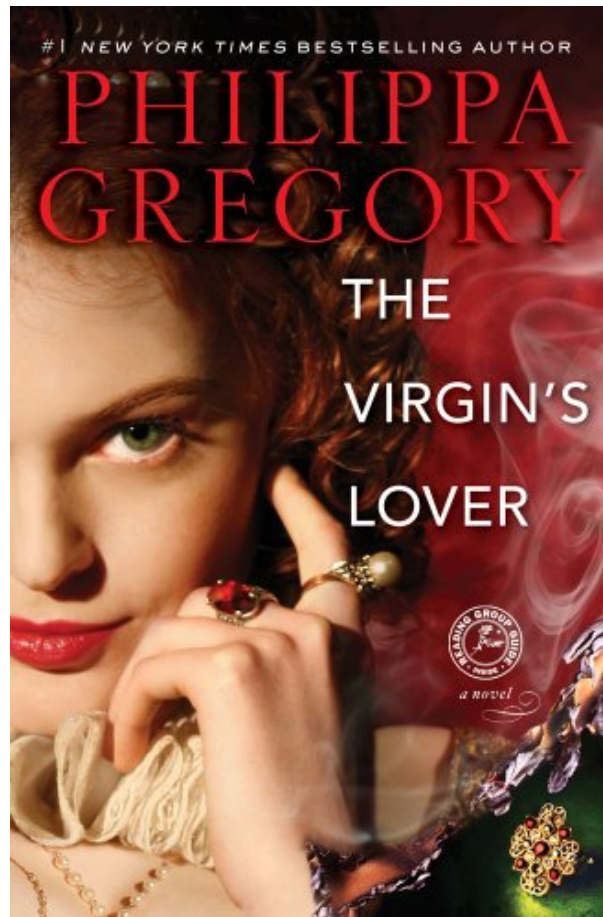
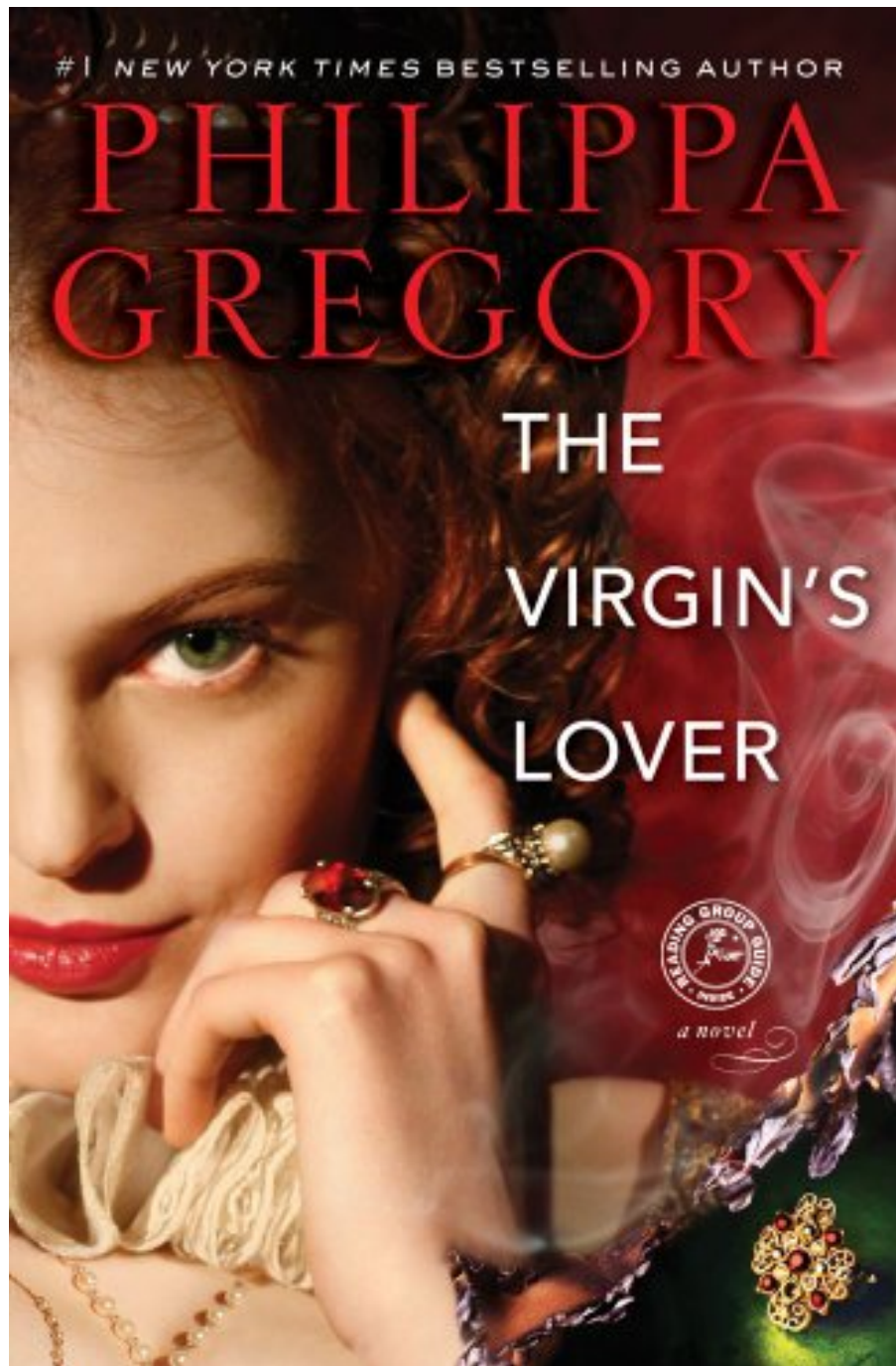


