreting and trying to understand based on research is adequate to imagine his personality and behaviour. To conclude why, for George, like for others, it is unthinkable to reach complete historical accuracy, it is critical to understand that novelists act and interpret the reconstructions of historians, creating even more subjective images than those before them. As a consequence, anachronisms are created.

## 5. Anachronisms as Tools of Narration

Anachronisms are ordinarily viewed as a negative part of the historical novel subgenre, but rather often than not, they serve a purpose in the book without which the book wouldn’t be as enticing or as detailed. Without a doubt, George deliberately created anachronisms in *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*. The most noticeable account of anachronisms is the character of Henry VIII and other characters. It has been resolved that the true character of Henry VIII

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<sup>55</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 131.

<sup>56</sup> J. J. Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968), 18.

<sup>57</sup> Hayden White, *Interpretation in History*, *New Literary History* 4, no. 2 (1973): 282, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/468478>.

is inaccessible. Therefore, there is a need for necessary anachronisms to create a full, detailed character. The necessary anachronisms allow George to convey content through the use of modern language. “My grandmother Beaufort and he had been ‘thick as thieves,’ as the saying goes.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, thick as thieves, although used for the first time in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, according to Richard Barker,<sup>59</sup> would not be considered a harmful anachronism but a necessary one. However, a case could be made where George could have used another idiom that would have been less anachronistic. Moreover, the childbirth of the dead child is useful to prove the anachronistic nature of Henry’s character. “When I remembered all the times we had looked fondly at the swelling of her belly ... while inside, this horror had been taking shape. ‘I spoke in sorrow, and stupidly.’ It must be buried somewhere away from consecrated ground.”<sup>60</sup> While Scarisbrick does not claim that any of the miscarriages or stillborn babies would be deformed, “Instead, it had yielded several miscarriages, three infants who were either still-born or died immediately after birth (two of them males), two infants who had died within a few weeks of birth (one of them a boy) and one girl, Princess Mary, now some ten years old.”<sup>61</sup> Nor Mattingly in *Catherine of Aragon* does provide any information that would support that. Thus, it is clear the birth of a deformed baby is an anachronism also. The character of Henry VIII was in that scene purposefully devised from a tragedy that happened but made much more dramatic to expose Henry’s “true” nature. At his last childbirth with Catherine of Aragon, he is struck with crushing sorrow that he experienced several times. Nonetheless, his emotions, in this instance, are interpreted and imagined. Yet, this necessary anachronism displayed a perfectly natural emotional state of a person who experienced such horrible times, and they also summarised all the miscarriages that had happened before, which were not as intricately described. Necessary anachronisms add depth to the characters, which is evident from the incident. However, as Lukács expressed, they should not contain any modern content. “To the highest bidder, as Henry and Wolsey discovered firsthand when they tried to buy the election of the Holy Roman Emperor in 1517 for Henry, and then the Papal election of 1522 for Wolsey. Those offices do not come cheap, and Henry and his pompous, puffed-up ass of a chancellor were simply not willing to pay the full market value. Henry sometimes showed a streak of perverse frugality—perhaps as a sentimental gesture to the

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<sup>58</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 223.

<sup>59</sup> "Thick as Thieves: Meaning, Origin, Usage," *The History of English*, <https://www.thehistoryofenglish.com/thick-as-thieves-meaning-origin-usage> (accessed March 21, 2025).

<sup>60</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 197.

<sup>61</sup> Scarisbrick, *Henry VIII*, 150.

memory of his father?”<sup>62</sup> Will Sommers's comment could be interpreted in two different ways. Firstly, it is possible that Will hates Wolsey and his policies to the degree that he is willing to criticise Wolsey's and King's decisions, which is more probable given his later comments on Wolsey. Secondly, there is a possibility that Will had breached the rules of necessary anachronisms, harshly criticising buying the election of the church that in modern times does not have nearly as much power, conveying a modern attitude towards that decision. His attitude would be just a critical view of the author, as Will is most likely a believer in God. Thus, he would not dare to criticise the importance of the church and of the Pope. Consequently, that would be just a harmful anachronism Lukács does not approve of. This concludes the use of necessary anachronisms in the book. They emphasise characters and their feelings, making them relatable and, foremost, real.

