

Inside the Mind of Thomas Cromwell

The Fashioning of the Self and of Tudor Politics in Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* and
Bring Up the Bodies

Mémoire réalisé par
Salomé Ory

Promoteur
Prof. Guido Latré

Année académique 2017-2018
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Introduction

Even if a lot of works have been written about the Tudor era and Henry VIII, very few of them study Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's right-hand man. The few works that are interested in him in most cases only focus on his career, talking about aspects such as his knowledge in finance and his influence on England's religion. It seems nobody ever showed interest in his private life, until Hilary Mantel wrote her two books, *Wolf Hall* (2009) and *Bring Up the Bodies* (2012).

Wolf Hall received several prizes such as the Man Booker Prize (2009), the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction (2009) and the Walter Scott Prize for historical fiction (2010). In 2012, *Bring Up the Bodies* also received the Man Booker Prize and the Costa Book of the Year. However, as Kean explains, “[t]he novels have been criticised and lauded in equal measure for providing an alternative portrait of Cromwell”, whom he describes as “one of the most controversial figures in British history”. Those who portrayed Cromwell before Mantel did not give him a good reputation. In his play *A Man for All Seasons* (1960), about Thomas More's life, Robert Bolt depicted Thomas Cromwell as a ruthless villain. As for Mantel, she was very curious about this historical figure and said about him in *The Guardian* (2012): “If a villain, an interesting villain”. She sees him as “an arch-plotter, smarter than Henry though not meaner”, somebody with “appetite for whatever life threw at him” and adds that “there seemed no limit to his massive, imperturbable competence”.

For all those reasons, Mantel decided to write about this sometimes underestimated and often stigmatised historical figure who accomplished so many things in less than ten years, from around 1533, when the king bestowed him his first titles, to 1540, when the king got him executed on the basis of a series of indictments. During those seven years, Cromwell managed to get a seat in the parliament, to make it declare Henry Head of the Church of England so that he could annul his marriage with Katherine of Aragon and marry Anne Boleyn. He also managed to find an annulment for this second marriage, so that the king could marry Jane Seymour. During that period, Cromwell also accumulated many titles.

Wolf Hall narrates Cromwell's rise to power, intermingled with flashbacks about his youth, as well as the way he managed to get Henry's marriage with Katherine annulled. As for *Bring Up the Bodies*, it relates how Cromwell managed to find an annulment for the king's marriage with Anne Boleyn by accusing her of having several lovers, among whom her own brother, and ends with her beheading.

The final purpose of this dissertation is not just to demonstrate that Mantel's Cromwell understands the art of shaping the self and the world around him. That aspect of his personality has been highlighted by historians and writers of fiction alike, although more elements can be added to the picture on the basis of Mantel's novels about him. My study will also strive to demonstrate that Cromwell is a Renaissance self-fashioned man and that he learned many skills during his life of travel that proved to be useful to overcome the obstacles that he encountered at the court of Henry VIII. In her two books, Mantel puts the readers in Cromwell's mind thanks to a particular technique of narratology, giving them access to Master Secretary's thoughts. This insight allows the readers to understand how Cromwell thinks as well as why and how he influences the people he meets, and how his shaping of his self and the world around him fits within the context of the Renaissance.

The first chapter aims to introduce the reader to a few concepts that are relevant for an in-depth study of this context. It first explains how Mantel's characters fit into the Renaissance framework of thinking and acting. It explains briefly what humanism is, as well as what its influence was on culture, art and religion. The second part of the first chapter defines what an historical novel is and highlights the differences between the job of an historian and of a novelist. It also responds to Mantel's comments on the genre of the historical novel in her 2017 Reith lectures for the BBC or in other media. In all of these, she explains what to avoid while writing historical fiction, and explains the difficulties she faced while writing *Wolf Hall*.

The second chapter analyses the narratology in Mantel's two books. It defines terms such as character, author and narrator before focussing on focalisation. The technique used by Mantel allows the readers to be inside Cromwell's mind, to have access to his thoughts. The last point studies how Cromwell's thoughts are represented in the miniseries *Wolf Hall* (2015) since the viewer is not in the character's head and there is no voice-over. I will investigate how in the two novels, the reader's presence inside a mind that moulds the self and its surroundings, allows that reader to become an 'actor' and 'auctor' on the Renaissance stage. If a camera finds it more difficult to create that kind of illusion, the question will need to be raised about how the TV series finds substitutes for Mantel's narrative techniques.

Based on Stephen Greenblatt's theory developed in the work *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (2012), the third chapter demonstrates in greater depth that Cromwell is a self-fashioned man. To do so, Greenblatt's ten criteria are applied to Cromwell and his evolution is narrated, from the son of a blacksmith to the right hand of the king. Cromwell's self-fashioning, which is also influenced by external factors and other

protagonists, is examined, making it clear that his personality is composed of several facets. In this context, the use of masks at court is analysed, as well as Cromwell's use of art. The chapter ends by highlighting the fact that even if Cromwell fashions himself, there are still things he cannot fashion.

The last chapter is devoted to the analysis of Cromwell's art of persuasion. It first defines what manipulation is in order to show that Cromwell often resorts to it in order to influence people so that they do and say what he wants them to. The reasons why Cromwell shapes the world around him are developed, as well as nine of the techniques he uses. A nuance is nevertheless added at the end, showing that Cromwell is not a ruthless manipulator and also has a heart.

List of abbreviations

Bring Up the Bodies = *BB*

Encyclopædia Britannica = *EB*

Reith Lecture = *RL*

Wolf Hall = *WH*

Chapter 1: The Renaissance and the Historical Novel

Before analysing Mantel's two books in detail, it is useful to understand in what context Thomas Cromwell and his contemporaries lived. The first part of this chapter will concentrate on those aspects of the Renaissance that are most relevant for a deeper understanding of Cromwell's position and convictions. The influence of humanism on people will be described, as well as on the culture, art and religion of the time. This part does not pretend to be exhaustive, but tries to provide an insight into people's culture and way of life under the reign of Henry VIII.

Apart from being a historical figure, Cromwell has now also become the main character in Mantel's two books of fiction written, as it were, from his perspective. He is partly a creation of the author, as a character in a historical novel. The second part of this chapter will highlight the difference between the work of a historian and that of a writer of historical novels. It will deal with the difficulties encountered while writing historical novels and the choices an author has to make.

1. The Renaissance

The Renaissance is generally assumed to have started in Florence in the 14th century and to have extended until the 17th century, acting as a bridge between the Middle Ages and the Age of Enlightenment. The movement reached England in the 16th century. While the Middle Ages were seen as "a period of cultural darkness" (EB, Renaissance), some events that took place at the end of the 12th century generated social, political, and intellectual transformations that ultimately led to the Renaissance (*ibid.*). Among those events were, as the Encyclopædia Britannica explains,

the increasing failure of the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire to provide a stable and unifying framework for the organization of spiritual and material life, the rise in importance of city-states and national monarchies, the development of national languages, and the breakup of the old feudal structures.

The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg helped the expansion of the movement, as well as the spread of new ideas. In Mantel's novels, Cromwell seems very much aware of the impact of the presses, and regularly refers to them. However, the printing press was not the only novelty. The Renaissance also witnessed "the discovery and exploration of new continents, the substitution of the Copernican for the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, the decline of the feudal system and the growth of commerce" (EB, Renaissance). The importance of commerce is also often referred to in Mantel's narratives since Cromwell gained his first

experience in the trading of silk. Other inventions such as the mariner's compass and gunpowder also appeared during the Renaissance (*ibid.*) and that period marked the beginning of the use of paper on a large scale in Europe.

The term 'rinascita' first appeared in Italia in 1550, in Giorgio Vasari's work *Lives of the Artists* (New World Encyclopedia). In English, the word 'Renaissance' first appeared in 1855 in Jules Michelet's work *Histoire de France*. The term 'Renaissance' refers to the influence that baptism had on society during the Middle Ages. Medieval society was ecclesiological, which means that it was structured by religion. Baptism meant a new birth, a new life as a new person and was the only way to achieve salvation (Ullmann 14).

There exist several theories that try to explain why the Renaissance first flourished in Florence. There are actually several factors that influenced that apparition, such as the political structure of the city, the influence of the Medici, a powerful family who lived there and acted as patrons for many artists, and the dispersion of Greek scholars and texts in Italy after the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 (EB, Renaissance). What is more, cities in the north of Italy believed in liberty and virtues of fairness, justice, republicanism and good administration, and Florentine genius was celebrated in art, sculpture and architecture (Skinner 69). Moreover, Florence also knew a "remarkable efflorescence of moral, social and political philosophy that occurred in Florence at the same time" (*ibid.*). Another possible cause for this change of mentalities might be the Black Death, a plague that took place between 1348 and 1350. This plague was at the origin of a new wave of piety during which people sponsored religious works of art (*ibid.*). Also, because they lost many of their relatives, people became aware of the fact that life is short and can stop at any moment, which led them to focus more on their lives on earth than on spirituality and afterlife (The Applied History Research Group). This realisation also hit Cromwell when he lost many of his relatives, among which his sister, his wife and his daughters. As will be explained in more detail later on, it is no coincidence that Cromwell received a very substantial part of his education in Italy.

1.1. Humanism

The main cultural movement that took place during the Renaissance is called humanism or Renaissance humanism. This system of education and method of approaching the world appeared in Italy in the 13th and 14th centuries (Grudin). As explained by Grudin in his article about humanism, the term is "alternatively applied to a variety of Western beliefs, methods, and philosophies that place central emphasis on the human realm". It is because of the enormous

influence of humanism on Renaissance culture that the Renaissance is acknowledged as a distinct historical period (*ibid.*).

The term 'humanism' was first used to refer to Renaissance humanism in 1808 by F.J. Niethammer, a German pedagogue, and is therefore a modern invention. In his book *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (1977), Walter Ullman expresses the main questions that need to be answered when we talk about Renaissance humanism:

Was Renaissance humanism a scholarly, literary, educational system that rested on the study of the classical authors? Was it chiefly, if not exclusively, concerned with the revival of classics? Was it philosophical in content and orientation? Was it perhaps a predominantly educational movement that affected many intellectual disciplines? Was its core philological? Was it possibly the cult of rhetoric and oratory and had it in fact evolved from the medieval art of composing letters (the *ars dictaminis*) of prose composition? Or did it not, as has also been claimed, simply mean a liberal education meant in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries? Was it perchance a philosophical method of rational enquiry and hence at base epistemology? Could its essence possibly be aestheticism that saw the world without regard to reality, as indeed its main proponent, Giovanni Gentile, averred when he said that the humanist lived 'in mondo che agita nel suo cervello'? Was the encouragement of literature as a cult for its own sake the hallmark of Renaissance humanism? (1-2)

A few pages later, Ullmann provides an explanation of the phrase 'Renaissance humanism' by saying that it was "an epiphenomenon, a concomitant feature and integral part of the overall ecclesiological, philosophical, governmental and political thinking that pervaded the age" (6). The most common definition of Renaissance humanism "a philosophy of education favouring classical studies in the school curriculum" (Niethammer cited in Trinkaus 3). The word 'umanisti', used to refer to the professors and students of Classical literature, comes from the *studia humanitatis*, a "course of Classical studies that, in the early 15th century, consisted of grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy" (Grudin).

The humanists' main interests were the "well-being of mankind" (Trinkaus 25), the human being as an individual and their relations with others (Parkinson 2003, 3-4), as well as Greek and Latin cultures and letters. Works from many authors from antiquity such as Aristotle, Cicero, or Livy were read again, as well as edited and commented on by the humanists (Braudel cited in Dumortier et al. 24). As Trinkaus states, "they were [...] as interested in *what* was said as in *how* it was said", which is the reason why they insisted on the correct interpretation and understanding of those antique texts (25).

The aim of Renaissance humanism was for young people, but also adults and even leaders, to develop their virtue. Today, one tends to associate the concept of humanity with

qualities such as understanding, benevolence, compassion and mercy but, at that time, characteristics such as fortitude, judgment, prudence, eloquence and love of honour were also associated with that term (EB, Humanism). Because Cromwell is the king's advisor, he advises him on how to behave and helps him develop his virtue. As explained in the last chapter of this dissertation, Cromwell realises the importance of virtue, but says that "our virtues make us, but virtues are not enough, we must deploy our vices at times" (WH 494). Henry also points out during a conversation with Cromwell that "[p]rudence is a virtue" and Cromwell highlights that virtues such as fortitude also belong to princes (WH 182). Furthermore, Cromwell's eloquence is also illustrated in the fourth chapter, since it is one of the techniques he uses to influence the people around him. However, even if he sometimes is a manipulator, Cromwell still shows benevolence towards the people whose education he is in charge of, as well as compassion and mercy towards his enemies, among which Thomas More, whom he tries to save and to help on several occasions.

Humanists wanted a "reform of culture, the transfiguration of what [they] termed the passive and ignorant society of the 'dark' ages into a new order that would reflect and encourage the grandest human potentialities" (EB, Humanism). In an article dedicated to the subject, the Encyclopædia Britannica also explains that "[t]he effect of humanism was to help men break free from the mental strictures imposed by religious orthodoxy, to inspire free inquiry and criticism, and to inspire a new confidence in the possibilities of human thought and creations". In addition, it also enumerates several characteristics of the humanist movement:

First, it took human nature in all of its various manifestations and achievements as its subject. Second, it stressed the unity and compatibility of the truth found in all philosophical and theological schools and systems, a doctrine known as syncretism. Third, it emphasized the dignity of man. In place of the medieval ideal of a life of penance as the highest and noblest form of human activity, the humanists looked to the struggle of creation and the attempt to exert mastery over nature. Finally, humanism looked forward to a rebirth of a lost human spirit and wisdom.

As this passage illustrates, Renaissance humanism emphasised the dignity of man. Actually, the latter was put at the centre of the universe, the Renaissance man was the *Uomo Universale*. During the Middle Ages, social bonds were extremely important and shaped lives, whether they were feudal, corporate or religious. In the Renaissance, the focus shifted towards the individual (Bruley et al. 499). The man who illustrated the concept of *Uomo Universale* best was Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72), since he was an architect, painter, classicist, poet, scientist, and mathematician among others. According to him, "a man can do all things if he

will” (EB, Renaissance Man). The Renaissance man’s capacities were considered to be limitless and he was encouraged to “to develop skills in all areas of knowledge, in physical development, in social accomplishments, and in the arts” (*ibid.*). Leonardo da Vinci was also the perfect *Uomo Universale* because his knowledge extended to many fields such as art, science, music, invention, and writing (*ibid.*). As for Cromwell, he is also a good example of the *Uomo Universale*, since he is not only interested in finances but also law, art, languages and classical literature, among other things.

The difference between humanism and the culture of the Middle Ages is that “Classical thought considered ethics qua ethics, politics qua politics” (Grudin), while medieval thought struggled to address the “often-conflicting demands of secularism and Christian spirituality” (*ibid.*). A second argument in favour of classical thought is that virtue was not abstract, but a concrete quality that could be tested on the battlefield or in the forum (*ibid.*). Finally, Classical literature such as the works of Cicero were great examples of rhetoric, and eloquence was actually considered as “an effective means of moving leaders or fellow citizens toward one political course or another” (*ibid.*). As demonstrated in the fourth chapter, Cromwell is very eloquent and knows how to use rhetoric in order to make people act as he wants them to.

The humanists did not start reading Classical literature again out of nostalgia or awe, but because they experienced “a sense of deep familiarity, an impression of having been brought newly into contact with expressions of an intrinsic and permanent human reality” (Grudin). This feeling was illustrated by authors such as Petrarch, and Castiglione perfectly explained humanists’ ideas in his work *Il libro del cortegiano* (1528), stating that the ideal courtier must be “a psychological model for active virtue, stressing moral awareness as a key element in just action” (*ibid.*). Petrarch is actually considered as a predecessor of Renaissance humanism. As for its main leading figures, they include Gianozzo Manetti, Leonardo Bruni, Marsilio Ficino, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Lorenzo Valla, and Coluccio Salutati (EB, Renaissance).

Sciences underwent major changes during the Renaissance too. During the Protestant Reformation and the Counter Reformation, people noticed that things they observed were not always as described by scientists like Ptolemy, who worked in the field of geography and Galen, a Greek physician, surgeon and philosopher in the Roman Empire. People slowly began to turn their back on Aristotelean natural philosophy and took interest in chemistry and the biological sciences such as botany, anatomy and medicine (Debus 102).

1.2. Art

In the 13th and 14th centuries, before the Renaissance, Italy knew a movement called “proto-renaissance”. Artists such as Giotto (1266/67 or 1276–1337) followed the example of St. Francis of Assisi who “prais[ed] the beauties and spiritual value of nature” (EB, Renaissance). Those artists adopted a new technique of painting that is close to the one used during the Renaissance and that is based “on clear, simple structure and great psychological penetration rather than on the flat, linear decorativeness and hierarchical compositions of [their] predecessors and contemporaries” (*ibid.*) Even if this work was written during the Middle Ages, the ideas contained in Dante’s *Divine Comedy* were close to those of the Renaissance. Because they wrote in the vernacular and studied Latin literature, Giovanni Boccaccio and Petrarch are also part of the proto-renaissance. However, the plague of 1348 stopped this rising movement, which only reappeared in the 15th century (*ibid.*).

At the Renaissance, art became considered as a branch of knowledge, “valuable in its own right and capable of providing man with images of God and his creations as well as with insights into man’s position in the universe” (EB, Renaissance). What is more, “[a]rt was to be based on the observation of the visible world and practiced according to mathematical principles of balance, harmony, and perspective, which were developed at this time” (*ibid.*). Famous painters from that period are Masaccio, the brothers Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Fra Angelico, Sandro Botticelli, Perugino, Piero della Francesca, Raphael, and Titian (*ibid.*). There were also famous sculptors such as Giovanni Pisano, Donatello, Andrea del Verrocchio, Lorenzo Ghiberti, and Michelangelo (*ibid.*). Architecture also changed during Renaissance thanks to architects such as Leon Battista Alberti, Filippo Brunelleschi, Andrea Palladio, Michelozzo, and Filarete (*ibid.*).