# THE VIRGIN'S LOVER BY PHILIPPA GREGORY



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From Publishers Weekly

Bestseller Gregory captivates again with this expertly crafted historical about the beautiful young Virgin Queen, portrayed as a narcissistic, neurotic home-wrecker. As in her previous novels about Tudor England (*The Queen's Fool*, etc.), Gregory amasses a wealth of colorful period detail to depict the shaky first days of Elizabeth I's reign. The year is 1558, an especially dangerous time for the nation: no bishop will coronate Henry VIII's Protestant daughter, the treasury is bankrupt, the army is unpaid and demoralized. Meanwhile, the French are occupying Scotland and threatening to install "that woman"—Mary, Queen of Scots—on the throne. Ignoring the matrimonial advice of pragmatic Secretary of State William Cecil, the 25-year-old Elizabeth persists in stringing along Europe's most eligible bachelors, including King Philip of Spain and the Hapsburg archduke Ferdinand. It's no secret why: she's fallen for her "dark, saturnine" master of horse, Sir Robert Dudley, whose traitorous family history and marriage to the privately Catholic Amy make him an unsuitable consort. Gregory deftly depicts this love triangle as both larger than life and all too familiar; all three characters are sympathetic without being likable, particularly the arch-mistress Elizabeth, who pouts, throws tantrums, connives and betrays with queenly impunity. After a while the plot stagnates, as the lovers flaunt their emotions in the face of repetitious arguments from Amy, Cecil and various other scandalized members of the court. But readers addicted to Gregory's intelligent, well-researched tales of intrigue and romance will be enthralled, right down to the teasingly tragic ending.

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From #1 New York Times bestselling author and “queen of royal fiction” (USA TODAY) comes a riveting and scandalous love triangle between a young woman on the brink of greatness, a young man whose ambition far exceeds his means, and the wife who cannot forgive them.

In the autumn of 1558, church bells across England ring out the joyous news that Elizabeth I is the new queen, yet one woman hears the tidings with utter dread. She is Amy Dudley, wife of Sir Robert, and she knows that Elizabeth’s ambitious leap to the throne will draw her husband back to the center of the glamorous Tudor court, where he was born to be.

