

## Hilary Mantel's Wolf Hall: A Psychological Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

This paper provides a concise response to the question of what drives the protagonist's transformation psychologically throughout the course of the novel. Furthermore, this paper intends to demonstrate the significance of psychological factors in establishing one's own sense of identity and rising to the level of a respected leader in society. The critical psychological theory is used as a framework in this paper. The findings of this study will help readers draw conclusions about the developmental and formative psychological steps and traumatic factors that an individual may be exposed to during his formative years.

**Keywords:** psychotropic, Hilary Mantel, Wolf Hall, trauma , anxiety, kingdom , Cardinal Wolsey , traumatic.

قاعة الذئب هيلاري مانتل: تحليل نفسي.

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المديرية العامة للتربية في محافظة ميسان

### المخلص

يقدم هذا البحث إجابة موجزة لسؤال ما الذي يدفع التحول النفسي لبطل الرواية طوال فترة الرواية. علاوة على ذلك، يهدف هذا البحث إلى إظهار أهمية العوامل النفسية في تأسيس إحساس الفرد بالهوية والارتقاء إلى مستوى القائد المحترم في المجتمع. يتم استخدام النظرية النفسية النقدية كإطار في هذا البحث. وستساعد دراسة النتائج هذه القراء على استخلاص استنتاجات حول الخطوات النفسية التنموية والتكوينية والعوامل المؤلمة التي قد يتعرض لها الفرد خلال سنوات تكوينه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المؤثرات العقلية، هيلاري مانتل، وولف هول، الصدمة، القلق، المملكة، الكاردينال وولسي، الصدمة.

**Introduction:**

Written by Hilary Mantel, "Wolf Hall" begins in the past, with protagonist Thomas Cromwell's childhood, and introduces him to readers through a traumatic event that will have long-lasting psychological effects on him. Nevertheless, the author paints an impressive picture, one that could have been achieved only through deep psychological inquiry and an in-depth understanding of human nature and its tribulations. She shows how Thomas Cromwell overcame the abuse he suffered at the hands of his own father as a child to become a shrewd and knowledgeable legal scholar and trusted adviser to Cardinal Wolsey, one of the most influential people in the kingdom.

The story continues to follow his developments socially and psychologically, also takes us into his personal life, including his wife and children, as well as revealing his religious views. As the novel progresses, the prominence of the other characters increases, but Thomas Cromwell's view of the situation remains unchanged. There are discussions of important historical events in the kingdom, such as the King's annulment with his first wife Katherine and his marriage to another lady named Anne Boleyn, and the novel concludes with the marriage, during which Thomas Cromwell expresses his own understanding of the events surrounding him. His religious beliefs are also revealed, as are details about his family life, including his marriage and children. Other characters become more prominent as the novel progresses, but Thomas Cromwell's perspective never changes. The novel concludes with the marriage, during which Thomas Cromwell expresses his own understanding of the events surrounding him, including the King's annulment with his first wife Katherine and his marriage to another lady named Anne Boleyn. The bitter experience that Hilary Mantel actually lived could lead readers of her life to conclude that it greatly influenced all of her writings. As depicted in "Wolf Hall,"

her traumatic upbringing and unfortunate circumstances had a profound effect on her psyche. At a young age, she experiences trauma in the areas of health, relationships, and faith. These details of her background, which have a significant impact on her personality, are crucial to grasp.

Most of Mantel's writings are responses to her trauma, she psychologically affected then, so there is relation between psychiatry and trauma, where trauma can be generally defined as (Caruth, 1996) "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (p.11).

Her health has been deteriorating since early in her life, when doctors misdiagnosed her as having a mental illness. Her mental and emotional health had already been deteriorating, but the heavy use of psychotropic drugs only made things worse. Last but not least, she hasn't been able to have children because she has been menopausal since she was twenty-seven, which has increased her anxiety (what does it mean to be a woman without children).

Mantel shows how men view childless women and their place in society. In the third chapter of Part 1, Lizzie warns Cromwell that the world, and especially women, will be against him if he divorces his wife for failing to produce a son. Knowing that Katherine of Aragon's nephew, the Holy Roman Emperor, will oppose King Henry, he agrees. Hilary Mantel's depiction of the barren woman, then, may be taken as a window into the author's inner conflict over her place in society.

She's been married twice before, both times ending in divorce. At the age of eleven, her parents divorce, and her father disappears after her mother develops feelings for an old boyfriend. She is a social worker despite having a law degree; she shares many shocking social stories.

Early in the novel, when Thomas Cromwell, a young boy of Putney, England, is being kicked and beaten by his father, Walter, a local brewer, it is implied that Mantel is experiencing psychological anxiety as a result of the brutality and cruelty she receives from men, particularly in her marriage experiences and her work as a social reformer to listen to more than one story includes the cruelty of fathers to their children. Thomas is in too much pain to do anything about it, so he is unable to fight back. Only the knotted twine holding his father's boot together catches his attention. As Thomas's consciousness fades, he passes out: 'So now get up.' Felled, dazed, silent, he has fallen; knocked full length on the cobbles of the yard. His head turns sideways; his eyes are turned towards the gate, as if someone might arrive to help him out. One blow, properly placed, could kill him now. Blood from the gash on his head – which was his father's first effort – is trickling across his face. Add to this, his left eye is blinded; but if he squints sideways, with his right eye he can see that the stitching of his fathers' boot is unraveling. The twine has sprung clear of the leather, and a hard knot in it has caught his eyebrow and opened another cut (Mantel, 2009, p.3).