A period called High Renaissance took place from around 1490 to 1527. This movement knew three main figures. The first one, Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), was considered to be the ultimate Renaissance man since his knowledge extended in numerous fields. As for Michelangelo (1475–1564), his inspiration was “the human body as the ultimate vehicle for emotional expression” (EB, Renaissance). About the works of Raphael (1483–1520), the last of the three figures, one could say that it “perfectly expressed the Classical spirit—harmonious, beautiful, and serene” (*ibid.*). As demonstrated in chapter 4, Cromwell also appreciates art and even uses it for his own purposes.

1.3. Religion

The religious context at the beginning of the Renaissance was quite complex. The Middle Ages ended with the Western Schism, which took place from 1378 to 1417 and during which three different men claimed to be pope: Urban VI, Clement VII and later, Alexander V (EB, Western Schism). Moreover, considerable changes influenced the Church during the Renaissance. Scholars and churchmen such as Erasmus and Luther tried to reform it, which Luther managed to do in October 1517 thanks to his 95 Thesis that led to the Reformation and, indirectly, to the Counter-Reformation. As further explained, Thomas Cromwell was also a Protestant and believed that what people eat during the mass is a piece of bread, rather than the body of the Christ.

According to Trinkaus, there are three possible interpretations of Renaissance humanists' position towards religion. The first group, consisting of Douglas Bush, Augustin Renaudet and Guiseppe Toffanin, think that the rise of *studia humanitatis* had a religious meaning and was the “reconciliation of Greek and Latin culture with Christianity” (Trinkaus 26). The members of the second group, among whom Hans Baron and Eugenio Garin, believe in civic humanism and think that *studia humanitatis* was “at the service of the community” (27) and that the fact that some humanists worked for popes and kings was a “perversion to their principal vocation” (*ibid.*). The third group of scholars, which includes Paul Oskar Kristeller and Walter Rugg, see humanism as the practice of the learned disciplines legitimated as *studia humanitatis* and nothing more. According to Giovanni Dominici, the *studia humanitatis* and the *studia divinitatis* were connected and people needed both to acquire a complete knowledge (*ibid.*).

Another attitude attributed to humanists was detachment from Christianity. Some scholars even say there has been a revival of paganism during the Renaissance. Humanists attacked scholasticism, the “system of philosophy, based on religious principles and writing, that was taught in universities in the Middle Ages”¹, because of the scholastic translations of Greek and Latin texts, which they deemed inferior, as well as their bad use of Latin (Parkinson 3). The anticlericalism present during the Renaissance already existed in the past, but since the humanists mastered Latin better than their predecessors, they were able to express better their opinion about this matter (Ullmann 3). What is more, secularisation concerned the whole of Europe and, even if some humanists were religious, most were not (Parkinson 4).

¹ <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/scholasticism?q=scholasticism> (14.11.17)

2. The Historical Novel

According to Collins Dictionary, an historical novel is “a fictional novel which is set in real events in history”². However, this definition might require a few more nuances. How close to reality is that kind of novel? How much has the reality or history been modified and romanticised? Did all events in an historical novel really take place? Has every character in the book really existed? Did the author deliberately avoid to talk about certain characters? Is an author of historical novels supposed to be a hundred percent faithful to reality?

Since “an awareness of the past can help the general reader confront the fear and perplexities of the present and future” (Kantor cited in Rodwell 48), historical novels are particularly interesting. However, there is no consensus on the definition of that genre and defining the historical novel is not a simple matter, since the genre is constantly evolving and includes several subgenres. The phrase ‘historical novel’ in itself contains a contradiction, since a novel is a fiction, that is to say something imaginary, and since history is made of events that happened in the past, that have occurred and are not subject to the imagination.

A first definition of historical novel that comes to mind is “a fiction set in the past” (Johnson cited in Rodwell 48). The Historical Novel Society provides another, more precise, definition:

To be deemed historical (in our sense), a novel must have been written at least fifty years after the events described, or have been written by someone who was not alive at the time of those events (who therefore approaches them only by research). (cited in Rodwell 47)

Mantel’s books respect the criteria cited in this second definition, since the events she describes took place in the sixteenth century and she wrote her two books more than four hundred years later thanks to a lot of research and documenting.

According to Jill Paton Walsh, “a novel is a historical novel when it is wholly or partly about the public events and social conditions which are the material of history, regardless of the time at which it is written” (cited in Rodwell 48). It appears clearly that *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* meet those criteria, since Mantel manages to make her readers go back in time and imagine what life was like during Henry’s reign, thanks to her many descriptions and explanations about the role of titles and hierarchy.

² <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/historical-novel> (19.11.17)

2.1. Historians vs. Novelists

People oftentimes want to know if what they read in historical fictions is real. Readers of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* often ask Hilary Mantel: “Can I check this out in a history book? Does it agree with other accounts? Would my old history teacher recognize it?” (RL, *The Day Is For the Living*). However, it is important to distinguish the jobs of novelists and historians. Both historians and novelists try to come as close to the truth as possible but they do not do so by focussing on the same elements. Historians focus on the events and try to analyse what happened, while novelists focus on the characters, on the people and answer the question “what was it like?” (Rodwell 50).

For Mantel, a novelist’s job “is not to be an inferior sort of historian, but to recreate the texture of lived experience: to activate the senses, and to deepen the reader’s engagement through feelings” (RL, *Can These Bones Live?*). During one of her Reith lectures in 2017, Mantel also explained what the difference between historians and novelists is in her eyes: “The novelist’s trade is never just about making things up. The historian’s trade is never simply about stockpiling facts. Even the driest, most data-driven research involves an element of interpretation” (RL, *The Day Is for the Living*). She goes on:

The historian and the biographer follow a trail of evidence, usually a paper trail. The novelist does that too, and then performs another act – puts the past back into process, into action – frees the people from the archive and lets them run about, ignorant of their fates, with all their mistakes unmade. (*ibid.*)

Rodwell confirms this statement by saying that “history is a disciplined method of enquiry of the past; historical fiction is a creative act” (54). In his conclusion, he cites Armstrong, who claimed that “historical fiction takes all those things that were (the history) and turns something that was not (an imagined story) into something that could have been” (53-54). In her Reith lecture *The Day Is for the Living*, broadcast by the BBC, Mantel explains:

Not every author [of historical fiction] concerns herself with real people and real events. In my current cycle of Tudor novels I do, and closely track the historical record so I can report the outer world faithfully – though I also tell my reader the rumours, and suggest that sometimes the news is falsified.

However, even if writing an historical novel is a creative act, Mantel informed her audience during a lecture that it is best not to lie while writing such a novel, and she advises people to “resist the temptation to tidy up the past” (RL, *Can These Bones Live?*). She further explains:

The reason you must stick by the truth is that it is better, stranger, stronger, than anything you can make up. If its shape is awkward, then you must make your fictional technique so flexible that it can bend around the difficulty; because it is the shape of your narrative the reader will follow. You can select, elide, highlight, omit. Just don't cheat. (*ibid.*)

In an article she wrote for *The Guardian*, Mantel explains that she decided to write historical fictions because she could not do plots. She said: "I can't do plots, I thought, so I will let history do them for me". However, she encountered several difficulties: "I was prepared to look at all the material I could find, even though I knew it would take years, but what I wasn't prepared for were the gaps, the erasures, the silences where there should have been evidences" (RL, *The Day Is for the Living*).

Another difficulty was to find the right balance between historical and literary quality: "It's a big task, to give the reader all the background information and all the foreground information and make the characters work as well" (Higgins). She also declared: "What I am trying to do is to write as I would in any other novel, so that it has a literary quality as well as, I hope, a historical quality" (*ibid.*). She further justified her choice: "I don't see why you should compromise. In writing a historical novel, you use all the tricks you have learned on diverse subject matter and use all the techniques you bring to novels of contemporary life" (*ibid.*).

As far as details are concerned, Mantel also needed to find a balance. If she had provided the reader with too many details, her story would have been too heavy and the plot would have unfolded too slowly. If she had written a story with too few details, the reader would not have had a sufficient glance at the atmosphere of Henry VIII's epoch (*ibid.*).

Mantel tried to render the reality of the past as accurately as possible and to give the impression to her readers that they landed in Henry's England. After reflection, she concluded that sixteenth-century diction would be too difficult and unattractive to the reader, but that modern English would not reflect the atmosphere she hoped to produce. She decided to write in Standard English with a present tense narration (*ibid.*), but inserted "small rises in the level of language [...] for comic effect" (Tayler) such as in the sentence "Well, I tell you, Lady Shelton, if she had had an axe to hand, she would have essayed to cut off my head". About that choice, Mantel declared: "We don't need our characters to mouth the words of another century, but to possess the common knowledge of their era – so they don't say what they could never think" (RL, *Adaptation*).

As for the characters present in historical novels, Scott H. Dalton says that they can be "real historical figures in the context of the challenges they faced, [...] or in imagined

situations” (cited in Rodwell 49) or “fictional characters in documented historical situations, or in fictional situations, but in the context of a real historical period” (50). Next to that definition, Dalton admits that a few changes are allowed, such as time-shift stories, where a character from the past is sent to the present or a character from now is sent to the past, alternate history or ‘What if?’ stories, showing alternative worlds, or historical novels including historical facts and characters in a world where dragons and magic exist (*ibid.*).

In *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, the characters and places mentioned really existed. Rodwell’s claim that historians focus on the events and novelists on the characters can be illustrated in those two novels. It clearly appears that Mantel focussed a lot on the characters and their psychology. In her books, the reader discovers Cromwell’s relationship with his household and his children. Some elements were maybe invented by Mantel to show another face of Cromwell, one that does not have anything to do with business and politics. However, even if she already focussed on a lot of characters, Mantel informs the readers in the author’s note in *Bring Up the Bodies* that some characters are missing from her story:

Some familiar aspects of the story are not to be found in this novel. To limit the multiplication of characters, it omits mention of a deceased lady called Bridget Wingfield, who may (from beyond the grave) have had something to do with the rumours that began to circulate against Anne before her fall. The effect of omitting any source of rumour may be to throw more blame on Jane, Lady Rochford, than perhaps she deserves [...] Connoisseurs of Anne’s last days will notice other omissions, including that of Richard Page, a courtier who was arrested at about the same time as Thomas Wyatt, and who was never charged or tried. As he plays no part in this story otherwise, and as no one has an idea why he was arrested, it seemed best not to burden the reader with one more name. (483-484)

2.2. Mantel’s Cromwell

It is important to make a distinction between the real Thomas Cromwell, who lived more than four hundred years ago, and the Thomas Cromwell the readers have access to in Mantel’s books. Of course, Mantel does not know Cromwell personally but, in her two books, she places the readers inside his head, giving them access to Cromwell’s thoughts and emotions.

Thomas Cromwell’s life is not very well known, which is one of the reasons for Mantel’s interest in this character. As Atwood said “the less is truly known [about a character], the more room for a novelist” (*The Guardian* 2012). Biographies of him talk about subjects like Cromwell’s role in the country finances and religion, but never about his private life. In *A Man for All Seasons* (1960), a play by Robert Bolt, Cromwell is depicted as a villain and Thomas More as a saint. As for Hilary Mantel, she gives Cromwell a more positive image in her two novels and does not only describe his career as a lawyer and his influence on Henry VIII, but

also his personal relationships with his household and family. About the image of Cromwell she created, she said in *The Guardian*:

It wasn't that I wanted to rehabilitate him. I do not run a Priory clinic for the dead. Rather, I was driven by powerful curiosity. If a villain, an interesting villain, yes? My first explorations challenged my easy prejudices. Some readers think I've been too easy on Cromwell. In fact it's possible to write a version of his career in which he is, at worst, the loyal servant of a bad master.

She also explained that she wanted to “approach the received version with great scepticism and try to get the reader to challenge what they think they know” (RL, *Can These Bones Live?*). According to her, “people are very loyal to the first history they learned. They are very attached to what their teachers told them and they are very resistant to having this subverted” (*ibid.*). However, she considers it as her job to present a new face of characters such as Thomas Cromwell.

During one of the Reith lectures, a woman from the audience called Anne Holland told Hilary Mantel that “Thomas Cromwell was portrayed as a great hero”, adding that “of course, like everything, nobody’s black or white”, but she explained it intrigued her “how strongly the views were both within the book, the film, and the TV”. Mantel’s answer is the following:

I hope to produce a nuanced portrait of Thomas Cromwell, as of Thomas More, of Henry VIII and all my characters, but good writers need good readers. The reader has to be prepared to lay aside their prejudices and read the nuances and interrogate every line asking how reliable is this person as witness to his story or someone else’s story. Their texts of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* ripple with doubt. My aim is to keep the text alive; it’s all about, as it were, putting the past back into process. So, what I’m trying to do... if I had written my books at say, from the point of view of Anne Boleyn or I had chosen Thomas More as my lead character, then you would have a very, very different text but it doesn’t mean that I am insincere or that text contains lies. The novel cannot, I think, be a neutral text but it can be a nuanced one. (RL, *Adaptation*)

In conclusion, Mantel faced many choices while writing *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, such as the balance between literary and historical quality, the quantity of details given to the readers and the kind of language used by the characters. She also had to select the events she wanted to talk about and the characters she needed to include in her story. Finally, she also decided to give her readers a different image of Cromwell, to challenge what they knew about him because she considers that it is part of her job as a writer of historical novels.

3. Conclusion

If the modern historical novel is about characters more than about events, and if the Renaissance is about the self-fashioning of modern man (or woman), and about his/her fashioning of the world around him/her, there is a felicitous congruity between the two.

As the first part of this dissertation shows, the Renaissance is essentially about how an individual character is able to shape the self and the world. Humanism takes human nature as its subject and is interested in the individual, which is put at the centre of the universe. The humanists tried to develop their virtue, and believed in the possibilities of human thought and creation, they were encourage to develop as many skills as possible. The fact that the modern historical novel focuses more on characters than on events allows an analysis of their psychology and experience as they try to achieve the Renaissance goals and become *Uomini Universali*. It is therefore hard to think of an art form or indeed an approach to history that does more justice to the concept of the Renaissance than the historical novel.

Chapter 2: Analysis of the Narratology in *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*

Narratology is “the branch of knowledge or criticism that deals with the structure and function of narrative and its themes, conventions, and symbols”³. This chapter will analyse the narratological effects in Mantel’s two books on the reader’s perception of the story. Who is talking? Is it an external instance? A character that experiences the storyworld? What is the viewpoint of the narrator? All those questions, and a few more, will be answered in this chapter in order to demonstrate that, in Mantel’s books, Cromwell is the centre of consciousness around which the self and the world are structured.

1. Author, Character, Narrator

There are several agents in a narrative and it is important not to confuse them. The author is a real person who writes the story. In this case, the author of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* is Hilary Mantel. The characters are the actors in a story. Gérard Genette, a key figure in narratology, explained that, to find who the character is, the reader must ask “who sees?” (Martens 185). As for the narrator, it is an “agent who produces a narrative” (Herman cited in Hogan 66), and that can be found by asking the question “who talks?” (Martens 185). The narrator is human-like and has certain properties that humans have, such as the ability to gain knowledge about the world (Hogan 76).

2. Focalisation

The term ‘focalisation’ refers to “the kind of perspective from which the events of a story are witnessed”⁴ and can be described as “the submission of (potentially limitless) narrative information to a perspectival filter” (Jahn cited in Hogan 75). It is also “the way the representation of the story is influenced by the position, personality and values of the narrator, the characters and, possibly, other, more hypothetical entities in the storyworld” (Niederhoff b, paragraph 2). Focalisation appears as a complex concept due to the numerous synonyms of the term: ‘perspective’, ‘reflector’ (used by Henry James), ‘slant’, ‘filter’ (used by Chatman), ‘interest-focus’, and ‘window’ (Niederhoff b, paragraph 6).

As the first chapter demonstrated, there is a felicitous congruity between the historical novel and the Renaissance. The Renaissance expresses a strong interest in the individual and is

³ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/narratology> (23.05.18)

⁴ <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095825880> (23.05.18)

about the fashioning of the self as well as of the world around it. As a Renaissance self-fashioned man who has the ability to structure himself and the world, Cromwell is at the centre of attention of the humanists. Furthermore, the previous chapter stated that the historical novel focuses more on characters than on events. In Mantel's books, Cromwell is also the centre of attention, he is the centre of consciousness, the readers are given access to his mind. Moreover, the narrator, who is a heterodiegetic narrator since he does not participate in the story, is restricted to Cromwell's experience, he does not know more than the main character. This technique that gives Cromwell a lot of control over the narrative is called different ways by different theorists, as explained in the following points.

2.1. Internal Focalisation

Genette distinguished three types of focalisation: internal, external, and zero focalisation, which can also be spelt zerofocalisation and called non-focalisation. In a story with zero focalisation, there is no focaliser, the narrator "relates events and scenes without any filter from a character in the story" (Hogan 76). This can be symbolised by Todorov's formula "Narrator > Character", the narrator knows more than the characters do, he is omniscient (Niederhoff a, paragraph 6). As for Pouillon, he calls this technique "vision from behind" (*ibid.*).

The term external focalisation, also called "vision from without" by Pouillon (*ibid.*), is used to refer to narratives where "the narrator says less than the characters know" and is written "Narrator < Character" (*ibid.*). In this case, "the narrator does not have access to inner thoughts but reports only objective facts about the story world" (Hogan 76).

