

A Man for Our Season
Reflection Statement

A Man for Our Season

Our enduring fascination with history stems from our ability to see our own concerns reflected in it, and something about the Tudor Period has captivated our interest and imagination for the past four hundred years. The purpose of my Major Work is to explore how one character from this time, Thomas Cromwell, has been re-imagined to allow a 21st century audience to see themselves, their ideals and their desires, reflected in the mirror that is history. It makes reflections of its own on society's judgement of character and the past in the relation to the present, challenges the reader to question cemented assumptions about seemingly well-known and understood characters, and explores the reinvention of the historical novel. The intended audience of this piece are the contemporary readers of an imaginary journal (The Old Yorker) published in England, and specialising in an analysis of culture, arts and politics, (similar to the New Yorker). By following and taking inspiration from the style of articles found in magazines such as *The New Yorker* and *The New York Review of Books*, both in my research and writing, I aspired for my audience to be within this interest group. I would hope to engage both academic and mainstream readers through the highly accessible, persuasive, analytical and critical features of this genre.

Beginning with the broad concept of studying how Cromwell's character has been depicted in a number of texts over time, my concept evolved into a close study of Hilary Mantel's award winning novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, as a reaction to Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*. As my initial number of texts fell from twenty to only two, so my form moved from that of a literary essay to an extended book review, a genre I was initially unfamiliar with, but found highly engaging. This change was influenced largely by the research process, as due to the currency of Mantel's work, I found fewer literary essays available than the plethora of book reviews that were. A number of older texts, including Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* had a broader scope of critical work surrounding them, but my interest in and simple enjoyment of Mantel's books drew me to the slightly less formal and technical style of the extended book review. In accordance with this shift, my mentor suggested I consider the genre in my final format, publishing my final draft as if it were to appear in a literary magazine.

Independent research and investigation has played a crucial role in the development of my work, particularly in its initial stages. Acknowledging that just as each historian's viewpoint is coloured depending on the moral tale they wish to convey, and that this translates into literature, I began my reading at a purely historical level. This, as well as allowing me to familiarise myself with the character I was soon to be immersed in, demonstrated Hilary Mantel's skill in the genre of historical fiction. One historical example that truly exemplified literary comparisons I make in my work were biographies containing conflicting perspectives of Cromwell, John Schofield's *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell: Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant* and Robert Hutchinson's *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell: Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister*. My reading surrounding G.R. Elton also supported Mantel's

influences and intentions for her own representation. Through his works *The Tudor Revolution in Government* and *Reform and Renewal, Thomas Cromwell and the Common Weal* I delved into his controversial arguments that Cromwell was in fact a farseeing modern statesman, who transformed the English Government into a structure that could survive royal incompetence and enact reform through constitution rather than fiat. This progressed England from the Middle Ages into the modern period without the bloodshed and descent into absolutism that occurred in much of the rest of Europe, something that could only be achieved by a highly skilled and insightful statesman. Mantel found Elton's argument persuasive, clearly reflected in her writings.

My research then moved towards a close analysis of my chosen texts, which involved both personal analysis and reading critical works surrounding the texts. This stage played a large role in physically shaping and refining the scope and concept of my work, as I discovered the availability of material for analysis for each of the texts. I saw Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons* and Mantel's works to be the richest, as well as the most polarised depictions, influencing my decision to use these in the more final stages of writing. Articles such as *A Man for All Seasons: An Historians Demur* and Stephen Greenblatt's *How it must have been* shaped my ideas in comparing the two texts, and offered interesting social and cultural insights. The individual analysis I undertook posed a challenge, both because of the volume of the task and this being the first time I had undertaken an individual research project of this style, but it was one that encouraged me to develop my skills as a receptor and writer of literature.

As my project developed its more specific focus, so could my research, and as such I focused more closely not only on Mantel's writings, but also the literary aspects of constructing historical fiction within the stylistic concerns of postmodernism. Berlatsky's *The Real, the True and the Told: Postmodern Historical Narrative and the Ethics of Representation* was of particular relevance. This research supplemented my knowledge and understanding of the interaction between history and fiction, and how historical fiction is constructed.