The harmful anachronisms that create an unreliable picture of events, settings and attitudes may hinder the factual structure of the story, yet they serve a purpose. The reason why George deliberately hinders the factual structure of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* can be examined in the previous note. (See note 52.) Despite the fact that historiographical sources do not agree on Katherine's deformed baby, George willingly creates a display of immense sorrow and fear that encapsulates the emotions felt by the parents, Katherine and Henry VIII, having to go through several miscarriages and stillborn children. Further in the text, their emotions are described as being cursed. “Let it lie there on the bedcovers, which afterward must be burnt. And instead of a churching ceremony, Katherine and I must be ritually cleansed and blessed.”<sup>63</sup> After a long series of miscarriages, Henry VIII suddenly creates a coping mechanism of being cursed. God does not want him to have a legitimate heir; he cursed him with a deformed dead baby. This, together with the childbirth of his bastard son Henry Fitzroy only moments after, creates a turning point in the story. “*My wife had had a monster. My mistress had had a healthy son.* Clearly, God was giving me a message. One too blatant for even me to ignore.”<sup>64</sup> This is Henry's climax of the relationship with Katherine. Now, God has given him a sign that Catherine shall not give him an heir. This perverted sign, this anachronism, has given Henry a reason to be mad, a reason to fanatically search for a suitable partner that could give him an heir. Although the turning point is anachronistic in nature, it propels the plot forward, giving the “madness” of Henry VIII a reason. The

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<sup>62</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 85.

<sup>63</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 197.

<sup>64</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 201.

miscarriages accumulate to this single point of tragedy and twistedness. The Queen is to blame for the failures, not him, since he has a bastard son. In conclusion, this instance of anachronism has a pivotal purpose in the book. It is to propel the plot forward, give a dramatic reason for Henry's obsession with an heir and start a new chapter of the story. George decides to sacrifice factuality for fiction, as she prefers emotions to reason. Therefore, the anachronism is not harmful but could be categorised as deliberate, which Russo talks about. The value as demonstrated is not in comparison of ages but in the morally questionable behaviour of Henry VIII. Another example of deliberate anachronism that George masterfully created to enhance the emotional appeal and to invest readers into the character of Henry VIII is the moment he first saw Katherine of Aragon. Henry VIII is meant to be a positive hero that differs from other portrayals. George managed to shift the perspective also thanks to deliberate anachronisms. "I loved her, then and there. Doubtless you will say I was only a boy, a ten-year-old boy, and that I had not even spoken to her, and that it was therefore impossible for me to love her. But I did. I did! I loved her with a sudden burst of devotion that took me quite by surprise."<sup>65</sup> "Then and there" is in *The Autobiography of Henry VIII* meant in Plymouth after the Spanish landed. The day Henry VIII met Catherine is described as an eerie, cold and otherwise unpleasant wet day, creating an incredible contrast to her beauty described by Henry. Their meeting is nothing but amazement and adoration created for readers to invest them in future events that would seem otherwise plain had George not introduced them in such a manner. Although this meeting was emotionally filled, Mattingly does not provide such information that they met "there and then". Mattingly informs that Princess Catherine was met by King Henry VII in Dogmersfield after weeks of celebration. Their meeting was simply a visual confirmation of "goods". After the inspection, the state reception transpired, and Catherine met Arthur.<sup>66</sup> So, George, by introducing Katherine and Henry VIII, has created an anachronistic image both spatially and timely, once again sacrificing historical accuracy for emotional and character development that would benefit the plot and Henry's image.

It is improbable that George, with her historically sound factual structure as demonstrated by practically perfect reconstruction of the coronation, would be ignorant of the first meeting of Henry VIII and Catherine or the details of their children, making the presumed harmful anachronisms deliberate. In conclusion, both necessary and deliberate anachronisms have

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<sup>65</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 44.

<sup>66</sup> Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon* (New York: Random House, 1941), 35–36.

proved to be essential for the story in creating full characters with deep emotional states that resonate with readers. Furthermore, the deliberate anachronisms were not in any case harmful to the story as they were based on historiographical research and, therefore, to some degree, faithful.