In a case of internal focalisation, the narrator does not know anything more than the character, he is "restrict[ed] to the experiences (perceptual, imaginative, etc.) of one or more characters" (Hogan 76). This technique is symbolised by Todorov's formula "Narrator = Character" (Niederhoff a, paragraph 6) and is actually the one used by Hilary Mantel in her two historical novels. She allows the readers to be in Cromwell's mind and to know exactly what he sees, what he feels and what he thinks. Cromwell is the filter, the events are presented the way he perceives, feels, interprets and evaluates them at a particular moment (Niederhoff a, paragraph 7). Mantel explained her choice during an interview:

The basic decision about the book was taken seconds before I began writing. "So now get up": the person on the ground was Cromwell and the camera was behind his eyes. The events were happening now, in the present tense, unfolding as I watched, and what followed would be filtered through the main character's sensibility. (Mantel, *The Guardian*)

2.2. Jamesian Reflector – Limited Point of View

In their works about narratology, Henry James and his disciple Lubbock distinguished four points of view: third-person narration with a prominent or authorial narrator, first-person narration, third-person narration without comments or inside views, and third-person narration from the point of view of a character, a Jamesian “reflector” (Niederhoff b, paragraph 11). This theory, also called limited point of view, corresponds to the concept of internal focalisation established by Genette, where the reader has access to the mental life of the reflector character and the narrator is withdrawn. In addition, James insisted on the importance of point of view and of consciousness in narratives. As explained by James E. Miller in his paper about Henry James’ work:

James probably developed his notions about point of view as he developed his concept of the drama of consciousness. He noted frequently in his criticism that action by itself and characters by themselves, in vacuums so to speak, failed to arouse interest. Only when the action involves people who live and breathe, and only when the people feel and respond to their situations or contexts of action - only then does interest begin to grow. The matrix of character and action is consciousness. Thus consciousness becomes the key to fictional interest, and feelings, meditations, inner responses, flow of thought surge to the fore as major material for representation. (345)

As mentioned earlier, the historical novel focusses more on the characters than on the events. However, as this extract explains, focussing only on the characters “fail[s] to arouse interest”. Not only do Mantel’s books focus on Cromwell, but they also give the readers access to his consciousness. They focus on the way events affect him, the way he tries to fashion the world and the people around him, and how he interacts with them.

2.3. Selective Omniscience

Among his eight different points of view, classified from the one telling the most to the one showing the most, Friedman’s selective omniscience occupies the sixth position. This concept is the equivalent of the Jamesian reflector, of the limited point of view, and of Genette’s internal focalisation. In a narrative with an omniscient narrator, the narrator knows everything, as we could suppose God would (Culler 23). The omniscient narrator is “the voice in which a story is written that is outside the story and knows everything about the characters and events in the story”⁵. He has access to the thoughts of the main character, but also of all the other characters. He is not limited by time and place, he knows what happens in different places at every moment. With selective omniscience, however, the narrator is limited to what a character, his filter,

⁵ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/omniscient-narrator> (07.05.18)

knows. In *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, the narrator has access to Cromwell's mind, the readers consequently know Master Secretary's intimate thoughts and feelings. However, the narrator does not know more than Cromwell. If Cromwell is not in the room, nobody knows what happens in it, nor the narrator, nor the reader. Also, the narrator does not know what happens in the future. Actually, the medieval, theocentric perspective of a God-like narrator makes room for a Renaissance, anthropocentric perspective of an individual who is constantly engaged in a process of structuring his own thoughts and actions, but also those of others.

2.4. Narratological Mechanisms in Mantel's Books

There are cases in Mantel's books where the narrator is not limited to what his filter knows and perceives. Several exceptions can be found in the two books, such as in the following example: "Even as the court is sitting, King François in Italy is losing a battle. Pope Clement is preparing to sign a new treaty with the Emperor, Queen Katherine's nephew. He [Cromwell] doesn't know this when he says, 'This is a bad day's work. If we want Europe to laugh at us, they've every reason now'" (WH 147). If the narrator was only in Cromwell's head, and nowhere else, he would not be able to tell the reader things that Cromwell does not know.

Moreover, in a conversation with Wolsey, the narrator tells the reader what happens in Wolsey's head:

'[...] I might send Master Stephen to Rome to sound out the Curia. But then I need him here...'
Wolsey looks at his expression, and laughs. Squabbling underlings! He knows quite well that, dissatisfied with their original parentage, they are fighting to be his favourite son. (WH 25)

In this extract, the words "he knows quite well that" are about Wolsey. Two interpretations are possible here to endeavour to explain the fact that Wolsey's thoughts are known to the narrator. On the one hand, one could argue that this is an exception to the method of selective omniscience, and that it is impossible for the narrator to know what Wolsey thinks since, normally, his only filter is Cromwell throughout the two books. On the other hand, one could argue that the narrator's filter is still Cromwell, and not Wolsey, and that the narrator has access to Wolsey's thoughts through Cromwell. Actually, Cromwell knows Wolsey so well that he might be able to guess what his master thinks. This hypothesis is supported by Bryan McHale:

[C]haracters can be shown to read each other's minds – not in any science-fiction sense, but in the sense that they develop working hypotheses about what others are thinking, inferring interior states from speech and external behaviour, just as one does in everyday life; they do "Theory of Mind", in other words. (paragraph 18)

According to Martens, if it were “undecidable whether a passage is focalized through a character or is the narrator’s statement, it would rob the reader of an essential signpost for understanding the story” (184). However, this is not the case in Mantel’s, and critics did not fail to notice Mantel’s successful attempt at using different techniques and being “risky with the narrative” (Alistair Moffat, *Scotsman*). Critics in *The Times* also noticed Mantel’s talent and wrote: “This is a wonderful and intelligently imagined retelling of a familiar tale from an unfamiliar angle”.

In a few other cases, it is difficult to determine who between the narrator and Cromwell is talking. In sentences such as “The difficulty is ... No, in fact, there are several difficulties” (*WH* 20), who is actually hesitating with the formulation? The most probable answer here is that it is Cromwell who is thinking. If it is the case, this example perfectly illustrates the fact that Cromwell is constantly structuring his thoughts, in addition to structuring the thoughts of other people and the world around him. But in the following example, the answer is less obvious: “When he once, as a test, explained to the cardinal just a minor point of the land law concerning – well, never mind, it was a minor point – he saw the cardinal break into a sweat and say, Thomas, what can I give you, to persuade you never to mention this to me again?” (*WH* 20-21). In this case, who is thinking back about that conversation and considering that explaining that point of the land law is not necessary? Both answers, the narrator and Cromwell, are possible. One might consider that it is the narrator’s formulation and that the narrator intervenes, giving his opinion and talking to the reader, which does not often happen through the books. However, one might also consider that the remark “never mind” expresses Cromwell’s impatience.

An example of an exception to the technique of selective omniscience can be found in Mantel’s second book. After a conversation with Wriothesley, the latter gives Cromwell “a glassy look” and the narrator tells the reader: “It will be some years before he [Cromwell] understands why” (*BB* 284). If the narrator was only in Cromwell’s head, and not able to go in the future as an omniscient narrator can do, he would not be able to know that, in the future, Cromwell will understand why Wriothesley gave him a glassy look. This example is, with no doubt, an exception to the method of selective omniscience.

Another example of the same kind happens later in the same book, when Anne Boleyn is brought to the Tower before her trial:

‘Is Harry Norris here?’ she asks. ‘Has he not cleared my name?’

‘I fear not,’ Kingston says. ‘Nor his own.’

Something happens to Anne then, which later he will not quite understand. She seems to dissolve and slip from their grasp, from Kingston’s hand and his, she seems to liquefy and elude them, and when she resolves herself once more into woman’s form she is on hands and knees on the cobbles, her head thrown back, wailing. (355)

The same question can be raised here: since everything is told from the point of view of Cromwell, how is it possible to know that Cromwell will not understand Anne’s behaviour when he thinks back about it in the future? If the narrator is only in Cromwell’s head at the moment of the events, how can he know what happens in the future if Cromwell does not?

Sometimes, the narrator tells the readers things that one could think Cromwell does not know. For example, there is often talk of the emperor Charles V, of the Pope, and of François, the King of France. One might think that when the narrator talks about them and about what they are doing, he becomes an omniscient narrator. But it is important to bear in mind that Cromwell has a lot of spies everywhere that are able to keep him posted about what his enemies are doing so that he can be ready for any possible attack.

As for the relation between the narrator and the reader, Margolin distinguishes several attitudes that the narrator can have: “neutral vs. judgmental, sympathetic vs. detached, involved vs. distanced, cynical, sentimental, emotionally charged, curious, amused, bewildered, and so on” (paragraph 33). Mantel’s heterodiegetic narrator is fairly neutral, he reports the thoughts of Cromwell without telling the reader what he should think about them. Also, he does not address the reader directly, seems quite detached and distanced. The few times Mantel makes her narrator tell the reader more than what Cromwell knows, she does so to create suspense.

What is more, Cromwell’s thoughts are reported in a kind of vocabulary that we imagine he would use. As a consequence, this mode of writing gives the impression that the reader is not behind a book, reading about Cromwell’s story, but that he is in Cromwell’s mind, working at the court of Henry VIII and understanding the workings of power. This technique also makes it possible for Mantel to “[bring] the past alive, kicking, laughing and crying”, as Andrew Marr wrote in the *Mail on Sunday*.

3. (Free) Direct and Indirect Discourse

Narratology traditionally counts four ways of reporting a story. The first one is called direct discourse and consists of representing the words pronounced by a person between quotation marks, followed by a reporting verb in the present or in the past, such as in the following example: “‘I should send you’, the cardinal says, jolly. ‘You could offer Pope Clement a loan’”

(WH 27). In indirect discourse, the reader does not have access to the words in the same form as they were when pronounced by the speaker. As shown by the example “John said he was proud”, the first person singular changes into the third person singular, and the present tense changes into a past tense, since the words reported were pronounced earlier in the past, before the moment when they are reported.

There are more flexible alternatives to those techniques. In free direct discourse, the character can interrupt the narrator and talk at the first person and in the present, such as in direct discourse, except there are neither quotation marks nor reporting verb:

He picks up the next batch of letters. A man called Batcock wants a licence to import 100 tuns of woad. Harry Percy is sick again. The authorities in Yorkshire have rounded up their rioters, and divided them into those to be charged with affray and manslaughter, and those to be indicted for murder and rape. Rape? Since when do food riots involve rape? But I forget, this is Yorkshire. (WH 648)

Indirect discourse also has a more flexible form, called free indirect discourse: “He's sent his nephews, his sister Bet's sons, to school with him; it's something he is glad to do for the family. The summer is for their recreation; what would they do in the city?” (WH 36). As this example illustrates, the character can also interrupt the narrator in free indirect discourse, but in a less obvious way, it is in some cases relatively complicated to find out if a sentence belongs to the character or to the narrator. Moreover, the speech and thoughts of the character are in the third person singular instead of the first person singular used in free direct discourse, and the verbs are in the past, the typical tense of narration. Another characteristic of free indirect discourse is that it displays cases of “*now* in the past”, also called the “*was-now* paradox”, such as the following examples: “Where was he this morning; To-morrow was Monday; How it was a terrible shame to the soul, to live now! and God could call him now” (Vandelanotte 66).

Some narratives are notable for their extensive use of one technique in particular, such as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce's narrative in free indirect discourse. D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf were also known for their use of this technique. However, most authors combine several techniques, such as Mantel in her two books. Most of the time, Hilary Mantel uses direct discourse, free direct discourse and free indirect discourse but she sometimes adapts those techniques her own way, as illustrated below. She seems to barely use indirect discourse. This can be explained by the fact that indirect discourse is the way of reporting speech that gives the most control to the “quoter” and the less to the “quotee” (Delabastita 18). Since Cromwell is the centre of consciousness, the filter of the narrator, he is

given more control than the narrator. The story is told from Cromwell's perspective, and not by a narrator who would narrate everything in the third person singular without allowing the character to intervene. Because the readers are in the mind of the main character, they know what he thinks, what he feels, hears and sees. The following extract illustrates the variety of techniques used by Mantel to report what her characters say and think:

It knocks the last breath out of him; he thinks it may be his last. His forehead returns to the ground; he lies waiting, for Walter to jump on him. The dog, Bella, is barking, shut away in an outhouse. I'll miss my dog, he thinks. The yard smells of beer and blood. Someone is shouting, down on the riverbank. Nothing hurts, or perhaps it's that everything hurts, because there is no separate pain that he can pick out. But the cold strikes him, just in one place: just through his cheekbone as it rests on the cobbles.

'Look now, look now,' Walter bellows. He hops on one foot, as if he's dancing. 'Look what I've done. Burst my boot; kicking your head.'

Inch by inch. Inch by inch forward. Never mind if he calls you an eel or a worm or a snake. Head down, don't provoke him. His nose is clotted with blood and he has to open his mouth to breathe. His father's momentary distraction at the loss of his good boot allows him the leisure to vomit. 'That's right,' Walter yells. 'Spew everywhere.' Spew everywhere, on my good cobbles. 'Come on, boy, get up. Let's see you get up. By the blood of creeping Christ, stand on your feet.'

Creeping Christ? He thinks. What does he mean? His head turns sideways, his hair rests in his own vomit, the dog barks, Walter roars, and bells peal out across the water. He feels a sensation of movement, as if the filthy ground has become the Thames. It gives and sways beneath him; he lets out his breath, one great final gasp. You've done it, this time, a voice tells Walter. But he closes his ears, or God closes them for him. He is pulled downstream, on a deep black tide. (WH, 3-4)

As explained, direct speech is characterised by quotation marks and a reporting verb in the past or present tense. Mantel uses this technique, as in the sentence: "'Look now, look now,' Walter bellows". However, she also sometimes chooses not to use quotation marks but just to separate the reported sentence and the reporting verb with a comma, as in the sentence: "You've done it, this time, a voice tells Walter" or as in "I'll miss my dog, he thinks". Moreover, the author also sometimes chooses not to use any reporting verb, as in: "Come on, boy, get up. Let's see you get up. By the blood of creeping Christ, stand on your feet". In this example, it is obvious that it is Walter who is talking, since it is he who was talking just before. However, in certain cases where Mantel uses this technique, it is not that easy to know who is talking.

To report to the reader what Cromwell is thinking, several techniques are used. One could consider that "he thinks it may be his last" is indirect speech, but the reporting verb, as well as the other verb, are in the present tense, and not in the past as is normally the case in indirect speech. As for "I'll miss my dog, he thinks", it could be considered to be direct speech

even if there are no quotation marks. The same goes for “Creeping Christ? He thinks. What does he mean?”. As the questions in this extract show, Cromwell’s thoughts are sometimes reported as if they were pronounced by him, the reader is in his head and hears his thoughts. This is also the case in: “Inch by inch. Inch by inch forward. Never mind if he calls you an eel or a worm or a snake. Head down, don’t provoke him”. Here, the words reported are exactly the words thought by Cromwell. However, there are no quotation marks and no reporting verb. Actually, Cromwell is interrupting the narrator with his thoughts, which is a characteristic of free direct speech. Throughout the two books, Cromwell’s thoughts are mostly reported by the narrator. As the previous and following extracts demonstrate, it is not the case the whole time and Cromwell sometimes narrates his own thoughts:

Very well. I dry my tears, those tears from All Hallows day. I sit with the cardinal, by the fire at Esher in a room with a smoking chimney. I say, my lord, do you think I would forsake you? I locate the man in charge of chimneys and hearts. I give him orders. I ride to London, to Blackfriars. The day is foggy, St Hubert’s Day. Norfolk is waiting, to tell me he will be a good lord to me. (*WH* 162)

Here, Cromwell’s thoughts are in the first person, and it is he who describes what happens to him, not a narrator, he has total control over the narrative. A possible interpretation for this change from the third to the first person might be the fact that, after this extract, Cromwell, who is not in the service of the king yet, goes to see the Duke of Norfolk for one of the first times. There, he hears that he has a seat in the new Parliament, which is a key event since it gives Cromwell more power and will give him many opportunities to approach the king. This change of person gives the impression to the readers that they are even closer to Cromwell, there is no intermediary anymore between them and Cromwell, and they can thus put themselves in Master Secretary’s shoes even more easily.

One of the major characteristics of Mantel’s writing technique is her use of the formulation “he, Cromwell”, especially in *Bring up the Bodies*. The narrator uses the third person singular when he talks about Cromwell, but naturally also when he talks about other male characters, in order not to repeat their name every time. Especially in *Wolf Hall*, the profusion of this pronoun sometimes makes it difficult for the reader to know who is talking, or who a remark is about. Horowitz noticed that formulation, as well as the change of person, from first to third, and interprets them as follows:

[...] the stylistic use of the pronoun ‘he’ when referring to him [Cromwell] is both confusing and momentum-halting. Indeed, on several occasions it was necessary to reread a few lines just to determine who was speaking. This uncertainty of voice is compounded by an occasional

shifting into first person singular or plural: Cromwell, after being referred to as ‘he’, suddenly says ‘I dry my eyes’; an abrupt shift from being ‘he’ to a new scene beginning ‘October, and we are going to Calais’; a conversation between Cromwell and Henry VIII includes the narrative ‘He watches Henry’s face. He is alive to anything that concerns honour’. Presumably it is Henry alive with the notion of honour.

However, even if Mantel herself admits that a narrator using the pronoun “he” to refer to somebody he is in the head of can sometimes be confusing, she defends her choice, explaining what she felt when she began writing *Wolf Hall*:

[Cromwell] seemed to be occupying the same physical space as me, with a slight ghostly overlap. It didn't make sense to call him "Cromwell", as if he were somewhere across the room. I called him "he". This device, though hardly of Joycean complexity, was not universally popular. Most readers caught on quickly. Those who didn't, complained. (*The Guardian* 2012)

All in all, it is thanks to the use of the present, added to the fact that the reader is inside Cromwell’s mind thanks to a selective omniscient narrator, that the reader is able to put himself in Cromwell’s shoes and to “smell the rain-drenched wool cloaks and feel the sharp fibres of rushes underfoot” (*Daily Telegraph*). It is also thanks to those techniques that critics as Rachel Cooke can say: “The voice is so true: I have my suspicions that Hilary Mantel actually *is* Thomas Cromwell” (*Observer*).

4. How Do We Know About Cromwell’s Thoughts in the Series?

The BBC adapted *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* into a miniseries by the name of the first of those two books in January 2015. The miniseries is made of six episodes, each between sixty and sixty-five minutes long.