As my research progressed, a number of connections were revealed between my project and the Advanced English course. Much of Hamlet's religious and political context revolves around the conflict between Catholic and Protestant beliefs, and the official change between the two in England is attributed to Cromwell. My critical study of Hamlet allowed me to reflect on the outcomes of the situation in which Cromwell found himself, understand our modern reception of that situation and consider how this representation translates into interpretations of Cromwell's character in literature. The 'Conflicting Perspectives' module required a firm understanding of how an author presents their view or opinion, in particular a radical or controversial belief, with the greatest possibility of persuading the receptor of its validity. This aided me in my consideration and interpretation of the images of Mantel's and Bolt's Cromwell's in conflict with one another. The 'Texts in Time' module allowed me to explore the ways in which contextual values and events shape the creation of a text, as well as its reception by both contemporaries and current readers. This was crucial to my study of Mantel's reactive writing against Bolt, and enabled me to understand how Mantel's interpretation appealed to the 21st century reader.

The evolution of my Major Work has certainly been satisfying to experience, and in undertaking the project I have been compelled to develop my writing and analytical skills in a way previously foreign to me, offering me a more holistic understanding of myself as a composer. My interest initially stemmed from my dual interest in history and literature, with the Tudor Age being my favoured historical period, and historical fiction one of my preferred genres. This base level of interest motivated me to challenge myself in my work. I have also come to develop an appreciation of collaborative work, as my close work with my mentor proved to be an invaluable source of assistance and direction. I believe I am naturally more inclined to favour individual work, but by not only allowing my work to be subjected to an alternate perspective, but also acknowledging and undertaking the suggestions made by this perspective, I have developed a greater sense of self certainty in my writing, and believe *A Man for Our Season* is all the more cohesive and engaging for it.

Bibliography

A Man for All Seasons (1966). [film] London: Columbia Pictures.

Ackroyd, P. (2012). *Tudors - The History of England Volume II*. London: MacMillan.

Acocella, J. (2009). *Hilary Mantel's "Wolf Hall" and Thomas Cromwell*. [online] Retrieved from:

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/10/19/091019crbo_books_acocella
[Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Anderson, M. (1948). *Anne of the Thousand Days*. London:.

Anne of the Thousand Days (1969). [DVD] London: Universal Pictures.

Bernard, G. (1998). Elton's Cromwell. *The Historical Association*, 32 (2), pp.587-603.

Bigelow Merriman, R. (n.d.). *Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell*.

Bolt, R. (1966). *A Man for All Seasons*. London:.

Bolt, R. (1974). Natural Law and the Problem of Certainty. *Contemporary Literature*, 43 (4), pp.760-783.

Carry on Henry (1971). [DVD] United Kingdom: The Rank Organisation.

Catholiceducation.org (1906). *A Man for all Seasons: an Historian's Demur*. [online]

Retrieved from: <http://catholiceducation.org/articles/politics/pg0078.html> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Chronicle.com (2013). *When Fictionalized Facts Matter - The Chronicle Review - The Chronicle of Higher Education*. [online] Retrieved from:

<http://chronicle.com/article/When-Fictionalized-Facts/131759/> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Coby, P. (2012). *Thomas Cromwell: Henry VIII's Henchman*. London: Amberley Publishing.

Coby, P. (2009). *Thomas Cromwell: Machiavellian Statecraft and the English Reformation*. London: Lexington Books.

- Davies, C. (1997). The Cromwellian Decade: Authority and Consent. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 (6), pp.177-195.
- Dennis, G. (2012). The other Cromwell, state creator. *The Australian*, pp.14.
- Donlan, D. (1973). A Man for All Seasons. *The Clearing House*, 43 (5), pp.316-324.
- Firth, C. (1908). The Ballad History of the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (3), pp.21-50.
- Folger.edu (2000). *Study Guide: Henry VIII-Folger Shakespeare Library*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.folger.edu/template.cfm?cid=3615> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Ford, F. (1906). *The Fifth Queen; And How She Came To Court*. 5th ed. London: Alston Rivers.
- Ford, F. (1907). *Privy Seal*. 5th ed. London: Alston Rivers.
- Ford, F. (1908). *The Fifth Queen Crowned*. 5th ed. London: Alston Rivers.
- Foxe, J. (n.d.). *Actes and Monuments*.
- Fraser, A. (1993). *The Wives of Henry VIII*. 3rd ed. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Galton, A. (2011). *The Character and Times of Thomas Cromwell: A Sixteenth Century Criticism*. London: British Library.
- God's Outlaw* (1986). [DVD] United Kingdom: BBC.
- Gregory, P. (2011). *The Other Boleyn Girl*. London: Scribner.
- Gregory, P. (2006). *The Boleyn Inheritance*. London: Scribner.
- Hauerwas, S. (1978). Hope Faces Power: Thomas More and the King of England. *Contemporary Literature*, 61 (4), pp.456-479.
- Henry VIII* (2005). [DVD] United Kingdom: Granada Television.
- Henry VIII and his Six Wives* (1972). [DVD] United Kingdom: Waris Hussein.
- Higgins, C. (2012). *Hilary Mantel discusses Thomas Cromwell's past, presence and future*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/aug/15/hilary-mantel->

edinburgh-wolf-hall [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Historyextra.com (2008). *The Tudors: This time it's political* | *BBC History Magazine*.
[online] Retrieved from: <http://www.historyextra.com/feature/tudors-time-it%E2%80%99s-political> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Hutchinson, R. (2010). *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell: Henry VIII's Most Notorious Minister*. London: Phoenix.