6. Fact-Checking and Reinforcing Historical Accuracy through Will Somers

Anachronisms, together with focalization, create a manipulating imagery of Henry VIII. As George said herself, Henry VIII deserved more than to be demonised. Thus, the focalization lies with Henry VIII almost exclusively to deepen the relationship between the reader and the main character. As it is a fictional autobiography, Henry VIII is the narrator as he is the character, with the exception of Will Somers, who often over-narrates the narration of Henry VIII or corrects his assumptions. “True. Henry had been King for so long that no one remembered anything else, and he had led his people out into a confusing landscape from which only he promised a map for deliverance.”<sup>67</sup> Henry VIII, on the other hand, is a character-bound focalizer who primarily gives us unreliable information based on his subjective views and thoughts. “‘You lied!’ I cried. ‘You are older than you claim, you are withered, dried up! I have been cheated!’ She leapt out of bed, terrified of my ranting in English. The fraud!”<sup>68</sup> And the correction of Will that follows is. “It was you who were blind and deaf to what you had become in the eyes of Europe. When you sent your envoys out, seeking another bride, you were no longer the great matrimonial catch you had been before your Great Matter.”<sup>69</sup> Henry is here shamelessly presented as an unreliable narrator, exposed by his jest, Will Somers. The normalised standards set by George, the standards that developed from her research, are in the book shared with Will Somers. Then, the difference between subjective, sometimes delusional information shared by Henry VIII and normalised standards of Will is the unreliability, since common knowledge of readers should be that of Will. These two narrators bear a symbiotic relationship where Will Somers acts as a fact-checker, the objective eye to otherwise truly subjective autobiography. Henry, by his unreliability, creates subjective yet realistic accounts of his life, and due to character-bound focalization, the manipulative effect of the focalization occurs. Mieke Bal considers focalization highly manipulative. She argues that by allowing the reader to know the feelings, emotions and thoughts of the character, the reader is much more likely to side with them. The

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<sup>67</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 513.

<sup>68</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 627.

<sup>69</sup> George, *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, 628.

characters have at least a more prominent possibility of manipulating the reader.<sup>70</sup> By allowing readers to know what Henry says is highly subjective and possibly untrue, George allows readers to know his true personality, in this instance narcissistic and delusional, which otherwise would be inaccessible, and by fact-checking and correcting the narrator, George creates a sympathetic energy that grants readers to relate. Also, the manipulative effect lingers on the anachronisms described previously as on the character-bound focalization. Thanks to the focalization, George manages to sever the psychological distance between the reader and the main character, creating relatable psychological experiences primarily at the start of the story. See notes 59 and 60. Another ability of this manipulative focalization is that readers perceive other characters only through the narrator's eyes. Therefore, readers cannot create an objective picture of other characters, but they can create a more objective picture of Henry, who is judged by Will. The character-bound focalization serves this purpose well, and thanks to Will Somers, a reader can distinguish between genuine information, subjectively less coloured and affective information, which would be corrected by Will Somers should they be false. The important question here, since readers rely on Will Somers to correct any false and subjective information uttered by Henry VIII, is how to know whether Will is a trustworthy narrator. Will Somers is still a character who does not have any other means of access to Henry's mind other than the autobiography that he comments on. Later in the book, it is revealed that Will Somers is incredibly close to his king. "He had appeared feverish, almost beside himself during the Christmas festivities. So naturally when he sent for me on that first day afterward, I assumed it was because he wished to confess. I was his secular confessor, Cranmer his spiritual."<sup>71</sup> The relationship reveals that it is possible for Will Somers to know more than is confessed in the autobiography. That creates a fictional trust in Will as he can recognise the shortcomings of *The Autobiography* and possibly correct them. However, as a character, Will Somers is still not objective. Firstly, because he had a genuine connection to his King. "There were only a few genuine mourners for the King. By that I mean anyone who felt sad, weak, out of sorts, and disinclined to participate in daily activities. I was one."<sup>72</sup> As a character and a fictional person, he is still subjective. "To be lumped with Wolsey! A compliment or an insult?"<sup>73</sup> Yet, Will's views differ not from those of a reader because, albeit fictional, Will Somers is also a reader. Later in the book, Will sees the King as he was rather

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<sup>70</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 153–154.

<sup>71</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 728.