Elizabeth’s excited triumph is short-lived. She has inherited a bankrupt country where treason is rampant and foreign war a certainty. Her faithful advisors warn her that she will survive only if she marries a strong prince to govern the rebellious country, but the one man Elizabeth desires is her childhood friend, the ambitious Robert Dudley. As the young couple falls back in love, a question hangs in the air: can he really set aside his wife and marry the queen? When Amy is found dead, Elizabeth and Dudley are suddenly plunged into a struggle for survival.

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Very good read

By sandra

I'm more drawn to Gregory's stories about the Tudor family, but so have haven't tackled the red/white queen series. This one was an enjoyable read but was dismayed at the rather abrupt ending. It was a case of "what, that's IT?" as it really seemed to finish mid-conversation. Still liked it immensely, and of course the history content behind it all is very much a grey area as well so I'm not sure what else she could have done with the story. Still, even some sort of speculative epilogue or some such might have lessened the end a little for me. I guess we can't have it all!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

I loved the previous books in this series

By theresa quiner

I loved the previous books in this series, but I didn't like how Elizabeth was so motivated by men and pushed around so easily by the men in her life. Elizabeth was one of the longest lasting queens in British history, and I kept waiting for the moment in the book when Elizabeth would find her strength and start whipping her country into shape, but that moment never came. The book would have been more interesting if more of the focus had been on Elizabeth finding her strength and less on the love story.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

## Weakest of the Series

By Sheryl L. Katz

Philippa Gregory has written three books about the origins and history of Queen Elizabeth. The first, *The Other Boleyn Girl*, was one of the best historical novels I've ever read. Starting from the story of the sister of Ann Boleyn, that book told the much told story of Henry VIII from a fresh perspective. In the process it also portrayed a piece of social history rarely revealed - the living conditions and politics of being a lady-in-waiting. As much history as I've read (I have an MA in history), this is the first time I've been exposed to that in the depth shown in the book.

The second book, *The Queens Fool*, tells the story of the period between the death of Henry and the reign of Elizabeth. Hannah, the Queens Fool, a secret Jew driven from Spain by the inquisition, is the main character. The social history of the English Jews who escaped the inquisition is well-portrayed, and again this is an aspect of history I knew little about - this book actually sent me scurrying to read more about it - and Gregory was quite accurate in her portrayal. The weakness of this book is that the larger story actually involves several significant historical incidents and is not as coherent.

This last book, *The Virgin's Lover*, tells its story from the perspective of Amy Robsart, the wife of Robert Dudley. From the first page I was cringing because I know too much of this story already. Unfortunately, the portrayal of Amy is extremely inaccurate, as is the portrayal of Elizabeth. And, I already knew way too well what ultimately happened to Amy, which is also inaccurately portrayed. Unlike the other two books, this one does not also have a secondary story with the details of any interesting social history. Instead, the plot just moves along and the story focuses on the too well-known characters. On the whole it just didn't work for me, but after about 150 pages or so I did get caught up enough to start reading it.

A fundamental problem in writing historical fiction is writing style and use of language. Anything a character says is likely to be awkward. If the language used is archaic, then the reader feels unfamiliar with it, and it probably isn't the way the character talked. If the language used is modern, it can be grating. Gregory tends to use a combination of both. Sometimes the language is constructed in a way that is archaic, other times, it is highly modern and colloquial. Sometimes her characters have bizarrely anachronistic thoughts. A character will analyze the behavior of another in what can only be modern terms, or a character like Cecil is thought of by Dudley as a kind of hero because he has a vision of a unified England (this is absurd as Dudley is attributing a nationalism to Cecil that didn't exist until centuries later, Cecil might have had a vision like that, but Dudley would never in 200 years have articulated it that way). There is also enough 20th century slang in the dialog for it to feel stilted. I think historical fiction writers really ought to try to write very standard, non slangy, but not forcibly archaic language. Otherwise the language gets in the way. Unfortunately, this language problem plagues all of Gregory's books.

Problems aside, Gregory is one of the best living writers of historical fiction. She knows history and uses it well (I don't necessarily fault her for departing from historian's opinions or even from the evidence). She does write characters well, and constructs a story skilfully. I did enjoy reading *The Virgin's Lover* despite its faults. If you enjoy Gregory's other books, you'll probably enjoy this one. However, don't expect it to be as good as the others.

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