Mantel's portrayal of Thomas's flight from his father and subsequent adjustment to life with his sister and brother-in-law mirrors the author's own real-life experience of growing up with her stepfather or her mother's lover after her parents divorced.

During an interview with the Telegraph, Mantel claimed that "I believe that the Catholic Church today is not an organisation for decent people." She goes on to add the following in the interview: "When I was a youngster, I was perplexed as to why priests and nuns were not more pleasant individuals. I considered them to be some of the most despicable persons I had ever met." Some have questioned her work in *Wolf Hall* as a result of these assertions, as well as the topics covered

in her previous book *Fludd*, with Bishop Mark O'Toole stating: "There is no doubt that there is an anti-Catholic undercurrent running through the discussion. *Wolf Hall* is not an unbiased novel. (Pollard,2018).

Cromwell is portrayed as more sympathetic in Mantel's version of events. More's willingness to torture people because of their religion astounds Cromwell, who comes from a family of butchers and built his own successful life. While More claims he hasn't hurt anyone, Cromwell points out that he's actually caused a lot of trouble for the Protestants in Bainham.

"You forfeited his goods, committed his poor wife to prison, saw him racked with your own eyes, you locked him in Bishop Stokesley's cellar, you had him back at your own house two days chained upright to a post, you sent him again to Stokesley, saw him beaten and abused for a week, and still your spite was not exhausted: you sent him back to the Tower and had him racked again." (Mantel, 2009).

Cromwell is not eager to die for his beliefs: he is much more practical than that and would rather bide his time and get vengeance on his rivals than throw his life away on a belief.

Mantel depicts psychological motifs in the title of the novel, it is certainly that of man's being a wolf to man and consuming him ethically. (Mantel,2009)The narrator in Part 4, Chapter 2 says "A man's power is in the half-light, in the half-seen movements of his hand and the unguessed-at expression of his face. It is the absence of facts that frightens people: the gap you open, into which they pour their fears, fantasies, desires"

Hilary Mantel's novel about the shady goings-on in the British royal court and notable historical figures ends with Thomas Cromwell paying a visit to the home of Jane Seymour, a lady-in-waiting to Queen Anne. (MacCulloch, 2018).

MacCulloch (2018) despite Cromwell's apparent dominance in the royal court and in the halls of power, he faces a political threat from the opportunistic world in which he operates and from the stubborn refusal of prominent figures like Sir Thomas More to acknowledge Henry as the head of the Church in England. He is put to death by the king he has faithfully served, and the Catholic Church briefly regains power in England as Mary, Queen of Scots (Catherine's daughter) reigns. Wolf hall isn't even where the story takes place, but the motif of man devouring his fellow man in the name of politics is present throughout the novel

Michael and Griffin (1998 ) Thomas Cromwell runs away from his abusive father at the beginning of the story, joining his sister Kat and her husband William in their home. The book glosses over his time as a banker, a law student, and a soldier in the French army so that it can focus on his rise to power. The story instead centers on his time spent working as Cardinal Wolsey's secretary and lawyer, and later as King James II's advisor. Mantel shows Cromwell's humanity through his love for his wife and children and his dedication to Wolsey, both of whom are important to him, and through his ability to handle situations logically and coldly, which helps him in his professional life.

His inner turmoil does not prevent Thomas More's actions from being generally accepted, and his life trajectory from influential royal counsel to martyrdom for his faith is a prime example of this. More is depicted as a rigid individual whose views on religion and the church are unyielding. (Michael & Griffin, 1998 ) as long as More's religious efforts do not jeopardise the king's plan to marry Anne Boleyn, everything is in working order. When Henry VIII's animosity toward the Pope grows and he eventually denounces Rome forcefully, More finds himself on the wrong side of history. With time and momentum on their side, Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer can permanently alter England's religious

landscape. In the end, More is tried for treason and executed by hanging.

According to the Course Hero (2018), Henry VIII, King of England, is not a monarch who struggles with mental health. Mantel will handle it expertly. One fights for peace while the other prays for war, as Henry VIII so eloquently puts it. He is accustomed to using his authority to get what he wants because he is a powerful man. Anne Boleyn is the one he longs for the most. To win her heart, he is prepared to stop at nothing. Like everyone else, he wished to enjoy favor with God. Cromwell provides a mechanism for juggling the needs of these various groups. Henry VIII is an ambivalent figure, managing to be both aggressive and disciplined. It appeared that he was listening to Cromwell's rational and practical advice. Furthermore, despite the fact that it reportedly drives him insane, he accepts Anne's limits on their sexual connection. But he cannot fathom being gentle with an opponent in a joust, even if it is Cromwell's son, and he quickly loses interest in Anne when she is unable to bear children of her own.