<sup>72</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 931.

<sup>73</sup> Bal, *Narratology*, 219.

than as the King describes himself. Will recognises his advanced age and loss of physical appeal. See note 61. The reader can also discern Henry's delusional statements, but the ones that are unclear to the reader, Will's witty remarks create a clear picture of the truth and explain them. In summary, the unreliability of Henry VIII is exposed throughout the book by Will, who functions as a more objective medium, that is the reader of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, narrator and a character. The intimate relationship with the King grants him the ability to judge the utterances of the King. Furthermore, the knowledge of the reader acts as a final medium in deciding whether the King as a narrator is reliable or not. The focalization helps bring readers closer to the character of Henry VII but also has a manipulative effect. The ability to know one's thoughts and emotions forces readers to relate to that character. Also, the perspective has a bias against other characters as they appear only in descriptions of the King, forcing readers to take his side in disputes.

In conclusion, George met all the rules that constitute a historical novel and that have been set in the research part of this thesis with her expansive research, as well as the balance of factual structure and fictional additions. Although she wrote about foreign history, through her fifteen years of research, she created a persuasive and lively depiction of Henry VIII, she used deliberate anachronisms to create an enticing plot and was also able to distance readers from the great events of history to avoid politically charged topics that would burden the plot with unnecessary and stagnant scenes. George used anachronisms deliberately to ensure the emotional engagement of the readers, as well as manipulating strategy to illustrate Henry in a positive light. Furthermore, her anachronisms had a positive impact on the story, creating seamless transitions between the events of Henry's striking yet sometimes chaotic life. The dual narration of the book was created to support the autobiography and to support readers with more objective knowledge, without which the readers would be lost and in need of research to analyse the highly subjective views and thoughts of Henry VIII. Character-bound focalization here played an important part in manipulating readers to share Henry's opinions as well as relate to him not as a King but as a father, husband and, most importantly, human.

## Conclusion

To conclude the analysis of *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, it is necessary to realise that George wrote this book with a clear aim, and that is to present Henry VIII differently from others to portray him in a more positive light. Here, Henry VIII is presented as a tortured human soul who tries to be good enough at first but later is inevitably thrown into madness by his past failures and experiences. He tries to be a good enough King, husband, subject of God

and father. George created a historically faithful structure on which she could delve into the psychology of the King. In order to take artistic liberties with the personality of the King and other characters, George had to create a factually and historically sound structure that would portray the age vividly and faithfully, creating an image for readers to build upon. To ensure that the readers have the knowledge to accompany her book, George included historiographical sources from her research for readers to explore.

The balance between history and fiction that George created would be possible to categorise into two domains. The physical domain is mainly factual and creates the backbone of the book, whereas the fictional domain is primarily psychological, incorporating the thoughts, emotions and spirituality of the characters. The physical domain is based on her research and description of the physical. George uses the great events of Henry's life to easily capture the essence of the moments without the need for detailed descriptions of rooms, furniture and architecture, which could possibly create anachronisms. Yet George is careful not to over-describe or not to be consumed by the great events. Through Henry VIII, she uses psychological distancing to shift the perspective from a physical, factual dimension to a fictional dimension. Fictional dimensions function as a focal point in the story, focusing on Henry VIII and his inner experiences. George even uses anachronisms deliberately to stress the seriousness of the events while sometimes evoking extreme emotions to emphasise the importance and summarise reoccurrence. George also uses anachronisms to create a sense of relatability in readers so that they emphasise Henry VIII possibly taking his side, and the use of necessary anachronisms here is absolutely crucial as they breathe life into characters. George might have also used the anachronisms to stress the fictional nature of this book as she uses the anachronisms deliberately.

The unreliability of Henry VIII is exposed by Will Somers, who acts as a second narrator, dutifully fact-checking Henry's assumptions and thoughts. Henry VIII himself is a highly subjective narrator manipulating reality by his delusions and narcissistic personality, creating doubt in readers. Will Somers, as a close friend and confidant of Henry, possesses the ability to judge him as he is not a mere reader of the autobiography but also a character in it. Together with anachronisms, George is actively trying to manipulate the reader using character-bound focalization. She uses Will as a narrator who is closer to the reader and earns the reader's trust. Since readers see everything through Henry's eyes and George uses anachronisms to dramatise the emotional scenes, further manipulating the readers, they have

no choice but to relate to Henry from start to finish. Will Somers acts as a brake and informant for the readers.