Even if the series achieved a certain success and received several nominations, one might argue that some quality was lost in the change of medium. In the series, the viewer gets to see Cromwell, which means that the camera does not show exactly what he sees as if it was on his shoulder or behind his eyes, the viewer is not in Master Secretary’s head. Moreover, the Thomas Cromwell in the series, interpreted by Mark Rylance, does not correspond to the descriptions of the Cromwell from the books: a man of strong build, not tall, with dark, heavy and waving hair, and small eyes (*WH* 31), nor does he look like the Thomas Cromwell represented on Holbein’s paintings. When looking at Mark Rylance, one can easily see that he is far thinner than what a reader of Mantels’ books would imagine. This lack of resemblance can be considered as negative since Cromwell’s physical appearance is normally one of his

assets, as it allows him to impress people and to threaten them. However, Mantel knows that “[t]he expectation of the audience is vast” (*Adaptation*) and she defends this choice of actor as follows:

You don’t need a lookalike. The cinema creates a mythic identity. We watch a film all together, in the dark. We engage in collective dreaming. And we eat [...] as if suspending adult life and adult judgement, sinking entirely into the story we are told. The image has taken reason prisoner. (*ibid.*)

In the series, some aspects of the selective omniscience from the books are still noticeable, such as the limitation of time and place. For example, the camera follows Cromwell everywhere but will not show scenes where Cromwell is not present. The viewer also does not get to see scenes happening in the future. However, the narrator that was reporting everything Cromwell thought and felt in the third person singular in the two books disappears in the series, and there is no voice-over. This absence of narrator means that the viewer does not have access to Cromwell’s thoughts, which is a fundamental change from the books.

After the death of his wife and daughters, the Cromwell from the series is sad, can be seen crying, but his feelings are much less evident and striking to the viewer than to the reader since the viewer does not get access to his thoughts, he might not know how helpless Cromwell feels. However, several techniques have been used by the producers of the miniseries in order to sometimes give the viewer access to the main character’s thoughts, or at least a glimpse of them.

As Mantel explained: “*Wolf Hall* attempts to duplicate not the historian’s chronology but the way memory works: in leaps, loops, flashes” (*The Guardian* 2012). Cromwell’s past is represented a lot in Mantel’s books thanks to those techniques, but it is a lot less in the series. In the books, Cromwell often thinks back about his past, about the people he met when he was a boy and a young man and who taught him several skills as well as to speak several languages. That period where he travelled and developed his personality and character is important to Cromwell, it forged him. A good illustration of this lack of importance accorded to Cromwell’s past in the series is the way the producers represented the very first scene of *Wolf Hall*, where Cromwell is beaten by Walter, his father. It is also shown in the series but one could argue that this part of his past is not given as much importance there as in the books. This scene is the very first one in the book *Wolf Hall*, the first meeting between Cromwell and the reader. In the series, it is shown in a flashback and seems to be more an anecdote than an experience that really constructed Cromwell in the man he became. What is more, in the two historical novels,

Cromwell sometimes thinks about his dead sister, along with her husband. He also often thinks about his dead wife and daughters, and even mentions several times Bella, the dog he had when he was a young boy. His love for his family and for dogs is nevertheless barely represented in the series.

Even if Cromwell's thoughts are less represented in the series than in the books, the viewers still sometimes have access to them. Apart from the flashbacks, other techniques are used. Even if the camera is not behind Cromwell's eyes, and not on his shoulder, it sometimes follows his eyes so that the reader's eyes are directed to what Cromwell sees. In the first episode, called "Three Card Trick", Cromwell goes back to see his father, who he had not seen since he fled his home when he was fifteen. When Cromwell arrives in the court of his father's house and sees his father working, the viewer sees a flashback where a boy is beaten by Walter and understands that it is Cromwell. Before that scene, the viewer did not know that Cromwell's father was that violent, whereas the reader knows it from the very first lines of the first book. Later on in this scene from the series, Cromwell looks down at the pavement and the viewer understands that he is thinking about when he was lying on that same pavement, being beaten by his father.

Another simple trick used by the producers to render Cromwell's thoughts is to make him pronounce them aloud. When Cromwell talks to the sister of his dead wife about her relation with her husband, he dares to ask her: "Does John Williamson not do his duty by you these days?", to which she answers: "His duty is not my pleasure". This reply marks the end of the conversation. In the book, Cromwell only thinks: "This is a conversation I shouldn't have had" (*WH* 171). In the series, he utters these words. Even if this scene is only anecdotal, it shows that Cromwell has a certain sense of humour. This humour is more perceptible in the book, since the readers have access to all his thoughts, but this technique used here by the producers allows the viewers of the series to have a glimpse of it.

At another moment, far more crucial, the same technique is used. When interrogating the queen's alleged lovers, Cromwell has a conversation with Harry Norris, during which the reader can read: "Would Norris understand if I spelled it out? He needs guilty men. So he has found men who are guilty. Though perhaps not guilty as charged" (*BB* 392). In the series, Cromwell does utter those sentences while interrogating Harry Norris, since they are of crucial importance for the rest of the story.

Sometimes, the viewers think that the scene they have in front of them is really happening, before realising that they are only the product of Cromwell's imagination. In *Wolf Hall*, one can read:

Sometimes – in a kind of fellowship of the imagination – he imagines resting his hand upon her shoulder and following with his thumb the scooped hollow between her collarbone and her throat; imagines with his forefinger tracking the line of her breast as it swells above her bodice, as a child follows a line of print. (366)

In the series, one gets the impression that Cromwell is really touching Anne's breast, until she speaks and the viewer realises that Cromwell is still leaning against the wall and never moved from there to touch the future queen.

As explained earlier, some might argue that some things have been lost, in that passage from one medium to another, since the viewer is not as much in Cromwell's head as the reader is and consequently might form a different opinion on him. However, a series obviously cannot include every single element contained in more than a thousand pages, a selection needed to be made. Moreover, having a narrator as present in the series as in the books might seem strange and might even be disturbing for the audience. In the books, the selective narrator reports what Cromwell sees, imagines, thinks and feels, and the reader is receptive to those pieces of information. In a movie, the intervention of a narrator so regularly might confuse the viewer or be superfluous. What is more, it is not because there is no narrator in the series that there is no narration. As Schmidt explains:

[...] aspects of the *mise en scène* are also part of the act of narration. Camera parameters as well as parameters of the montage mediate the narrative events and the *mise en scène*. Thus shot composition, lighting and set design can contribute significantly to audiovisual narration. The same holds true for all elements of sound. (paragraph 22)

All in all, some aspects of the narration in the books have been respected in the series, such as the limitation of time and space: there is no scene in the series where Cromwell is not. Also, he is still the centre of the attention, the story is all about him, his life and his evolution at court. Furthermore, the producers of the series have also employed several strategies to allow the audience to have a glimpse at Cromwell's thoughts, such as the camera following his eyes, making Cromwell say out loud things he just thought in the book, or creating scenes showing what is happening in his imagination.

Chapter 3: Cromwell as a Self-Fashioned Man of the Renaissance

As Nietzsche said, “everything bears witness to what we are, our friendships and enemies, our glance and the clasp of our hand, our memory and that which we do not remember, our books and our handwriting” (cited in Preston 13). This chapter will show that this is particularly true for Cromwell. It will mainly be based on the book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* written by Stephen Greenblatt in 1980. In this book, Greenblatt analyses the works and lives of More, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spencer, Marlowe and Shakespeare, and claims that these authors “fashioned” their lives and identities.

When talking about self-fashioning, about the possibility that people have to shape themselves and their lives, Greenblatt says that he is aware that “there are always selves – a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, a structure of bounded desires – and always some elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity” (1). However, he believes that the use of self-fashioning in the sixteenth century was particular: “family, state, and religious institutions impose[d] a more rigid and far-reaching discipline upon their middle-class and aristocratic subjects” than before, so there was less autonomy in self-fashioning (*ibid.*).

Yet, this period also knew changes in “the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities” (*ibid.*), which explains why self-fashioning was still possible even with that loss of autonomy. Greenblatt describes the complexity of this change as follows:

This change is difficult to characterize in our usual ways because it is not only complex but resolutely dialectical. If we say that there is a new stress on the executive power of the will, we must say that there is the most sustained and relentless assault upon the will; if we say that there is a new social mobility, we must say that there is a new assertion of power by both family and state to determine all movement within society; if we say that there is a heightened awareness of the existence of alternative modes of social, theological, and psychological organization, we must say that there is a new dedication to the imposition of control upon those modes and ultimately to the destruction of alternatives. (1-2)

This awareness that people were able to construct their identity “as a manipulable, artful process” (2) was already widespread among the elite. However, according to the more authoritative forms of Christianity, a man could not fashion himself, and the influence of

religion was undeniably strong at this period. As St Augustine said: “Hands off yourself. Try to build up yourself, and you build a ruin” (cited in Greenblatt 2).

As Greenblatt further explains, the term ‘fashion’ was already used before the sixteenth century, with the meaning of “action or process of making, for particular features or appearance, for a distinct style or pattern” (*ibid.*), but it is at that time that it acquired the meaning of “the forming of a self” (*ibid.*). For the author, “fashioning may suggest the achievement of a less tangible shape: a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving” (*ibid.*). The model that people tried to resemble thanks to self-fashioning was Jesus, which, as the author explains, can lead to considerable anxiety.

Even if people are able to fashion their identity, there are always other forces that have an influence on it. According to Geertz, “[t]here is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture” (cited in Greenblatt 3). Here, culture is understood as “a set of control mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions... – for the governing of behaviour” (*ibid.*).

As Greenblatt states, self-fashioning “invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one’s identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one’s control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (3). This chapter will endeavour to demonstrate that Cromwell shaped his own identity, but that it was also shaped by forces outside his control. Chapter 4 will also show how Cromwell managed to shape events and to fashion the people around him.

1. Cromwell’s Evolution

Cromwell represents the social and economic mobility of his time, he fashioned himself and managed to evolve with the world he lived in, in order to elevate himself to the position of right-hand man of the king, the most important post that existed in the realm.

As Mantel narrates in her two books, Cromwell is the son of a blacksmith, Walter Cromwell, who beat him when he was a child and does not even know his son’s date of birth. As a young child, Cromwell works in the kitchen of his uncle and helps his father shoeing horses before fleeing his home because of his father’s abuse. On his way, he helps people charge their cart, and they let him ride in in exchange. He learns the three-card trick and earns a bit of money thanks to it. He then meets Lowlanders, three wool merchants who have trouble with a port officer about their documents and he helps them by bribing the officer. In exchange, the merchants take him with them on their boat to their home, where he is promised to always have

a bed and food when he visits, but Cromwell is determined to continue his journey, find a war and become a soldier. That is what he does, and he fights in Italy with the French. When he manages to flee the front, he “[gets] into cloth” as he says to Norfolk (*WH* 164) and the trading of silk. He also works in Italy, in the counting houses of the Portinari and Frescobaldi, and lives and works in Antwerp. When he comes back in England, he works for Cardinal Wolsey, until the fall and death of the latter. Cromwell then comes in the service of the king, where he acquires more and more power, as well as many titles, among which Master of the King's Jewel House, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Master of the Rolls and Principal Secretary. During all these years, Cromwell evolves and learns many new and very diverse skills. In Mantel's fictional account of this episode in his life, Cromwell is described as follows:

His speech is low and rapid, his manner assured; he is at home in courtroom or waterfront, bishop's palace or inn yard. He can draft a contract, train a falcon, draw a map, stop a street fight, furnish a house and fix a jury. He will quote you a nice point in the old authors, from Plato to Plautus and back again. He knows new poetry, and can say it in Italian. He works all hours, first up and last to bed. He makes money and spends it. He will take a bet on anything. (*WH* 31)

This extract shows how hard-working Cromwell is, and how varied his talents are. With his many travels, jobs and adventures, he has been able to learn many things and to develop multiple talents. He has shaped himself into a man of many abilities, as recommended by the humanists, and as a “master of practical solutions” (*WH* 85).

2. Greenblatt's Criteria Applied to Cromwell

In his book *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, Greenblatt compiled a list of “governing conditions common to most instances of self-fashioning” (8-9). In this point, each one of Greenblatt's conditions will be analysed in relation with Cromwell's case.

2.1. The Importance of a Pedigree

Greenblatt's first criterion is that a self-fashioned man does “not inherit a title, an ancient family tradition or hierarchical status that might have rooted personal identity in the identity of a clan or caste”. As explained, Cromwell's father was a blacksmith and did not come from a rich family, which was the main criterion at this time to be granted some power. The distinction between the social classes was still strong, even if mobility was a bit more possible than before. In a conversation, Henry tries to know where Thomas Cromwell comes from, as many people do since his past is obscure and nearly completely unknown to everybody, even to Cromwell's family:

‘My lord Suffolk asks me, where does the fellow spring from? I tell him there are Cromwells in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, landed people, or once they were. I suppose you are from some unfortunate branch of that family?’

‘No.’

‘You may not know your own forebears. I shall ask the heralds to look into it.’

‘Your majesty is kind. But they will have scant success.’

The king is exasperated. He is failing to take advantage of what is on offer: a pedigree, however meagre. (*WH* 218)

Most of the time, people are disconcerted when they learn that Cromwell rose to so much power without a pedigree. Here, the king even tries to invent him some, in order to legitimate his position. The creation of a pedigree is not something uncommon, as the following extract shows:

[...] Sailors’, ‘he explained, don’t like anything new.’

‘Nor does anyone else,’ he’d said. ‘Not as far as I can see.’

There cannot be new things in England. There can be old things freshly presented, or new things that pretend to be old. To be trusted, new men must forge themselves an ancient pedigree, like Walter’s, or enter into the service of ancient families. Don’t try to go it alone, or they’ll think you’re pirates. (*WH* 118)

People are also frequently irritated by the fact that a blacksmith’s son has so much power. Norfolk once tells Cromwell: “Damn it all, Cromwell, why are you such a... *person*? It isn’t as if you could afford to be” (*WH* 163). In his eyes, as well as in other people’s eyes, Cromwell “remains a nobody” (*BB* 169) because, unlike Wolsey, who also was a lowborn since he was a butcher’s son, he does not have an office that dignifies him:

He knows Brandon’s words will go round in his head when that head touches the pillow. ‘When it comes to the affairs of nations you cannot deal, you are not fit to talk to princes.’ [...] Besides, Brandon’s right. A duke can represent his master at the court of a foreign king. Or a cardinal; even if he is lowborn like Wolsey, his office in the church dignifies him. A bishop like Gardiner; he may be of dubious provenance, but by his office he is Stephen Winchester, incumbent of England’s richest see. But Cremuel remains a nobody. The king gives him titles that no one abroad understands, and jobs that no one at home can do. He multiplies offices, duties pile on him: plain Master Cromwell goes out at morning, plain Master Cromwell goes in a night [...] It doesn’t matter if the French don’t comprehend. Let them judge by results. (*BB* 168-169)

However, this lack of recognition does not prevent Cromwell from becoming more and more powerful and rich. Katherine of Aragon acknowledged Cromwell’s success without a pedigree by saying: “The blacksmith makes his own tools” (*WH* 291).

Moreover, it appears clearly that Cromwell is aware that the world is changing and that he is ready to evolve with it: “[C]hivalry’s day is over. One day soon moss will grow in the tilt

yard. The days of the moneylender have arrived, and the days of the swaggering privateer; banker sits down with banker, and kings are their waiting boys” (*BB* 169). This extract shows that there is a change in the structure of society at Cromwell’s time, a change which he took advantage of and thanks to which he started to scale the social ladder. What is more, people are aware that “[a] world where Anne can be queen is a world where Cromwell can be Cromwell” (*WH* 205). If the world evolves enough to let somebody as Anne Boleyn be queen, the world can let Cromwell be whatever he wants, even without a pedigree.

Besides fashioning himself, Cromwell fashioned his environment and the people around him, as this passage explains:

He, Cromwell, is no longer subject to vagaries of temperament, and he is almost never tired. Obstacles will be removed, tempers will be soothed, knots unknotted. Here at the close of the year 1533, his spirit is sturdy, his will strong, his front imperturbable. The courtiers see that he can shape events, mould them. He can contain the fears of other men, and give them a sense of solidity in a quaking world: this people, this dynasty, this miserable rainy island at the edge of the world. (*WH* 522)

All in all, Cromwell rose from son of a blacksmith to the right hand of the king by taking advantage of the fact that times were changing and fashioned himself, but kept on refusing any pedigree, even if people without one were distrusted.

2.2. The Submission to an Authority and the Destruction of an “Alien”

For Stephen Greenblatt, “self-fashioning [...] involves submission to an absolute power or authority situated at least partially outside the self – God, a sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration”. Even if it might be hard to imagine Cromwell in a position of submission to anything, since he so easily changes his stance, one might consider that the authority Cromwell is submitted to is the legal court. Law is Cromwell’s main source of power, and the tool he uses the most in order to shape England, often by convincing Henry to agree to the enforcement of a law.

Moreover, as Greenblatt explains, “self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile. This threatening Other – heretic, savage, witch, adulteress, traitor, Antichrist – must be discovered or invented in order to be attacked and destroyed”. Even though it is one of the most important institutions of his time, Cromwell does not submit to the Roman Catholic Church, it is his “threatening Other”. Cromwell is a believer, God remains the supreme authority for him, but he does not support the same vision of religion as most people around him support, mainly because he does not like the behaviour of monks

and priests. Cromwell is a Protestant, which means that religion is an important aspect of his being, without being all-inclusive like it is for traditionalist Roman Catholics. Consequently, Cromwell does not shape his life around religion only, there can be other factors such as mathematics and logic.

Moreover, Cromwell is a rationalist, which means that he follows his reason and does not let his emotions or beliefs take control. In philosophy, rationalism is an approach to knowledge which assumes that knowledge can be acquired thanks to reason rather than experience⁶. This concept appeared at the end of the Renaissance and was supported by Descartes and Spinoza, among others⁷. Today, rationalism is defined as “the practice or principle of basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than on religious belief or emotional response”⁸. It is this second definition of the concept that will be used here. In 2009, Christopher Tayler wrote about Hilary Mantel: “A historian might wonder about the extent to which she makes Cromwell a modern rationalist in Renaissance dress” (*The Guardian*). Moreover, Atwood (*The Guardian* 2012) described Cromwell’s mind as “deep, dark, labyrinthine, but strangely objective”. A sentence from *Wolf Hall* proves Cromwell’s preference for rational over emotional responses: “[...] he feels an irrational dislike taking root, and he tries to dismiss it, because he prefers his dislikes rational” (60).