Jefferson Powell, H. (1999). Who's Afraid of Thomas Cromwell?. *Chicago-Kent Law Review*, 74 pp.393-408.

Johnfoxe.org (1928). *The Acts and Monuments Online*. [online] Retrieved from:
<http://www.johnfoxe.org/index.php?realm=more&gototype=modern&type=essay&book=essay12> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Kirsten, T. (2012). Perfect Destruction. *The Australian*, pp.18.

Knowles, D. (1974). An Eltonian Revolution in Early Tudor History. *The Historical Journal*, 17 (4), pp.867-872.

Macculloch, D. (2013). Thomas Cromwell: a thug in a doublet?. *BBC History*, 14 (3), pp.29-33.

Macfarquhar, L. (2012). *How Hilary Mantel Revitalized Historical Fiction*. [online]
Retrieved from:
http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/15/121015fa_fact_macfarquhar
[Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Macleod, A. (1972). *The Trusted Servant*. 3rd ed. London: Hodder General Publishing Division.

Mail Online (1997). *Prince of Darkness: The truth about Thomas Cromwell*. [online]
Retrieved from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1219158/Prince-Darkness-The-truth-Thomas-Cromwell.html> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].

Mantel, H. (2009). *Wolf Hall*. London: Fourth Estate.

Mantel, H. (2012). *Bring Up The Bodies*. London: Fourth Estate.

- Matusiak, J. (2012). Faction, Intrigue and Influence at the Mid-Tudor Court. *History Review*, Iss. 48 pp.2-7.
- Miles, L. (1966). The Literary Artistry of Thomas More: The Dialogue of Comfort. *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900*, 6 (1), pp.7-33.
- Nybooks.com (2009). *How It Must Have Been by Stephen Greenblatt* | *The New York Review of Books*. [online] Retrieved from:
<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/how-it-must-have-been/?pagination=false> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Powell, J. (2005). "For Caesar's I Am": Henrician Diplomacy and representations of King and Country in Thomas Wyatt's Poetry. *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 36 (2), pp.415-431.
- Prescott, H. (1952). *The Man on a Donkey*. 4th ed. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.
- S, W. (n.d.). *Thomas Lord Cromwell*. London:.
- Sansom, C. (2003). *Dissolution*. London: Macmillan.
- Sansom, C. (2004). *Dark Fire*. London: Macmillan.
- Sansom, C. (2006). *Sovereign*. London: Macmillan.
- Sansom, C. (2008). *Revelation*. London: Macmillan.
- Sansom, C. (2010). *Heartstone*. London: Macmillan.
- Schofield, J. (2011). *The Rise and Fall of Thomas Cromwell: Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant*. London: The History Press.
- Schucking, L. (1925). Shakespeare and Sir Thomas More. *The Review of English Studies*, 1 (1), pp.40-59.
- Shakespeare, W. (n.d.). *Henry VIII*. London:.
- Slavin, A. (1990). G.R. Elton: On Reformation and Revoltion. *The History Teacher*, 23 (4), pp.405-431.
- Slavin, A. (1997). On Henrician Politics: Games and Dramas. *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 60 (3), pp.249-271.