To answer the main research question - How do historical novels balance historical factuality and fictional aspects together with artistic freedom, and how does narrative unreliability affect it? The balance between factual and fictional is slightly more tilted to the fictional part. Although her factual structure and her effort to research every aspect of Henry's life are nonetheless expansive and admirable, the fictional part, Henry's interpreted character, is ever-present, filling every page of the autobiography. However, the fictional dimension could not exist in such a profound state without the factual structure that evokes the past so vividly and remarkably closely to historiographic narratives. Narrative unreliability can have positive and negative impacts on the factual dimension of the historical novel because readers are prone to scepticism towards information given by the unreliable narrator, or readers could pursue research of their own to reassure themselves in other novels where characters as Will Somers can't fact check the verity of the statements.

## Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá historickým románem, který je součástí historické fikce. Historický román byl přestrukturován Sirem Walterem Scottem, který jako první použil ke zpracování románu historiografický výzkum, aby tak dosáhl historicky přesného vyobrazení doby. V nedávné době se popularita historického románu zvýšila, dokonce historický román pronikl do televize jak do filmů, tak i do seriálů nadále zvětšující popularitu žánru. Avšak kritika z historického pohledu stále přebývá, zejména kritika historických nepřesností a levných referencí populární kultury. Margaret George napsala *The Autobiography of Henry VIII*, tedy historický román ve formě fiktické autobiografie Jindřicha VIII, který je provokativní svými dvěma vypravěči. George ve své knize představuje kompletní život Jindřicha VIII a to od útlého věku přes jeho vrchol vlády až po jeho smrt. George se soustředí hlavně na jeho emoční život a osobnost, která se během jeho života, podle interpretace George, výrazně mění k horšímu. Jelikož cílem této práce je najít, jak autorka vyvažuje fikci a historická fakta, pak toto dílo, ve kterém je Jindřich VIII vyobrazen záměrně v dobrém světle, což může svědčit o manipulaci čtenářů, je perfektní pro tento výzkum. A to z toho důvodu, že Will Somers, sekundární vypravěč knihy, funguje jako faktuální kontrola Jindřicha VIII, který se často dopouští hyperbolických výroků, čtenáři díky němu tak mohou rozpoznat alespoň některé nespolehlivé informace poskytnuté Jindřichem VIII. Její obsáhlý výzkum je patrný ve faktické stránce díla, kde George dosáhla téměř perfektního vyobrazení doby, a to díky

především známým událostem dějin, které jsou použity zejména pro ukotvení představivosti čtenářů. George používá faktickou stranu knihy jako opěrnou strukturu fikce, historické události jsou zde popsány stručně, jelikož George se věnuje a soustředí na Jindřicha VIII a jeho intimní život.

V této práci jsou představena pravidla pro kategorizaci historického románu založená na pracích G. Lukácse, Bakera, Groota a ostatních, která později slouží pro upevnění Autobiografie Jindřicha VIII do historického kontextu, na kterém je postaven zbytek praktické části. Pravidla pro rozpoznání historického románu vycházejí z nepropustnosti času, naprosté oddělení doby naší od doby v knize proto, že je nutné zachovat časovou vzdálenost, aby román mohl být označen za historický. Román by měl také vycházet z historiografického výzkumu, aby se předešlo krátké časové odlišnosti mezi dílem a zdrojem. Johnson, která toto pravidlo doporučuje, se snaží předejít výzkumu na základě přeživších a veteránů, kteří si událost ještě pamatují, a tak událost není dostatečně stará na to, aby se podle Johnson mohla považovat za historickou. Také by nemělo být dílo upevněno příliš blízko známých událostí, ty pak mohou prozradit co se stane dál. George ve své knize používá vzdálenost psychologickou, kde se soustředí na intimitu charakterů, zachovává tak zaujetí čtenářů i přes velice známé období Britské historie.