As Tayler underlines, Cromwell is “disgusted by the waste and superstition he encounters, and takes a materialist view of relics and indulgences” (*The Guardian* 2009). Cromwell does not believe in prophecies, portents, omens and other signs announcing good or bad events, unlike most people living at his era. He also argues that what people eat during the mass is just a piece of bread and not the body of the Christ, and that what they drink is only wine and not the blood the Christ. The common people believe in a punishing God who spreads diseases and decides on the quality of the harvest, but for Cromwell, there is a rational reason, and religion is not the answer to every problem: “It’s not the hand of God kills our children. It’s disease and hunger and war, rat-bites and bad air and the miasma from plague pits; it’s bad harvest like the harvest this year and last year; it’s careless nurses” (*WH* 82).

What is more, Cromwell does not like the fact that the priests and monks take advantage of people’s beliefs to grow rich:

⁶ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rationalism> (21.11.17)

⁷ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rationalism> (29.04.18)

⁸ <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rationalism> (21.11.17)

If you ask me about the monks, I speak from experience, not prejudice, and though I have no doubt that some foundations are well governed, my experience has been of waste and corruption. May I suggest to Your Majesty that, if you wish to see a parade of the seven deadly sins, you do not organise a masque at court but call without notice at a monastery? I have seen monks who live like great lords, on the offerings of poor people who would rather buy a blessing than buy bread, and that is not Christian conduct. (*WH* 219)

Furthermore Cromwell criticises the fact that nothing good comes out of monasteries, monks are supposed to teach children but they do not. He also blames them for inventing their own version of history:

Nor do I take the monasteries to be the repositories of learning some believe they are. Was Grocyn a monk, or Colet, or Linacre, or any of our great scholars? They were university men. The monks take in children and use them as servants, they don't even teach them dog Latin. I don't grudge them some bodily comforts. It cannot always be Lent. What I cannot stomach is hypocrisy, fraud, idleness – their worn-out relics, their threadbare worship, and their lack of invention. When did anything good last come from a monastery? They do not invent, they only repeat, and what they repeat is corrupt. For hundreds of years the monks have held the pen, and what they have written is what we take to be our history, but I do not believe it really is. I believe they have suppressed the history they don't like, and written one that is favourable to Rome. (*ibid.*)

Not only does Cromwell want to give less power to the monks, but he also wants to give less power to the priests and consequently more power to the people. Cromwell is a friend of Tyndale, who translated the Bible from Latin into English, the vernacular language. Like his friend, Cromwell thinks that the ideal would be “a single country, single coinage, just one method of weighing and measuring, and above all one language that everybody owns” (*BB* 83). With a Bible in English, people would have direct access to the scriptures and would not need the biased intermediary of priests.

Moreover, according to another criterion established by Greenblatt, the “alien”, is “perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic (the absence of order) or that which is false or negative (the demonic parody of order)”. As explained above, the “alien” in Cromwell’s eyes is the church, and the authority is law. Law is supposed to be based on rationalism, on reason rather than emotions, since it strives to be objective. One can then easily understand that, for people who work for the law, the influence of religion as it is promoted in England during Henry’s reign is seen as negative. Religion even creates, as Greenblatt writes, a “demonic parody of order”. People who go to church believe that what they experience is in accordance with what is written in the Bible, while they are actually taken advantage of by the members of the clergy, who use the scriptures to their own purposes, since

they are written in Latin, a language that the common people do not understand due to their lack of education in this matter.

Furthermore, Greenblatt states that “one man’s authority is another man’s alien” (Greenblatt 9). One can easily imagine that people who enact laws are rationalists working for the good of the country rather than for the good of the Church. Both commitments are difficult to combine, and Thomas More, another self-fashioned lawyer, is a good illustration of that duality.

As explained above, Thomas Cromwell has a different view on religion than many people in the kingdom of Henry VIII: “Show me where it says, in the Bible, ‘Purgatory’. Show me where it says relics, monks, nuns. Show me where it says ‘Pope’” (WH 39). This kind of interrogation haunts him a major part of his adult life:

These are days of brutal truth from Tyndale. Saints are not your friends and they will not protect you. They cannot help you to salvation. You cannot engage them to your service with prayers and candles, as you might hire a man for the harvest. Christ’s sacrifice was done on Calvary; it is not done in the Mass. Priests cannot help you to Heaven; you need no priest to stand between you and your God. No merits of yours can save you; only the merits of the living Christ. (WH 299)

By contrast, Thomas More believes in purgatory, relics, monks, nuns, and in the power of the pope in Rome. He even wears a hair shirt in order to make himself suffer. In reaction against Luther’s writings, the king has written a book entitled *Assertio septem sacramentorum* (1521) with the help of More, which allowed Henry to be given the title “Defender of the Faith” by the pope.

When Thomas Cromwell presented him with the bill that would make Henry the Supreme Head of the Church of England, More refused to sign it, which eventually cost him his life. He refused to say why he would not sign it, but Cromwell knows: “We know his reasons. All Europe knows them. He is against the divorce. He does not believe the king can be head of the church. But will he say that? Not he. I know him” (WH 563). More’s refusal thus reveals that his loyalty to the church and to the pope is greater than his love for the law. For More, the origin of the Henry’s power is divine, he is a king because God gave him his power. For Cromwell, it is the parliament and the people that are the source of Henry’s power: “Where does the prince get this power, and his power to enforce the law? He gets it through a legislative body, which acts on behalf of the citizens. It is from the will of the people, expressed in Parliament, that a king derives his kingship” (WH 532).

After More's refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy, it becomes even clearer that this situation is not just a quarrel between Cromwell and More, but that it is a dispute between two authorities: king against pope, parliament against church, England against Rome:

I follow my conscience, More said, you must follow yours. My conscience satisfies me – and now I will speech plainly – that your statute is faulty (and Norfolk roars at him) and that your authority baseless [...] My conscience holds with the majority, which makes me know it does not speak false. 'Against Henry's kingdom, I have all the kingdoms of Christendom. Against each one of your bishops, I have a hundred saints. Against your one parliament, I have all the general councils of the church, stretching back for a thousand years. (WH 645)

As explained in Greenblatt's sixth criterion, "when one authority or alien is destroyed, another takes its place". The role of the Oath of Supremacy was to annihilate Rome's power in England, which would from that moment on follow the decisions of the king in matters of religion rather than the decisions of a pope living in another country. The authority of the king thus replaced the authority of the pope in England.

As developed above, Cromwell and More defend different authorities and one man's authority is the other man's "alien". However, Greenblatt claims that "there is always more than one authority and more than one alien in existence at a given time", which means that there are other "aliens" that More and Cromwell try to fight and other authorities whose values are close to their hearts.

Besides working on the annulment of the king's first marriage, Cromwell also works for peace. As Atwood explains in her article, peace is for Mantel "one of the more praiseworthy motives for all the bloodletting that Cromwell engineers" (*The Guardian* 2012). What is more, he also strives for justice and education, which is noticeable when looking at his household. Even if, at the time, girls were not educated, Cromwell's daughters were literate and learned Latin. One of them even asked to learn Greek. Moreover, Cromwell also welcomes people in his house in order to give them an education and a roof over their heads. He explains his love for justice and education to More as follows:

The spectacles of pain and disgrace I see around me, the ignorance, the unthinking vice, the poverty and the lack of hope [...] Last week the people were rioting in York. Why would they not, with wheat so scarce, and twice the price of last year? I must stir up the justices to make examples, I suppose, otherwise of whole of the north will be out with billhooks and pikes, and who will they slaughter but each other? (WH 635)

Besides his silent opposition to the new position of Henry VIII as Supreme Head of the Church of England, there are also other things that More fights against. He is firmly opposed

to the translation of the Bible made by Tyndale. He also considers it as his duty to get involved in everything that concerns heretics, as well as sedition, as he explains to Cromwell:

And you'll say to me, well, it's not work for a lawyer, running after false translations. But I hope to get the means to proceed against the brothers for sedition, do you see? [...] If there is a crime against the state, our treaties come into play, and I can have them extradited. To answer for themselves in a straiter jurisdiction. (*WH* 121)

What is more, Cromwell chooses not to torture his enemies, at least not physically, whereas More has no problem with it:

More says it does not matter if you lie to heretics, or trick them into a confession. They have no right to silence, even if they know speech will incriminate them; if they will not speak, then break their fingers, burn them with irons, hand them up by their wrists. It is legitimate, and indeed More goes further; it is blessed. (*WH* 361)

In his eighth criterion, Greenblatt adds that “if both the authority and the alien are located outside the self, they are at the same time experienced as inward necessities, so that both submission and destruction are always already internalised”. The authorities Cromwell fights for, the parliament and the king, are obviously not inside him. Moreover, it seems evident that Cromwell is not part of the group he fights against, so the “alien” is outside the self as well. Naturally, Cromwell tries to fight for his authority, submits to it, and he also fights against the “alien” at the same time, trying to destroy the antagonist force.

2.3. Self-Fashioning Is In Language

Greenblatt's penultimate criterion states that self-fashioning is “always, though not exclusively, in language”. It is partly thanks to language that Cromwell fashions himself. During his many years of travel, from the moment he leaves Putney until the moment when he comes back to England, Cromwell practices many professions in many countries and consequently learns several languages. One could thus consider that languages help him fashion himself. In Italy, Cromwell works at Frescobaldi's banking house. He first works in the kitchen, before proving himself and being accepted as a banker. In a new country, he learns a new job, but also develops new parts of his personality. When he arrives at Frescobaldi's house, he tells a steward: “Tell me what you want done. I can do it” (*BB* 77) and notices that he is already boasting like an Italian. Later in his life, this ability turns out to be useful. One of the first times he meets Cromwell, Henry discovers that this man was not only a soldier, but that he has also trained in banks in Florence and Venice. When Henry asks him if there is anything else that he can do, Cromwell answers: “What would Your Majesty like me to be?” (*WH* 183), once again boasting.

Besides fashioning himself thanks to the languages that he learned while travelling, Cromwell also fashions himself thanks to what he expresses thanks to language, or chooses not to express. As explained in the following chapter, Cromwell created a myth around himself by never talking about his past. This way, people do not really know him and fear him because they do not know what he is capable of. He only tells them what he wants them to know, and takes advantage of every belief they have about him.

2.4. The Dangers of Self-Fashioning

As Greenblatt points out, “the power generated to attack the alien in the name of the authority is produced in excess and threatens the authority it sets out to defend. Hence self-fashioning always involves some experience of threat, some effacement and undermining, some loss of self”.

Wolf Hall and *Bring Up the Bodies* show how Cromwell uses his knowledge and talents, among which his persuasiveness, to serve Henry VIII and the parliament, two sources of power that are linked since, as explained above, Henry “derives his kingship from the will of the people, expressed in Parliament” (*WH* 532). However, we know from history that Cromwell’s talents ended up giving him too much power, which displeased Henry who beheaded him in 1540, accusing him of many indictments, one of them being that Cromwell acted for personal gain. In other words, the power that Cromwell generated to fight his enemies and the king’s opponents was in excess and finally threatened the authority of the king he first wanted to defend.

3. Fashioning Also Happens Thanks to Other People

As the criteria established by Greenblatt show, Thomas Cromwell fashioned himself. However, one could argue that other people participated in this task. Wolsey and Henry VIII are of course the first persons that come to mind when thinking about the people that helped Cromwell to climb the social ladder: Wolsey because he enabled Cromwell to meet the king, Henry because he granted him many titles and enabled him to accumulate a lot of money and power. Henry even tells Cromwell at some point: “What you are, I make you. I alone. Everything you are, everything you have, will come from me” (*WH* 360).

However, one could consider that Anne Boleyn also helped fashion Thomas Cromwell since she was the one who convinced the king to give Cromwell his first work at court in the Jewel House. As Lady Carey tells Cromwell: “She [Anne Boleyn] made Tom Wyatt a poet. She

made Harry Percy a madman. I'm sure she has some ideas about what to make you" (*WH* 346). Moreover, Anne Boleyn is well aware of that fact, and she does not miss an opportunity to threaten Cromwell by telling him that "[t]hose who are made can be unmade (*BB* 133) when she feels threatened by him. She even tells him that she created him, to which her uncle, Lord Norfolk, retorts that Cromwell also created her, since he is the one who made the annulment of Henry's first marriage possible and allowed her to become queen.

4. Cromwell's Multiple Identities

Cromwell did not construct only one identity for himself, but several. As already explained, Cromwell told the steward at Frescobaldi's house and king that he could be what they wanted him to be, he is flexible. Actually, he is able to adapt himself to his environment and to the person he is talking to.

Cromwell has the ability to evolve with time. With every year passing, he becomes a new man. When he thinks back to the feelings he might have had about Jane Seymour, who will become the king's wife, Cromwell thinks that "[h]e is not the same man he was last year, and he doesn't acknowledge that man's feelings; he is starting afresh, always new thoughts, new feelings" (*BB* 34).

Moreover, he is able to gather all those personalities he constructed in the past, and to choose who he is on a particular day: "He Thomas, also Tomos, Tommaso and Thomaes Cromwell, withdraws his past selves into his present body and edges back to where he was before. His single shadow slides against the wall, a visitor not sure of his welcome. Which of these Thomases saw the blow coming?" (*WH* 71). This passage shows the plurality of his personality: there is not only one Thomas Cromwell, each one of his experiences and jobs allows him to create a new Cromwell. After the death of his daughters and his wife, Cromwell feels lost without them and also needs to choose an identity: "There were days [...] when he'd woken in the morning and had to decide, before he would speak to anybody, who he was and why" (*WH* 359). Cromwell has so many facets that he sometimes does not know which one to choose.

5. Masks at Court

As Greenblatt explains in his chapter about Wyatt, “the old feudal models gradually crumbled and fell into ruins” (Greenblatt 162), and “men created new models, precisely as a way of containing and channelling the energies which had been released” (*ibid.*). The transition from feudalism to despotism, as he states,

fostered a radical change in consciousness: the princes and condottieri, and their secretaries, ministers, poets, and followers, were cut off from established forms of identity and forced by their relation to power to fashion a new sense of themselves and their world: the self and the state as works of art. (*ibid.*)

The main tool used to create this mask, to fashion oneself in an artistic way, is rhetoric, which most gentlemen were familiar with thanks to their humanist education. Rhetoric “encourage[ed] men to think of all forms of human discourse as argument” (*ibid.*) and “offered men the power to shape their worlds, calculate their probabilities, and master the contingent, and it implied that human character itself would be similarly fashioned, with an eye to audience and effect” (*ibid.*). Greenblatt’s comments on Wyatt also apply to Cromwell. As explained in the following chapter, Thomas Cromwell masters rhetoric so well that he is able to use it in order to influence people so that they do and say what he wants them to. The following extract shows how Cromwell has learned to speak to the people in an audience and to control his voice and manners to influence them:

He has his papers, and if it comes to it, he can lay them on the table and make his case without them; he has his trained memory, he has his accustomed self-possession, his courtroom voice that places no strain on his throat, his urbanity of manner that places no strain on his emotions; and if George thinks he will falter, reading out the details of caresses administered and received, then George does not know the place he comes from: the times, the manners, that have formed Master Secretary. (*BB* 446-447)

As explained, Cromwell’s contemporaries created a new identity, the self as a work of art, which is actually a mask that they put on when going to the court. At this time, masks were also used during feasts where people dressed up as virtues. However, as pointed out by Mary Boleyn: “They have no virtues, it’s all show” (*WH* 139). The behaviour at court was mainly based on appearances, people tried to be somebody else, more elegant, more sophisticated, and full of grace thanks to self-fashioning, but most of them just hid their true self behind a mask. When talking to Anne Boleyn, Thomas Cromwell also notices that she wears a mask, and while people’s expressions can sometimes betray them, Cromwell “knows his face says nothing, he can rely on his face for that” (*BB* 400).

The consequence of this trend to fashion oneself in an artistic way is that people at court were nearly constantly on stage. They were “a group of men and women alienated from the customary roles and revolving uneasily around a centre of power, a constant struggle for recognition and attention, and a virtually fetishistic emphasis upon manner” (Greenblatt 162). The behaviour they were supposed to adopt was described in manuals such as Castiglione’s *Book of the Courtier* and *The court of Civil Courtesy*, “a handbook designed to help its reader to thread his way successfully through the labyrinth of social distinctions, to win the game of rank”, as Greenblatt explains (*ibid.*).

Even if he does not try to win the game of rank and refuses to create himself a pedigree, Thomas Cromwell’s multiple faces are perceptible at court. With his household and his family, Cromwell is protective, and people from the outside can tell that they love him. At court, Cromwell is mainly perceived as “calculating and ruthless” (Atwood 2012), he wears a mask: “Erasmus says that you must do this each morning before you leave your house: ‘put on a mask, as it were’” (*WH* 320).

This ability to switch between his different identities and to constantly reinvent himself also makes it possible for Cromwell to adapt himself to his environment, and to be able to change his plans quickly when his master, the king, happens to change his mind. When Henry decided that he wanted his marriage with Katherine to be annulled in order to be able to marry Anne Boleyn, Cromwell was his man. When the monarch got tired of Anne and decided he wanted to marry Jane Seymour instead, Cromwell found charges against her. He is able to change his goal as easily as his identity.

6. Cromwell’s Use of Art

As Greenblatt highlights, people fashioned themselves as works of art. One might argue that Cromwell did not see himself as a work of art in the aesthetic sense of the term, but he mentions several times the fact that his daughters were pretty and did not inherit his genes. He is not unaware of the Renaissance ideal of the beauty of a body. Moreover, during his early life, when he lived in Italy, Cromwell discovered that he was fond of art, in particular of poetry and frescoes. Cromwell fashioned himself very minutely, partially thanks to art, and often also used art for his own purposes.

On several occasions, Cromwell enacts a scene as if he were in a play in order to explain a situation or a conversation he had with somebody else. He plays the role of somebody and his interlocutor steps into somebody else’s shoes as well. Art and the literary imagination are often

referred to in *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*. Henry wrote a book about his own life, Cromwell thinks he could write one about the king too, and More tells Cromwell that he should write a play, to which he answers: “Perhaps I shall” (*WH* 592).