- Slavin, A. (1990). Telling the Story: G.R. Elton and the Tudor Age. *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 21 (2), pp.151-169.
- Starkey, D. (2004). *Six Wives: The Queens of Henry VIII*. London: Harper Perennial.
- The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008). [DVD] Hollywood: BBC Films.
- The Other Boleyn Girl* (2003). [DVD] United Kingdom: BBC.
- The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933). [film] London: London Film Productions.
- The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970). [DVD] United Kingdom: BBC.
- The Twisted Tale of Bloody Mary* (2008). [DVD] United Kingdom: TV Choice Productions.
- Theater2.nytimes.com (2013). *Log In - The New York Times*. [online] Retrieved from: http://theater2.nytimes.com/2008/10/08/theater/reviews/08brantley.html?_r=3& [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Themonthly.com.au (2009). *Tudor Style - Hilary Mantel's 'Wolf Hall' | Peter Craven | The Monthly*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.themonthly.com.au/arts-letters-peter-craven-tudor-style-hilary-mantel-s-wolf-hall-1774> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Tudors Season 1* (2007). [DVD] Ireland: Showtime Networks.
- Tudors Season 2* (2008). [DVD] Ireland: Showtime Networks.
- Tudors Season 3* (2009). [DVD] Ireland: Showtime Networks.
- Tudors.org (n.d.). *Thomas Cromwell and the Intellectual Origins of the Henrician Revolution | The Tudors*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.tudors.org/undergraduate/thomas-cromwell-and-the-intellectual-origins-of-the-henrician-revolution/> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Unknown. (2009). *BBC period show, The Tudors, is 'historically inaccurate', leading historian says - Telegraph*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/6005582/BBC-period-show-The-Tudors-is-historically-inaccurate-leading-historian-says.html> [Accessed: 15 Apr 2013].
- Walker, P. (2010). *The Couriers Tale*. London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

Weir, A. (1991). *The Six Wives of Henry VIII*. London: Grove Press.

Wilson, D. (2012). Brewer's boy made good. *History Today*, Iss. 62 pp.3.

Wilson, D. (2012). *A Brief History of the English Reformation*. London: Robinson.

Elton, G. R. (1953). *The Tudor revolution in government; administrative changes in the reign of Henry VIII*. Cambridge [Eng.], University Press.

Elton, G. R. (1973). *Reform and renewal; Thomas Cromwell and the common weal*. Cambridge [Eng.], University Press.

Great Lives (2013, 11th November 2005). [TV programme] BBC History, Radio 4.

History.ac.uk (1973). *The many faces of Thomas Cromwell | Reviews in History*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1168> [Accessed: 17 Mar 2013].

The Independent (2012). *Double Booker winner Hilary Mantel claims Henry VIII's arch-fixer Thomas Cromwell was an enlightened figure who laid foundations for the welfare state. She's wrong*. [online] Retrieved from:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/double-booker-winner-hilary-mantel-claims-henry-viiiis-archfixer-thomas-cromwell-was-an-enlightened-figure-who-laid-foundations-for-the-welfare-state-shes-wrong-8218790.html> [Accessed: 28 Apr 2013].

Wood, A. (2011). *Thomas Cromwell, Our Contemporary*. [online] Retrieved from:

http://www.academia.edu/1473029/Thomas_Cromwell_Our_Contemporary [Accessed: 28 Apr 2013].

thestar.com (1997). *Hilary Mantel: Author didn't expect Bring Up the Bodies to win second Booker prize | Toronto Star*. [online] Retrieved from:

http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2012/10/23/hilary_mantel_author_didnt_expect_bring_up_the_bodies_to_win_second_booker_prize.html [Accessed: 29 Apr 2013].

Americamagazine.org (2013). *A Tale of Two Thomases | America Magazine*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/culture/tale-two-thomases> [Accessed: 18 May 2013].

Grossman, L. (2012). *The Year in Novels So Far; Plus, Hilary Mantel!*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://entertainment.time.com/2012/05/16/the-year-in-novels-so-far-plus-hilary-mantel/> [Accessed: 18 May 2013].

- Higgins, C. (2012). *Hilary Mantel discusses Thomas Cromwell's past, presence and future*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/aug/15/hilary-mantel-edinburgh-wolf-hall> [Accessed: 19 May 2013].
- Indianreview.in (n.d.). *Historicizing fiction or Fictionalizing history - Stuti Goswami : Indian Review : Literature*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://indianreview.in/historicizing-fiction-or-fictionalizing-history-stuti-goswami/> [Accessed: 18 May 2013].
- J. Whiteley, P. (2013). Natural Law and the Problem of Certainty: Robert Bolt's "A Man for All Seasons". *Journal of Contemporary literature*, 43 (4).
- L. Berlatsky, E. (2011). *The Real, the True, and the Told: Postmodern Historical Narrative and the Ethics of Representation*. Ohio: The Ohio State University Press.
- Standpointmag.co.uk (2012). *A Man for our Season | Standpoint*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://standpointmag.co.uk/node/4507/full> [Accessed: 18 May 2013].
- The Independent (2009). *Wolf Hall, By Hilary Mantel*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/wolf-hall-by-hilary-mantel-1680694.html> [Accessed: 18 May 2013].
- Lytard, J. (1984). *The postmodern condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Markbernstein.org (2012). *Mark Bernstein: Bring Up The Bodies*. [online] Retrieved from: <http://www.markbernstein.org/Jun12/BringUpTheBodies.html> [Accessed: 25 May 2013].