Psychologically speaking, Anne Boleyn is a woman of hidden desires; she wants what she's thinking about, but as a historical figure from Henry VIII's reign, she can't say so. When Anne Boleyn shows up at King Henry VIII's court, she becomes the center of his attention. She uses her charisma to entice the king with the ease of a seasoned angler. In spite of the king's raging lust, she (according to her sister) patiently gives him access to her body in small doses over time. Anne and Cromwell develop a friendly relationship, or at the very least a productive working relationship, with each other. Both of them know exactly what they want out of life and how to go about getting it. They get together frequently to discuss the status of the King's divorce action against Katherine. Despite the fact that Anne and Cromwell's

relationship does not last forever (Cromwell plays a role in Anne's death as well), it is an important part of the story.

Cromwell is employed by British cardinal Thomas Wolsey, who also serves as Cromwell's mentor and advisor. Cromwell began working as a lawyer and clerk for Cardinal Wolsey in 1642, at the height of the cardinal's power and wealth. Through the eyes of Cromwell and his court, readers see Wolsey bargain and manipulate his way to an annulment. Wolsey is portrayed more favorably here than in other versions of the story because of Cromwell's loyalty to him and the cardinal's admiration for his abilities. Shakespeare's portrayal of Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, for instance, paints him as a monstrously ruthless figure. Despite the ostentatious lifestyle, desire for power, and skill at behind-the-scenes dealings, Mantel allows readers to see a more complex and nuanced character. (Course Hero , 2018).

Identity is explored numerous times throughout the narrative. Early on, we learn that "Who is Thomas Cromwell?" is one of the novel's central concerns because it arises as a result of the reader witnessing young Thomas Cromwell endure the harsh wrath of his father. By letting readers into the man's head, Mantel hopes to give a more nuanced and accurate picture of this historical figure. Cromwell, on the other hand, appears to take a very pragmatic approach to the concept of self. He was able to rise from poverty to wealth by adapting his public persona to fit his circumstances. By adapting to the needs of whoever he is serving at the time—Cardinal Wolsey, Henry VIII—he is able to further his own goals. This adjustment has far-reaching effects because some of us, the readers, take Cromwell as an example to emulate.

Binnie(2019) argues that while ambition can lead to great power, it can also be the downfall of great characters. Almost every major player is motivated by their own sense of success, and many of them



are willing to stop at nothing to get there. For example, Henry VIII wants the authority of the Church over that of the state, and he also wants an heir who will carry on the Tudor dynasty. Thomas More's life's work is the elimination and stifling of all opposition to the Catholic Church.

Anne Boleyn wants to be queen and the mother of Henry VIII's heir, Henry VI; Thomas Cromwell hopes to make a difference in the world while also making money. Ambition is often the driving force behind the acquisition of great power. (Binnie,2019)

The story paints a picture of politicians with a firm grasp on the reins of power. Many of them are male clergy members of various ranks within the Catholic Church. They are so ambitious and wealthy that they are almost indistinguishable from the nobility whose political aspirations have nothing to do with spiritual considerations.

During this time, the Church was depicted as a separate nation within or alongside others; the pope appeared to have as much military power as the emperor. Given the circumstances, it's understandable that even a powerful monarch might fear the Catholic Church's sway. Perhaps, like Henry, he would prefer to exert his own influence within the Church than be subject to its authority. Like Henry, he may have access to shrewd advisors who can help him find a way to rule and head the church at the same time. (Binnie,2019) Cromwell has one goal in mind and is actively working toward its realization: a world in which a single person can hold both religious and political power and thus rule supreme over the entire planet.

The development of Cromwell's character in "Wolf Hall" according to Baron ( 2001) , is subtle; he seems like a fully mature and wise advisor right from the start. At the novel's conclusion, as Cromwell mulls over the prospect of Thomas More's execution, he shows the same desire to be merciful to his enemy as he does for the shamed Katherine of Aragon and her situation. Throughout the novel, he sees himself as a

surrogate father to several young men, and this love for his own family and sons shines through. On the other hand, Cromwell experiences loss on all fronts, rises in his career, and witnesses the realization of his dream of an England ruled by a king rather than the Church.

When it comes to the changes that seem to be coming to England, Cromwell is open-minded and sensible. Cromwell is depicted as a small kid watching the burning of a heretic in one particularly moving moment. This memory stays with him as More begins persecuting those who would defy the Catholic church and bring in the ideas of Luther and English translations of the Bible. The novel comes to a finale with More's beheading at the Tower of London (Baron,2001)

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the characters' and the plot's effects on their psyches is a major part of this paper. In the beginning of the research paper, the author ties the writer's harrowing past experiences to reality, and then to the events in the book, which, despite being fictional, have a strong relationship to the author's harrowing past experiences and the description of the events. The psychological significance of the work's title was also discussed, as was the novel's characters' development as individuals and as a group throughout the course of the story. These are the most important people to study in this field. This investigation paper discussed the impact on the reader's opinion and the reader's psychological impression through a dramatic portrayal of how the characters develop to obtain their personal desires such as money, power, sex, and religious dominance.

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