Art also plays a major role in the dénouement of the story. In *Bring Up the Bodies*, when Cromwell questions Anne’s alleged lovers, he asks Harry Norris to “recall an entertainment, a certain interlude played at court. It was a play in which the late cardinal was set upon by demons and carried down to Hell” (391). Even if Norris claims that it was only a play and entertainment, he knows that Cromwell will use his participation in the play as an argument against him, although in a covert manner: Cromwell wants to avenge Wolsey, whom he deeply loved, but he cannot openly condemn somebody because of a play. However, Cromwell “needs guilty men. So he has found men who are guilty. Though perhaps not guilty as charged” (*BB* 392). This situation perfectly illustrates how Cromwell, born as the son of a blacksmith and brewer, fashioned himself as somebody able to appreciate art and to use it for his own purposes.

Moreover, Cromwell also uses the literary imagination and appropriates art to exercise his memory, which is one of his most impressive features, next to his physical appearance. He knows the entire New Testament in Latin by heart and is able to memorise a large quantity of information. Several times in *Wolf Hall*, Cromwell mentions a method of remembering, as in the following conversation:

Cavendish looks sly. ‘No one exceeds your own powers of memory,’ he says. ‘My lord cardinal asks for an accounting of something or other, and you have all the figures at your fingertips.’
‘Perhaps I invent them.’
‘Oh, I don’t think so.’ Cavendish is shocked. ‘You couldn’t do that for long.’
‘It is a method of remembering. I learned it in Italy.’
‘There are people, in this household and elsewhere, who would give much to know the whole of what you learned in Italy.’ (*WH* 78-79)

This technique is further explained as follows:

In Italy he learned a memory system and furnished it with pictures. Some are drawn from wood and field, from hedgerow and copses: shy hiding animals, eyes bright in the undergrowth. Some are foxes and deer, some are griffins, dragons. Some are men and women: nuns, warriors, doctors of the church. In their hands he puts unlikely objects, St Ursula a crossbow, St Jerome a scythe, while Plato bears a soup ladle and Achilles a dozen damsons in a wooden bowl. It is no use hoping to remember with the help of common objects, familiar faces. One needs startling juxtapositions, images that are more or less peculiar, ridiculous, even indecent. When you have made the images, you place them about the world in locations you choose, each one with its parcel of words, of figures, which they will yield you on demand. At Greenwich, a shaven cat may peep at you from behind a cupboard; at the palace of Westminster, a snake may leer down from a beam and hiss your name.

Some of these images are flat, and you can walk on them. Some are clothed in skin and walk around in a room, but perhaps they are men with their heads on backwards, or with tufted tails like the leopards in coats of arms. Some scowl at you like Norfolk, or gape at you, like my lord Suffolk, with bewilderment. Some speak, some quack. He keeps them, in strict order, in the gallery of his mind's eyes. (WH 216)

This method is actually well-known under the name of “method of loci” or “method of the memory palace”. It consists of memorizing a place that the orator knows well, often a house or a temple, and divide it into different rooms. Images are associated to those rooms where the orator mentally walks into in a certain order. The method of loci is also illustrated in the following extract:

The king has given him lodgings within the old palace at Westminster, for when he works too late to get home. This being so, he has to walk mentally through his rooms at Austin Friars, picking up his memory images from where he has left them on windowsills and under stools and in the woollen petals of the flowers strewn in the tapestry at Anselma's feet. (WH 432)

This technique allows the orator to remember “specific facts and the order of his arguments” (Mortensen 52). The story of the supposed inventor of this method, Simonides of Ceos, is also mentioned in Mantel's book, among the numerous anecdotes that the readers get to read. The legend has it that Simonides was invited to dine at the house of a rich man named Scopas, where he performed a song in honour of his host, in which he also praised Castor and Pollux. Offended not to be the only one praised by Simonides, Scopas declared that he would only pay Simonides half the price agreed for the poem and that Castor and Pollux could pay him the other half. Later on, a messenger came to Simonides and told him that two people were waiting for him outside. When he was outside, searching for them, the roof of the house collapsed, killing everybody inside. The relatives of the guests wanted to bury their beloved ones, but the corpses were so damaged that they did not manage to recognise anybody. Because of his extraordinary memory, Simonides was able to remember where everybody was seated, and so to identify the bodies. According to the legend, the two men that sent a messenger to call Simonides outside were Castor and Pollux, the twin brothers and demigods, who saved his life to reward him after he praised them.

Giulio Camillo's Theatre of Memory is also mentioned several times in Mantel's work. Camillo's ambition was to create a theatre where all the existing knowledge in the world could be reunited. Only scholars, a privileged elite, could have access to this theatre (Radcliff-Umstead 48). In *Wolf Hall*, Christophe, one of the members of Cromwell's household, explains that there is a man in Paris who has built a soul. He goes on:

It is a building but it is alive. The whole of it is lined with little shelves. On these shelves, you find certain parchments, fragments of writing, they are in the nature of keys, which lead to a box which contains a key which contains another key, but these keys are not made of metal, or these enfolded boxes of wood.

Then what, frog-boy? someone says.

They are made of spirit. They are what we shall have left, if all the books are burned. They will enable us to remember not only the past, but the future, and to see all the forms and customs that will one day inhabit the earth. (614-615)

In his work “Guilio Camillo's Emblems of Memory”, Douglas Radcliff-Umstead describes Camillo’s Theatre of Memory⁹. He explains that, for his project, Camillo used Christian, Neo-platonic, Hermetic and Kabbalistic sources, and that Camillo first thought about using the metaphor of the human body “as a microcosm of the universe in order to illustrate his memory system” (50), but that he finally chose to represent the world as a theatre. In *Wolf Hall*, Camillo’s Theatre of Memory is described as a “wooden box” (471), but also as “a theatre in which you yourself are the play” (471-472):

‘Erasmus has written to us about it,’ Henry says, over his shoulder. ‘He is having the cabinetmakers create him little wooden shelves and drawers, one inside another. It is a memory system for the speeches of Cicero.’

‘With your permission, he intends it as more than that. It is a theatre on the ancient Vitruvian plan. But it is not to put on plays. As my lord the bishop says, you as the owner of the theatre are to stand in the centre of it, and look up. Around you, there is arrayed a system of human knowledge. Like a library, but as if – you can imagine a library in which each book contains another book, and a smaller book inside that? Yet it is more than that.’ (WH 472)

Radcliff-Umstead also explains that Camillo’s theatre is based on a Vitruvian scheme and composed of seven tiers, the lower ones designating the more important figures (*ibid.*). The lowest tier consists of seven doors, referring to the seven planets, and each door bearing an image of the deity it refers to: Diana, Mercury, Venus, Apollo, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. All the higher tiers follow that same order and represent the creation of the world. The second tier is the Banquet level. It represents “the first moment, the ocean realm of simple elements” (51). The third tier, inspired by Homer’s *Odyssey*, is the Cave. It refers to “the creation of everything that is mixed and simple except for man” (*ibid.*). The fourth tier, the Gorgons, is about the creation of the human soul. Pasiphae and the Bull are the emblems of the fifth tier, which is about the outer man. The sixth tier is the level of Mercury’s Winged Sandals and concerns human activities that do not require specific skills. Finally, the last tier is also about human activities, but those that require “a high degree of disciplined training” (*ibid.*). As Radcliff-Umstead

⁹ For an illustration of Camillo’s theater, see Appendix 1.

explains, “from the lowest level to the uppermost tier, Camillo's theatre presents a picture of the world from its base in eternity to man's creative pursuits” (52).

As demonstrated here, Cromwell used art for his own purposes, since he used the technique of the Theatre of Memory designed by Guido Camillo and managed to develop his memory to a considerable extent thanks to it.

7. But There Are Also Things He Cannot Fashion

Even if Cromwell managed to shape himself, the people around him, as well as a whole country, there are still things that he has no influence on, the first one being his physical appearance and the way people perceive him. His robust appearance is one of the main factors that allow him to be impressive and proves to be useful when he needs to influence people. However, Cromwell is not able to control his appearance completely, and people say he looks like a murderer, even if he does not try to. When discussing with Thurston, his cook, Cromwell asks him if he thinks he looks like a murderer. Thurston answers: “I see how you would look like a lawyer. Not like a murderer, no. But if you will forgive me, master, you always look like a man who knows how to cut up a carcass” (*WH* 205-206). Even his own son thinks he looks like a murderer. When Cromwell tells him: “I fear Mark was right [...] I once heard him say I looked like a murderer”, his son just answers: “Did not you know?” (*WH* 527).

Another thing that Cromwell cannot shape is the fate of the people he loves. He has no control over sickness and death, although some people think they can understand and predict the working of a disease:

[People] take comfort from a belief that since the infection killed so many last year, it won't be so violent this year, which he does not think is necessarily true, they seem to be endowing this plague with a human or at least bestial intelligence: the wolf comes down on the sheepfold, but not on the nights when the men with dogs are waiting for him. (*WH* 148)

After several years of loyal service, he lost Wolsey. Before that, he lost his sister Kat, her husband Morgan Williams, his own two daughters as well as his wife, Liz: “Voices murmur. Sunlight outside. He feels he could almost sleep, but when he sleeps Liz Wykys comes back, cheerful and brisk, and when he wakes he has to learn the lack of her all over again” (*WH* 106). Not only does he not control the fact that people around him fall sick and die, but he also cannot control it when it happens to him. In 1535, Cromwell falls ill of the “Italian fever” (*WH* 612) but recovers from it. What is more, another proof that Cromwell does not have control over his destiny is the fact that he died in 1540, beheaded on order of the king despite all his pleas, which

did not affect his fate. The event does not literally occur in *Wolf Hall* or in *Bing Up the Bodies*, but the readers of these books inevitably keep this fatal event at the back of their minds.

Chapter 4: Cromwell's Art of Persuasion

Throughout Mantel's two books, Thomas Cromwell is given more and more power by Henry VIII. Moreover, he always manages to reach his goals, getting people to do what he wants them to do and to say what he wants them to say. The power of shaping the actions of one's surroundings is a characteristically Renaissance trait of his character.

This chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of the way Cromwell manages to convince people to act in a certain way or to change their minds. As Alex Mucchielli explains, "every word is an attempt to influence others" (cited in Sutiú 99). The aim of the participants in a communication process is to "change the information and the feelings of the others", which implies that they try to influence their interlocutor's system of representation (101), and this chapter will show that it is exactly what Cromwell does. Moreover, according to Philippe Breton, "we do not try, when we manipulate, to make an argumentation, in other words, in order to change an opinion, we actually try to impose another one" (105), which is also one of Cromwell's strategies.

However, a distinction is necessary between manipulation and persuasion, two techniques that can be used to influence a person or an audience. We speak of manipulation when, in a communication process, the recipient of the discourse is the victim of the enunciator. The victim, unaware of the true aims of their interlocutor (Sutiú 99), is manipulated against their best interest and in the best interest of the manipulator (Van Dijk 360). In the case of persuasion, "the interlocutors are free to believe or act as they please, depending on whether or not they accept the arguments of the persuader" (361), they have a more active role than the victims of manipulation (*ibid.*), it involves their "acceptance and consensus" (Sutiú 106). Moreover, people that are being persuaded can still use their free will, which people that are manipulated cannot do (*ibid.*). Persuasion, unlike manipulation, tries to create a situation that can benefit everyone (Eikenberry). Thanks to the analysis of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, it can clearly be said that Cromwell does not only try to persuade people, he also often manipulates them and tricks his victims into situations that are not in their best interest. However, in some cases, what Cromwell's enemies see as manipulation can be seen by others as a necessity in order to put some order into Tudor's chaotic house.

1. Why Cromwell Needs to Influence

There are several reasons that explain that Cromwell tries to influence many people around him. When he comes back from his many travels, Thomas Cromwell works for Thomas Wolsey, the son of a butcher who became archbishop of York, cardinal and also Lord Chancellor for fourteen years. The reason for Cromwell's loyalty to Wolsey is the affection he has for him. Cromwell loves him and respects him, even if he does not always agree with him and every idea of his. He works for the Cardinal as his lawyer, among others, since he has so many talents to exploit and take advantage of. When Wolsey fails at getting the annulment of Henry's marriage with Katherine of Aragon, the king sends Wolsey away. Henry's new animosity towards the cardinal is mostly due to the influence of Anne Boleyn, Henry's future wife, who does not like him. After Wolsey is stripped of his property, banished from his home at Hampton Court and sent to Yorkshire by Henry, Cromwell tries for a long time to influence the king and to convince him to call the cardinal back and to give him his trust again. After several attempts by Cromwell, the king agrees to grant the cardinal a sum of money to help him improve his living conditions. However, the king never recalls Wolsey from the north and the latter finally dies of illness in 1530.

After the fall of Wolsey, Cromwell finds in the king a new master and serves Henry until his death in 1540. Once again, he does not always agree with his master's decisions but tries his best to please the king. He does not try to fulfil the king's desires just for his pleasure, but also to save his life. During the whole period when he serves the king, he always stays aware of the fact that his life is constantly in danger while working for somebody as powerful as the king. He knows that if he does something that does not please Henry, if he gains too much power without his benediction, or simply if he fails to fulfil one of the monarch's wishes like Wolsey did, he can easily be killed. As Horowitz underlines, "Mantel portrays Cromwell as adept at manipulating Henry VIII", but he is also aware that "[i]t is, after all, the caprice of a ruler – yesterday and today – that determines the rise or fall of a minister" (7). In addition, Cromwell knows that he has many enemies who would be happy with his fall and who would even help the king find additional reasons to kill him.

Besides trying to help his masters and to save his own life, Thomas Cromwell also tries to influence people and to shape events in order to save Thomas More and Thomas Wyatt. Because he refuses to take the Oath of Supremacy and to sign the bill that would make Henry the Supreme Head of the Church of England and allow him to dissolve his marriage to Katherine of Aragon, Thomas More is sentenced to death by the king, who does not easily accept such an

affront. More justifies his refusal by explaining that what is stated in the oath goes against his religious convictions. Moreover, More never believed that Henry's marriage to Katherine was invalid, nor that it needed to be dissolved. On several occasions, Cromwell tries to convince More to take the oath, suggesting different ways to get around the points with which he disagrees, without success.

Also, when several men are accused to have had sexual intercourse with Anne Boleyn, who was queen at that time, Thomas Wyatt is also brought to the tower. Since Cromwell feels some affection for him and promised to the latter's father to protect him, he does his best to avoid Wyatt going to trial and being killed.

2. How Cromwell Influences and Convinces

In this part, key passages from *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* will be analysed in order to describe and understand how Cromwell managed to influence and convince the people around him, which allowed him to hold so much power. As Cromwell's nephew Richard once said, "No, you don't [force anyone to do anything], I agree, it's just that you are practised at persuading, and sometimes it's quite difficult, sir, to distinguish being persuaded by you from being knocked down in the street and stamped on" (*WH* 438).

The list of techniques described below does not pretend to be comprehensive. Furthermore, several techniques might even be combined in one and the same conversation, and even within the same sentence. The extracts used below have been chosen on the basis of their relevance and illustrative quality, but the selection of passages could have been much wider.

2.1. Thanks to His Superior Knowledge

As Cromwell said to Bryan, "used wisely, wisely shared, knowledge may protect you" (*BB* 372). As a matter of fact, Cromwell's knowledge helped him achieve his goals and stay alive in the merciless environment of Henry's court. In the following passage, Cromwell goes to meet Percy, the Earl of Northumberland to convince him to claim that he never pre-contracted a marriage with Anne Boleyn when he was younger. If he had, her marriage to Henry VIII would not be possible.

How can he [Cromwell] explain to him [Percy]? The world is not run from where he thinks. Not from his border fortresses, not even from Whitehall. The world is run from Antwerp, from Florence, from places he has never imagined; from Lisbon, from where the ships with sails of silk drift west and are burned up in the sun. Not from castle walls, but from counting houses,

not by the bugle but by the click of the abacus, not by the grate and click of the mechanism of the gun but by the scrape of the pen on the page of the promissory note that pays for the gun and the gunsmith and the powder and shot. (*WH* 378)

While they are arguing, Cromwell notices that Percy still believes in medieval customs. He believes in the respect of titles, and thinks that only armies can exercise power. However, Cromwell is the perfect illustration that titles mean less than they did before, since he managed to cross the borders that separate social classes and evolved from simple son of blacksmith to the king's secretary. Moreover, as an accountant, Thomas Cromwell knows that the world is changing and that banks now have more power than before and can inflict more damage than armies. Cromwell travelled a lot when he was young and lived in several countries. Thanks to the knowledge acquired at this time of his life and to his mastery of those languages, he knows how other countries work and can still communicate with them to keep his knowledge up to date. Obviously, his knowledge of the outside world gives him advantage over an opponent. It enables him to be superior to Percy, even if he comes from a lower social class. Eventually, he will win this fight and Percy will swear to the king that he never pre-contracted a marriage with Anne Boleyn.

2.2. Thanks to Rhetoric and Kairos: What, How and When

In order to manipulate people, influence them and convince them to act as he wants them to, Cromwell often uses rhetoric, which is “a technique for the reasoned use of language as a means of obtaining adherence based upon a reasoned evaluation undertaken by the audience” (Parker 72). It also refers, more simply, to a kind of “speech or writing intended to be effective and influence people”¹⁰. Even if reason is used, the point that the manipulator tries to convince his victim to agree with him is not based on logic, it cannot be demonstrated thanks to empiricism nor explained thanks to mathematics or science (70). The adhesion of the recipient of manipulation can be guaranteed thanks to trick, force, fraud, appeal to reason or appeal to emotions (73). Furthermore, rhetoric can be used in combination with other means of persuasion to reinforce them. An argument must also be adapted to the person that one tries to convince. It must fit the audience's held ideals, value judgements, faith, cynicism, scepticism, reliance upon authority, dogmatism, mysticism, rational-critical inclinations, superstitions, biases and prejudice (72).