Dále jsou představeny anachronismy, nejčastější historické nepřesnosti a jejich dělení. Anachronismy jsou většinou vnímány jako nepřínosné, klamoucí informace, které neodpovídají historickým výzkumům, nejsou tedy historický objektivní a neměli by v knize být. Je nutností tedy stručně prozkoumat objektivnost historie a práce historiků, čímž docílíme toho, že bude zodpovězeno, jak se odlišuje výzkum historiků a autorů historický románu a jak s výzkumem pracují. Pro výzkum objektivity historie jsou použity teorie Whita a Eltona. Historiografie je bohužel studována a popisována lidmi, není tudíž možné, aby byla kompletně objektivní. I když historikové by neměli na rozdíl od autorů historického románu interpretovat, stále si zachovávají subjektivní styl výzkumu, který je následně dostupný v učebnicích či knihách. Anachronismy pak nejsou tak nepřesné, pokud se neshodují s historií na základě výzkumu, jak je na první pohled možné si myslet. George využívá anachronismy ve své knize dobrovolně, je to prostředek pro posun příběhu, nebo emoční pouto, které George vytváří mezi hlavním hrdinou knihy a čtenářem skrz intimitu „uměle“ vytvořenou anachronismy. Čtenáři tak mají možnost se ztotožnit s Jindřichem VIII, který podle interpretace George působí lidštěji a obyčejněji se sny i problémy jako člověk než jako jeden z nejznámějších králů historie. Anachronismy George však mají tendenci být stále fiktivní, a

pakliže by měl být historický román vyrovnaný, anachronismy George se naklání na stranu fikce, i přes pevnou strukturu faktů, kterou George položila svým důkladným výzkumem.

Nakonec, tato práce se zabývá naratologií, perspektivou neboli fokalizací a nespolehlivým vypravěčem, a jak přispívají k vyváženosti díla mezi fikcí a fakty. Jsou využity teorie Mieke Bal, Ansgar Nünning a Zerwecka. Fokalizací se rozumí perspektiva, kterou George využívá pro manipulaci čtenáře. Perspektiva leží v Autobiografii Jindřicha VIII víceméně jen u vypravěče, čtenář zkoumá svět 16. století očima Jindřicha VIII, zná také jeho myšlenky a touhy, avšak takto blízká fokalizace, kterou Bal nazývá „character-bound“ způsobuje to, že čtenář si ztotožňuje názory vypravěče, je tudíž manipulován. Will Somers je také fokalizován, je to jediná postava kromě Jindřicha VIII, která se dočká své perspektivy a to proto, že v knize sdílí svůj životní příběh, alespoň částečně, může se tak v knize vyjadřovat v první osobě. Nespolehlivost vypravěče se může zdát jako negativní věc, avšak George využívá nespolehlivost vypravěče pro hlubší emoční propojení mezi vypravěčem a čtenářem, vytváří tak manipulativní vztah, který vede k přijetí, či pochopení vypravěče a jeho názorů. Nespolehlivost vypravěče je posuzována na základě teorie Nünning, který tvrdí že se jedná o nespolehlivost v tom případě, že se liší normy světa fiktivního v knize a normy světa představeného čtenářem. George tak vytváří nespolehlivého vypravěče, Jindřicha VIII, a zároveň při představení Willa Somerse, odhaluje nespolehlivost Jindřicha VIII, a to neustálým opravováním a kontrolou tvrzení Jindřicha VIII, které se liší od této normy. George využívá Willa Somerse jako čtenáře, který je bližší čtenáři reálnému, tudíž získává jeho pozornost a důvěru. Tato strategie je však fiktivní část knihy, která je po celou dobu vyvažována historickými obrazy a fakty. Ačkoli George vyvažuje fikci obrazy a fakty a ačkoli je historie všudypřítomná, ústřední téma knihy je stále Jindřich VIII a jeho život v intimních oblastech jako jeho myšlenky, emoce nebo milostný život a jeho vztah s Bohem, je to stále interpretovaný charakter vytvořen na základě myšlenek a názorů George, tudíž subjektivní obraz. The Autobiography of Henry VIII má v popředí fikci, která je pevně zasazena do historického kontextu, avšak je stále více prominentní. Tato teze je obecným kritickým výzkumem historického románu zaměřená pouze na vyobrazení Autobiografie Jindřicha VIII pomocí výše uvedených teorií.

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