¹⁰ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/fr/dictionnaire/anglais/rhetoric> (03.05.18)

In her books, Mantel endowed Cromwell with exceptional eloquence. After several requests from Cromwell, Henry agreed to grant the cardinal some money. To express his gratitude and because it is what is proper in that kind of situation, Cromwell kneels before the king, and makes “eloquent and extensive” thanks (*WH* 211). Henry is surprised by his eloquence and says: “Dear God, Master Cromwell, you can talk, can’t you?” (*ibid.*). What is more, this conversation is not the only time when people notice that Cromwell has a way with words. Years after he ran away from his home because his father was an alcoholic and beat him, Cromwell goes to see him. When he tells him that he is a lawyer, his father is not surprised and tells him that he had always been a talker. In his household too, his eloquence does not remain unnoticed, and Mercy tells him once: “Thomas, when you’re cold and under a stone, you’ll talk yourself out of your grave” (312). When Cromwell tries to convince More to sign the bill and to recognise Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, More also acknowledges his capacity of persuasion by telling him: “How you can talk. Words, words, just words” (636).

Cromwell does not just have a way with words, he actually uses a technique called *kairos*. It is a rhetorical theory stating that a speaker, besides knowing how to speak to convince an audience, must also know when to speak. What is more, for Isocrates, *kairos* requires “fitness for the occasion, propriety of style, and originality” (Paul 47). This theory was also used by Niccolò Machiavelli, a contemporary of Cromwell. For thinkers such as Protagoras, Pythagoras and Gorgias, one and the same action could be perceived as good or bad, according to the moment it is performed (46). Moreover, one and the same person might be more or less manipulable and easily influenced at different moments, according to the circumstances and to their state of mind (Van Dijk 361). As his interrogation of Mark Smeaton illustrates, Cromwell knows how and when to speak. During this encounter, Cromwell does not just threaten Mark, but chooses the right moments to do so and alternates with moments of sympathy and compassion. By doing so, he takes into account the emotions of the person he tries to influence. When he feels Mark is too scared to talk, he soothes him. When soothing is not efficient anymore, he insists and frightens Mark even more.

However, even if those thinkers refer to a specific moment when it is more appropriate to talk, they do not clearly explain when one is advised to talk and when one should avoid it. Isocrates only tells us that there are “two occasions for speech – when the subject is one which you thoroughly know and when it is one on which you are compelled to speak” (Van Dijk 48). As Cromwell’s knowledge is considerable and extends to many domains, there are many

occasions when he is allowed to speak, in accordance with the theory of *kairos*. In addition, since he serves an impatient king, one could think that Cromwell sometimes does not have any choice but to speak because the king asks him to.

In his books *Discourses* (1531) and *The Prince* (1532), Machiavelli talked about *occasione* and *virtu*, terms that are equivalent to *kairos*. The term *occasione* refers to “the key moment that must be seized by a prince in order to demonstrate his *virtu*” (Paul 59) and that prince must “act according to the needs of the moment, adopting a flexible moral stance, and understanding politics through comparative histories rather than universal principles” (*ibid.*). However, according to Cromwell, *occasione* and *virtu* are sometimes not enough, and *vice* is needed to achieve someone’s aims: “It is not the stars that make us, Dr Butts, it is circumstance and *necessità*, the choices we make under pressure; our virtues make us, but virtues are not enough, we must deploy our vices at times” (WH 494).

Kairos has also been linked to the advising of kings and persons with power. According to Plutarch, one should give frank counsel “when occasion is offered, and the time serveth best to repress excessive pleasure, to restrain unbridled choler, to refrain intollerable pride and insolencie, to stay insatiable avarice, or to stand against any foolish habitude and inconsiderate motion” (Paul 51). Even before being in the service of the king, Cromwell offered the monarch his frank counsel, telling him that he could not afford a war against France at that time, which upset Henry. However, seven years later, when Cromwell comes to court to speak to Henry in favour of Wolsey, he gets the chance to explain and justify his statement. He tells the king that “no ruler in the history of the world has even been able to afford a war” (WH 181). Here, Cromwell makes reference to other leaders, and uses the past to know how to behave today. This technique is also characteristic of *kairos*, according to Isocrates. For him, “the deeds of the past are, indeed, an inheritance common to us all; but the ability to make proper use of them at the appropriate time... is the peculiar gift of the wise” (Paul 56).

The following conversation is of key importance since it is the first real encounter between Cromwell and Henry, the first occasion they have to get to know each other and to form an opinion on their interlocutor. In the following passage, Cromwell insists on the words he used seven years earlier and dares to correct the king, which seems dangerous.

‘Listen to me, master – you said I should not fight because the taxes would break the country. What is the country for, but to support its prince in his enterprise?’

‘I believe I said – saving Your Majesty – we didn’t have the gold to see you through a year’s campaign. All the bullion in the country would be swallowed by the war. I have read there was

a time when people exchanged leather tokens, for want of metal coins. I said we would be back to those days.’ (WH 182)

However, one might argue that he is just following the rules of *kairos* by giving Henry frank council, standing against an immoderate motion when he judges that the moment is right to do it. Even if Master Secretary’s frankness is welcome at the end of the conversation, the reader cannot avoid but fear for Cromwell’s safety while talking so bluntly to the king. However, Cromwell still uses phrases that show his respect towards the king, such as “I believe I said”, not to tell the king too directly that he is wrong, and “saving Your Majesty”. In addition, in order to convince the king that he is right, Cromwell once again refers to the past, demonstrating his extensive knowledge of the world by talking about his readings, showing how erudite he is.

In the following paragraph, it is striking how frankly Cromwell spoke to the king. Cromwell is very direct and speaks the truth, but it must be born in mind that telling the king something that could displease him is always dangerous. Furthermore, the end of this passage shows how unpredictable the king is, he ends up laughing whereas he was shouting a second before. Even in a situation that could be considered dangerous for him, Cromwell tells the king the plain truth, at the risk of causing his discontent for a while.

‘You said I was not to lead my troops. You said if I was taken, the country couldn’t put up the ransom. So what do you want? You want a king who doesn’t fight? You want me to huddle indoors like a sick girl?’

‘That would be ideal, for fiscal purposes.’

The king takes a deep ragged breath. He’s been shouting. Now – and it’s a narrow thing – he decides to laugh. (WH 182)

In the theory of Machiavelli, prudence is “the principal point of judgement” (Paul 61) and consists in “discerning between the qualities of inconvenients, and not taking the bad for the good” (*ibid.*). According to him, only a prudent person can use their virtue at the right moment, the *occasione*, to make their country happy and prosperous. In the passage below, Cromwell advises the king to be reasonable and cautious.

‘You advocate prudence. Prudence is a virtue. But there are other virtues that belong to princes.’

‘Fortitude.’

‘Yes, cost that out.’

‘It doesn’t mean courage in battle.’

‘Do you read me a lesson?’

‘It means fixity of purpose. It means endurance. It means having the strength to live with what constrains you.’

Henry crosses the room. Stamp, stamp, stamp in his riding boots; he is ready for *la chasse*. He turns, rather slowly, to show his majesty to better effect: wide and square and bright. 'We will pursue this. What constraints me?'

'The distance', he says. 'The harbours. The terrain, the people. The winter rains and the mud. When Your Majesty's ancestors fought in France, whole provinces were held by England. From there we could supply, we could provision. Now that we have only Calais, how can we support an army in the interior?' (WH 182-183)

Furthermore, in that same passage, Cromwell dares again to contradict the king and to teach him how he should conquer. Henry is arrogant and his strategy is to shout and to try to look impressive, in particular by paying attention to the way he slowly turns on himself to look more majestic. However, Cromwell's strategy is to stay calm, and not to react to the king's nervousness and state the facts. Furthermore, Cromwell refers once more to the past, using Henry's ancestors as examples to follow, as instructed in the theory of *kairos*.

2.3. By Threatening His Opponents

Two other techniques used by Cromwell to make his opponents change their minds are intimidation and the use of threats. Naturally, he needs to think carefully before threatening someone and he cannot afford to threaten everyone. Thomas Cromwell never dares to threaten the king, because he knows that it would cost him his life. During Cromwell's first encounter with Thomas Percy, the latter is not only a victim of his knowledge, but he also receives threats from the king's secretary:

'But my lord, they need supply, they need provision, they need arms, they need walls and forts in good repair. If you cannot ensure these things you are worse than useless. The king will take your title away, and your land, and your castles, and give them to someone who will do the job you cannot.'

'He will not. He respects all ancient titles. All ancient rights.'

'Then let's say I will.' Let's say I will rip your life apart. Me and my banker friends. (WH 378)

Here, Cromwell clearly threatens Percy to destroy his life if he does not do what he wants him to do and, by extension, what the king wants him to do. In a sense, it is Cromwell's job to convince and threaten people if needed so that the king can obtain what he wants. In the following extract, it is obvious that Cromwell goes from one extreme to the other, first violently threatening his victim, before becoming friendly again and even using the words "my lord" as if he respected Harry Percy:

'If ever you say one more word about Lady Anne's *freedom*' – he pack into one word a volume of disgust – 'then you will answer to me and to the Howards and the Boleyns, and George Rochford will have no tender care of your person, and my lord Wiltshire will humble your pride, and as for the Duke of Norfolk, if he hears the slightest imputation against his niece's honour

he will drag you out of whatever hole you are cowering in and bite your bollocks off. Now,' he says, resuming his former amiability, 'is that clear, my lord?' (*WH* 379)

Another victim of Cromwell's threats is Mark Smeaton, a young man who first played lute for Cardinal Wolsey and later for the queen, Anne Boleyn. When the first doubts about the queen's loyalty to the king start to appear, Thomas Cromwell invites Mark Smeaton to his house in the hope to make him talk and to get the names of the queen's lovers. Smeaton is also suspected of conducting an affair with the king's wife. Cromwell does not like Smeaton because he once heard him talking in Flemish about him and the cardinal. Smeaton called the cardinal 'the old fellow', said that he was too proud and should be beheaded for that. He then predicted that Cromwell would fall with Wolsey:

'Yes, for sure the lawyer will come down with him. I say lawyer, but who is he? Nobody knows. They say he has killed men with his own hands and never told it in confession. But those hard kinds of men, they always weep when they see the hangman.' He is in no doubt that it is his own execution Mark looks forward to. Beyond the wall, the boy runs on: 'So when I am with Lady Anne, she is sure to notice me, and give me presents.' A giggle. 'And look on me with favour. Don't you thing? Who knows where she may turn while she is still refusing the king?' A pause. Then Mark: 'She is no maid. Not she.' (*WH* 168)

In a single conversation with a friend, Smeaton managed to talk about Wolsey's as well as Cromwell's death, express his dislike and contempt about Cromwell and boast about his future relationship with the queen. After hearing this conversation, Cromwell thought that he could not do anything about what he had heard, except bear it in mind. It is what he did and when some of Anne's ladies in waiting advise him to talk to Smeaton, he invites him at his home.

Cromwell first starts the meeting by destabilising his adversary by speaking in Flemish, which astonishes Smeaton because he did not know that Cromwell mastered that language too. Cromwell answers: "I know you did not. Or you would not have used it to be so disrespectful of me" (*BB* 324), which, again, places Cromwell in a position of superiority over his rival, because Smeaton does not remember what he exactly said about Cromwell, but the king's secretary does, thanks to his prodigious memory.

During his encounter with Smeaton, Cromwell tries several techniques to convince the young man to give him the names of the queen's lovers. He first proposes to reward him, which seems to work, as Mark reveals that the queen is unhappy because she is in love with him. Cromwell encourages the lute-player by telling him that he understands the queen's preference for him as he is "a very handsome young man" (*BB* 325). The conversation continues and

Smeaton confesses without being threatened that the other men at court are jealous of him and he cites the names of Weston and Norris. But when Cromwell tells Mark “You have given us two names [...]. Now name them all. And answer Master Richard. How often [did you have sexual intercourse with the queen]?” (327), the young man retracts and refuses to say more. As he sees that flattery and sympathy are no longer enough, Cromwell resorts to threats, telling Mark that he will give the names, and that he will “do it freely, or do it enforced” (*ibid.*). At this remark from Cromwell, Smeaton loses the self-confidence he showed at the beginning of the conversation when he talked about his success with the queen and about his private parts. It is interesting to note that, even if Cromwell chose to destabilise his opponent from the beginning of the conversation in order to take the advantage and a position of domination, he did not directly resort to threats, trying first to be flattering and sympathetic. It is only when those first two techniques did not work anymore that he frightened Mark Smeaton.

Because he is now afraid, Smeaton backs down on his declarations, claims he thinks that the queen is chaste and insists he cannot give the names of the other lovers. However, Cromwell does not accept a defeat and will not let Mark leave his house until he knows the names of the men who go to bed with the queen. He tells Mark: “No one had hurt you, had they? Or coerced you, or tricked you? You spoke freely. Master Richard is my witness” (*BB* 328). Here, we can talk of manipulation, because Cromwell deforms reality. As stated by Sutiú, “to manipulate means nothing else but to build an image of the reality that has only the appearance of being so” (106). Cromwell makes it appear as if he had no bad intentions towards Mark, whereas the reader clearly perceives that Cromwell will not leave Mark alone until he knows what he wants to. Moreover, according to Van Dijk, “manipulators make others believe or do things that are in the best interest of the manipulator, and against the best interests of the manipulated” (360). In this passage, Cromwell tries to manipulate Smeaton so that he will give him the names of the queen’s lovers. One can easily imagine the negative repercussions that Mark’s confessions will have on his life. If it is true that Smeaton has not been hurt, it is clear that he has been tricked and manipulated from the beginning.

When Cromwell says: “It’s chilly, we should have a fire lit” (*BB* 328), Mark panics because he thinks that Cromwell wants to burn him. Now that he is afraid, he perceives everything Cromwell says as a threat, even if it is not clear to the reader if that sentence was really a threat or, as he gets to read, “just an ordinary household request” (*ibid.*). The remark that follows is quite interesting to analyse. A few lines after this observation from Cromwell, one can read “[t]he wood is laid already. Such a long time it takes, to fan the spark. A little,

welcome crackle, and the servant withdraws, wiping his hands on his apron [...]” (*ibid.*). We could compare the preparation of the fire to the process of research and charging of Anne Boleyn’s lovers. When Cromwell found out that Smeaton was the man that could help him in his task, the wood was laid. The process of charging is long, such as the process of fanning the spark of a fire. The upcoming confessions of Mark Smeaton are the crackle that will generate a whole fire, since, thanks to his confession, Cromwell will be able to charge several men and lead them to their death. When the fire is ready and the men dead, Cromwell, Henry’s servant, can withdraw, wiping his hands.

At this point, Cromwell seems to consider that his victim is too scared because of his first threat and of the effect the “household request” had on him. Consequently, he once again uses sympathy and compassion to soothe his victim, with remarks such as the following:

It is a shame you should suffer alone, if others are culpable. And of course, they are more culpable than you, as they are gentlemen who the king has personally rewarded and made great, and all of them educated men, and some of them of mature years: whereas you are simple and young, and as much to be pitied as punished, I would say. (329)

However, this technique does not work anymore and Mark still refuses to give the names. Since being nice is not efficient, Cromwell resorts once again to threats, asking Smeaton if he wants to spend ten minutes with Christophe, a man from his household with an impressive physical appearance. He then carries on, saying that Wriothesley would write down what they say, but not necessarily what they do. When Wriothesley threatens Mark to take him to the Tower to torture him, Cromwell stops him and tells him aside:

It is better not to specify the nature of the pain. As Juvenal says, the mind is its own best torturer. Besides, you should not make empty threats. I will not rack him. I do not want him carried to his trial in a chair. And if I needed to rack a sad little fellow like this... what next? Stamping on dormice? (330)

Here, we understand that Cromwell wants Mark to confess but does not want him to suffer, he will not torture him. Or at least, not physically. Cromwell does not seem to take into account psychological torture. He continues:

No one wants your pain, Mark. It’s no good to anyone, no one’s interested in it. Not even God himself, and certainly not me. I have no use for your screams. I want words that make sense. Words I can transcribe. You have already spoken them and it will be easy enough to speak them again. So now what you do is your choice, it is your responsibility. You have done enough, by your own account, to damn you. Do not make sinners of us all. (331)

Even if he told Wriothesley that he would not torture Mark, Cromwell did not say so to Mark. He tells him he does not want to hurt him, but not that he is not going to, Mark can still have doubts about his intentions. Contrary to Wriothesley, who just threatened Mark to take him to the tower, here Cromwell appears nicer and less cruel than his secretary, telling Smeaton that he does not want him to suffer nor to scream. Acting this way, he tries to enlist Mark's cooperation. However, by talking about responsibility, Cromwell puts even more pressure on Smeaton. According to him, if he does not confess, he will damn himself as well as everyone around him. With these last sentences, Cromwell makes Mark afraid of him, of some possible torture, but also of God's punishment.

Afterwards, Mark Smeaton asks Cromwell what exactly he wants him to say, pretends he has forgotten what he is supposed to say, and says that he cannot tell him something that he does not know. Cromwell tells him that he knows, and will tell him, and that he has to be his guest that night in order to be able to remember. He is led by Christophe in a room where Cromwell's household stores different kinds of objects, among which feather wings used to dress up as an angel, and a giant star that hangs from the ceiling during the period of Christmas. Mark screams and cries the whole night, thinking that the star is an engine for torture and that the wings brushing his face are a phantom. The next morning, Mark gives Cromwell the names of every lover of the queen, needing somebody to hold him not to fall. Cromwell thinks that he "has never had this problem before, the problem of having frightened someone too much" (336).

As the analysis of this confrontation with Mark Smeaton shows, Cromwell intertwines several techniques to influence his victim and make him talk. After beginning the conversation by destabilising him, he alternates the moments where he flatters Mark, is compassionate and sympathetic towards him, with moments when he frightens him, puts pressure on him and threatens him. However, the nature of the threats always remains unsure, he arouses doubt. This uncertainty, combined with the myth that surrounds Cromwell's past, makes Mark even more afraid of him.

Another illustration of Cromwell's use of threats to influence his opponents can be found when he interrogates Harry Norris, one of the men accused of having an affair with the queen. When Norris tells him that he will not confess, Cromwell answers: "I wonder" (BB 386), and Harry understands that Cromwell might torture him to get his confession. When Harry Norris says "You will not put gentlemen to the torture, the king would not permit it" (387), Cromwell attacks: "There don't have to be formal arrangements" (*ibid.*). He stands up, slams his hand down on the table and adds: "I could put my thumbs in your eyes, and then you would

sing 'Green Grows the Holly' if I asked you to" (*ibid.*). After this outburst, which is theatrical rather than spontaneous, Cromwell is calm again and goes on, explaining to Harry that he must confess because the king wants to get rid of Anne Boleyn because he loves another woman and cannot be with her as long as he is married to Anne. Exactly as with Smeaton, he alternates threats with moments of peace. He first threatens and frightens, before resuming his calm, which can destabilise his adversary. This technique of alternating moments of sympathy with moments when he is more violent and threatening is also described by Cromwell himself. When dealing with the monks that followed Elizabeth Barton, the prophetess who predicted that Henry's reign would not last long if he stayed with Anne Boleyn, Cromwell thinks that "he has spoken gently, he has spoken bluntly, he has threatened and cajoled" (*WH* 623).

However, even if Cromwell often threatens people by saying that he will make them suffer, he never does it. When Hans Holbein, a painter protected and employed by Cromwell as well as by the king, asks Cromwell if he is going to hang him up by his hands until he confesses, Cromwell answers: "I don't do that. I only threaten to do it" (*WH* 601). He nevertheless seizes a great amount of power by "contain[ing] the fears of other men, and giv[ing] them a sense of solidity in a quaking world" (*WH* 522).

Moreover, Master Secretary does not only threaten people to make them suffer, he also threatens them to interpret their silences. While interrogating George Boleyn, Cromwell tells him: "My lord, I am accustomed to dealing with those who refuse to answer" (*BB* 397). When hearing this, George thinks that Cromwell is going to torture him, but Cromwell tells him: "Well, now, I didn't rack Thomas More, did I? I sat in a room with him. A room here at the Tower, such as the one you occupy. I listened to the murmurs within the silence. Construction can be put on silence. It will be" (*ibid.*).

2.4. By Flattering His Opponents

As seen in the analysis of the conversation with Smeaton, Cromwell regularly resorts to flattery to achieve his aim and get what he wants from his opponent. The king's right hand is very well aware of his own method, as this extract shows: "He has a way of getting his way, he has a method; he will charm a man or bribe him, coax him or threaten him, he will explain to a man where his true interests lie, and he will introduce that same man to aspects of himself he didn't know existed" (*BB* 7).

Chapuys also understands his technique very well and describes it: "When the cardinal came to a closed door, he would flatter it – oh beautiful yielding door! Then he would try

tricking it open. And you are just the same, just the same [...]. But in the last resort, you just kick it in” (WH 465). Cromwell uses these three techniques very often, sometimes combined if need be, sometimes on their own. To convince a lady in waiting to let him access the queen’s chamber, he thinks: “I’ll charm this small Howard”. So he “stands spinning words around her, complimenting her gown and her jewels” (WH 468). Since manipulation techniques need to be adapted to the audience in order to be more efficient, Cromwell identifies what would work best with a young girl that is fourteen years old and decides that he will flatter her. Once more, his ease with rhetoric is of considerable use in this task; it enables him to “spin words around her”. He knows what to say to whom, when to say it, and how to say it. Furthermore, Cromwell also tried to flatter, the gentlemen of the chamber, the men Henry spends most of his time with:

Ever since he, Cromwell, came up in Henry’s service, he has been mollifying these men, flattering them, cajoling them, seeking always an easy way of working, a compromise [...] I have probably, he thinks, gone as far as I can to accommodate them. Now they must accommodate me, or be removed. (BB 47)

In addition, the action of removing the gentlemen can be compared to the kicking of the door referred to by Chapuys. To do so, Cromwell will resort to the second technique mentioned by the emperor’s ambassador’s, that is to say that he will trick them.

2.5. By Tricking His Opponents

The people who have met Cromwell know how tricky he is, but they are not the only ones. Because of his international reputation, everyone who has heard of Cromwell knows that he is a cunning fox. Master Secretary even says himself that he was born tricky, and Henry VIII tells him that he is “as cunning as a bag of serpents” (WH 631) and that this is the reason why he has kept him working for him.

In 1536, George Boleyn, also known as ‘Lord Rochford’, is accused of having sexual intercours with the queen, his sister. During his trial, Cromwell hands him a paper, telling him: “Certain words are written here, which the queen is said to have spoken to you, and you in your turn passed them on. You need not read them aloud. Just tell the court, do you recognize these words?” (BB 447). On that paper is written that “[t]he king cannot copulate with a women, he has neither skill nor vigour”. Because he wants to make his audience laugh, Lord Rochford reads those sentences aloud, even if he was told not to. When he realises his mistake, George tries to defend himself by saying: “These are not my words. I do not own them” (*ibid.*). But by pronouncing them before the courts, he has made them his own and he has “impugned the succession, derogated the king’s heirs: even though he was cautioned not to do it” (*ibid.*).

Maybe if Cromwell had not told him not to read the sentences out loud, Lord Rochford would not have thought about it. But Cromwell knows him, he knows he likes to boast and he suspected that George would want to make the assembly laugh.

The conversation Cromwell has with Norris when he interrogates him for the same reason also illustrates very well Cromwell's tendency to trick his opponents. Because he has had the opportunity to watch him do for a long time, Harry Norris has identified Cromwell's technique. He knows that Cromwell will trick him and that whatever he says will be used against him at court and that a refusal to answer a question can be interpreted as a sign of guilt:

'But the king was not in a position to marry her, and you were, and she had your pledge, and yet you dallied. Did you think the king would die, so you could marry Anne? Or did you expect her to dishonour her marriage vows during the king's life, and become your concubine? It is one or the other.'

'If I say either, you will damn me. You will damn me if I say nothing at all, taking my silence for agreement'.

[...]

'And what do you think to brother George?' he asks him. 'You may have been surprised to encounter rivalry from that quarter. I hope you were surprised. Though the morals or you gentlemen astonish me.'

'You do not trap me that way. Any man you name, I will say nothing against him and nothing for him. I have no opinion on George Boleyn.'

'What, no opinion on incest? If you take it so quietly and without objection, I am forced to conjecture there may be truth in it.'

'And if I were to say, I think there might be guilt in that case, you would say to me, "Why, Norris! Incest! How can you believe such an abomination? Is it a ploy to lead me away from your own guilt?"' (BB 389-390)

Whatever Norris says, Cromwell finds a way to use it against him, and Norris knows that there is no good answer to Cromwell's questions. In this extract, Norris shows Cromwell that he is aware of his tricks. However, he does not manage to get around them and falls in his traps. He claims that he knows that a silence can be taken as a sign of guilt but refuses nonetheless to give Cromwell the names of the other queen's lovers. When he says that he has no opinion on George Boleyn, Norris means to say nothing negative nor positive about him, thinking it is his best option. However, Cromwell still identifies a flaw in this declaration and exploits it, interpreting it as an approval of George's behaviour.

2.6. By Taking Advantage of People's Beliefs

Besides shaping himself and the world around him, Cromwell can also shape what people think. Many times, he manipulates people and uses their beliefs to his advantage. Manipulators aim to control the mind of their victims. To do so, they "interfere with processes of understanding,

the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies” (Van Dijk 359). In other words, manipulators can influence what people understand, how they think and what they believe in.

A first example can be found in *Wolf Hall* when William Brereton, one of the king’s men in waiting, comes during the night to Austin Friars, Cromwell’s home, and tells him that the king asks for him at Greenwich. When he arrives, the king informs Master Secretary that his dead brother talked to him in his dream. Henry thinks that Arthur is mad and has come back to reproach him. The king says: “He seemed to say I stood in his place. He seemed to say, you have taken my kingdom, and you have used my wife. He has come back to make me ashamed” (*WH* 275). However, Cromwell does not see this dream as a negative sign, but rather sees an opportunity to influence the king and make him stronger and more powerful. As explained in the previous chapter, Cromwell, as a rationalist, does not believe in prophecies, omens and portents. When a cat was born in the cardinal’s room, Wolsey thought it was an omen and that it predicted that something good or bad was going to happen in the future. When a comet falls, people think it is a portent and that it announces something bad. This kind of belief baffles Cromwell and he wonders why the falling of a comet could not be positive, the sign that a nation is going to rise and not to fall as people interpret it. During his conversation with Henry, Cromwell reinterprets as something positive what the king interpreted as a bad sign, he uses the monarch’s beliefs and turns them into something beneficial for his purposes, which is to make Henry more powerful.

Cromwell first asks Henry if his brother talked to him in his dream, or if he made any sign. As he did not, he asks Henry why he thinks that he meant him any harm and tells him:

You know the lawyer’s saying “*Le mort saisit le vif*”? The dead grip the living. The prince dies, but his power passes at the moment of his death, there is no lapse, no interregnum. If your brother visited you, it is not to make you ashamed, but to remind you that you are vested with the power of both the living and the dead. This is a sign to you to examine your kingship. And exert it. (*WH* 276)

Even if Cromwell does not believe in signs, and thus does not believe that the king’s brother really talked to him in a dream, he is ready to play the game if it can benefit the king and make him stronger and more self-confident, so he uses the king’s beliefs and moulds them. Further in the conversation, Cromwell refers to Henry’s father, once again applying the technique of *kairos* and talks about the history of the king’s ancestors, making use of it for present purposes:

Your father made it sure. A prince coming out of Wales, he made good the word given to his ancestors. Out of his lifetime's exile, he came back and claimed his ancient right. But it is not enough to claim a country; it must be held. It must be held and made secure, in every generation. If your brother seems to say that you have taken his place, then he means you to become the king that he would have been. He himself cannot fulfil the prophecy, but he wills it to you. For him, the promise, and for you, the performance of it. (WH 276-277)

When Henry asks him why he only dreams about his brother now, Cromwell answers: "Because now is the vital time [...] Because now is the time to become the ruler you should be, and to be sole and supreme head of your kingdom" (277). Somebody who knows about Henry's history will know how important this reply is, since he appointed himself Supreme Head of the Church of England in 1534 with the help of Cromwell and of the Parliament. Here again, by shaping the way the king thinks, Cromwell has influenced his interlocutor.

When Henry dreamt of his dead brother, he also called Thomas Cranmer in to solicit his support. When the king explains his dream, Cranmer sticks to what is written in the Bible and tells him that what he saw was not his brother's real body. He says: "It is an image formed in Your Majesty's mind. Such images are *quasi corpora*, like bodies. Read Augustine" (275), and he adds that his brother's death was God's will. However, Cromwell is ready to let Henry believe that he really saw his brother, if it can help him make the king boost his self-confidence, even if the Bible says it is not possible. After their meeting with the king, Cranmer asks Cromwell if he thinks that the gospel is "a book of blank sheets on which Thomas Cromwell imprints his desires" (278). The fact that Cromwell is a Renaissance self-fashioned man that can shape himself and the world around him confirms Cranmer's interrogation.

Cromwell does not only take advantage of people's beliefs about omens or religion, but also about himself. He cultivates a myth around himself by never talking about his past and by letting people believe what they want about him. This leaves his opponents languishing in uncertainty, which gives him a position of superiority since he knows more than them. Cromwell "doesn't mind talking to Richard, to Rafe about his past – within reason – but he doesn't mean to give away pieces of himself" (WH 358). By chance, inventing Cromwell's past was an activity that Wolsey was particularly fond of and he used to tell people, for example, that Cromwell was stolen by pirates when he was an infant and that his youth "was secluded, spent almost entirely in fasting, prayer and study of the Church Fathers" (WH 73).

Eustache Chapuys, the emperor's ambassador, once asked Cromwell if his father was Irish and if it was true that Cromwell fled from England at fifteen after escaping from prison. As for Mark Smeaton, he is afraid to be tortured when Thomas Cromwell tells him he is going

to stay at his house for the night. Since nobody knows anything about Cromwell's past, it might be possible that he tortured people during his young years and therefore knows techniques of torture. Because nobody knows anything about Cromwell's past, and because there is a rumour that he killed a man, people tend to believe a lot of things about him. People's credulity feeds their fears, as he realises, and Cromwell never misses an opportunity to take advantage of that:

It is wise to conceal the past even if there is nothing to conceal. A man's power is in the half-light, 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. (*WH* 359)

Sometimes, Cromwell even lies about what he is able to do. When Cardinal Wolsey asks him to get to know the people that surrounded Katherine of Aragon, who speak Spanish, Cromwell answers that his Spanish "[isn't] that good" (*WH* 35), which is a lie, but Cromwell thinks that the cardinal "doesn't have to know everything [he] know[s]" (*ibid.*). This example shows that Cromwell does not only hide things about himself from his enemies, but also from the people he likes. This part of mystery about him is what protects him, it allows him to be able to surprise his interlocutor when he wants to, which gives him a position of superiority.

2.7. By Shaping the Truth

As he is able to shape himself and the world, Cromwell is also able to shape the truth, to transform it to make it more acceptable for people. For example, when the king falls in love with Jane Seymour and wants to get rid of Anne Boleyn in order to marry his new lover, Cromwell says: "We are going to seek an annulment. Just now I do not know on what grounds" (*BB* 284). He is ready to construct a reality that people will accept. He knows he needs to find good reasons for the king to annul his marriage with his second wife, so he will find some.

Besides interpreting omens and portents in his own way, Cromwell also reinterprets religion, or at least, sees it in a different way than other people. Religion had a significant role in Henry's days and a lot of events were interpreted as God's will when they were not seen as tokens and omens. In his conversation with Smeaton, Cromwell says: "Ambition is a sin. So I am told. Though I have never seen how it is different from using your talents, which the Bible commends we do" (*BB* 329). It appears here that Cromwell uses his own interpretation of religion to justify what he is doing, thus creating his own biblical truth. He is putting a lot of pressure on Mark to make him talk. Some people might think that he is doing so only by ambition, to be in the good books of the king. For Cromwell, he is only doing what is advised in the Bible and uses his talent, which is eloquence. Moreover, some might think that some of

Cromwell's actions and statements are contrary to what the gospel advises and that he is sinning. But according to him, "[p]eople must say whatever will keep them alive, till better times come. That is no sin" (*WH* 317).

When, during a joust, the king falls and remains unconscious for quite a long time, people panic and try to take the throne even before being sure that the king is dead. At that moment, Cromwell realises that he is in danger, since the king is his only guarantee of power and survival. When such an accident happens, it is important to save the king's image. A king must always appear strong, otherwise his enemies will take advantage of the occasion and try to take his lands and his throne. In order to preserve that image of strength, Cromwell is ready to change the reality:

He says to Fitzwilliam, 'Of course, it never happened. Or if it did, it was an incident of no importance.'

For Chapuys and the other ambassadors, he will stick by his original version: the king fell, hit his head, and was unconscious for ten minutes. No, at no time did we think he was dead. After ten minutes, he sat up. And now he is perfectly well.

The way I tell it, he says to Fitzwilliam, you would think that the blow on the head had improved him. That he actually set out to get it. That every monarch needs a blow on the head, from time to time. (*BB* 206)

While interrogating Anne's alleged lovers, Cromwell explains to Wriothsley that he is not looking for the whole truth, but that he only wants "the truth [he] can use" (*BB* 359). At no moment those men said that they were guilty of having an affair with the queen. At court, they admitted: "We are guilty of all sorts of charges, we have all sinned, we all are riddled and rotten with offences and, even by the light of church and gospel, we may not know what they are" (439). For Cromwell, it is simple: "He needs guilty men. So he has found men who are guilty. Though perhaps not guilty as charged" (392).

When people are reluctant to act as he wants them to, Cromwell does not hesitate to shape the truth and play with words to make his decisions appear more acceptable. Some people were against the bill that he introduced and that made Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church of England. Cromwell retorted: "[The bill] doesn't say, as some say, make the king head of the church. It states that he is head of the church and always has been. If people don't like new ideas, let them have old ones. If they want precedents, he has precedents" (*WH* 588). Cromwell knows that "[t]here cannot be new things in England. There can be old things freshly presented, or new things that pretend to be old" (118) and makes use of it. He plays with the fact that people are used to old decisions that are now accepted as facts and are part of their lives. Since,

as Cromwell claims, the king has always been the head of the church, people are not pushed out of their comfort zone, which makes it easier for them to accept the bill.

In order to prevent people from diminishing the king's power and to be able to punish those who "deny Henry's title or jurisdiction, speak or write maliciously against him, call him a heretic or a schismatic" (*WH* 589), Cromwell also introduces a second enactment against treason by words. By declaring that "[i]t casts into statute law what the judges in their wisdom have already defined as common law. It is a measure for clarification. I am all for clarity" (*ibid.*), he once again convinces people that what his bill states is not new, which makes it easier to accept.

During an encounter with Katherine of Aragon, Henry's first wife, and Mary, their daughter, Cromwell explains the situation:

'So your father the king is named head of the church, and to soothe the conscience of the bishops, they have caused this formula to be inserted: "as far as the law of Christ allows".'

'What does that mean?' Mary says. 'It means nothing.'

'Your highness, it means everything.' [...] 'I beg you,' he says, 'to consider it in this way, that the king has merely defined a position previously held, one that ancient precedents [...] show as his right.' (*WH* 289-290)

In order to make his bill more acceptable for the bishops, who did not recognise Henry but the pope as the head of the church, Cromwell adds that the king is "head of the church as far as the law of Christ allows", which is so vague that it allows him to interpret it the way he wants, and in this way shapes the world around him how and when he desires to.

In 1532, Cromwell threatened Harry Percy in order to persuade him to claim that he never pre-contracted a marriage with Anne Boleyn so that she could marry Henry VIII. However, when the king wants an annulment for his marriage with Anne a few years later, Cromwell needs to find reasons that appear lawful. Therefore, he goes once more to Harry Percy to try and convince him to claim the opposite of what he claimed a few years before and to declare that he had a secret pre-contract of marriage with Anne. Not only does Cromwell tell Harry Percy what he needs to claim, but he also provides him with good excuses to explain why he claimed he never pre-contracted the marriage a few years before:

'I put it to you, my lord, that you are married to Anne Boleyn'

[...] 'I put it to you that in or about the year 1523, you made a secret contract of marriage with her, and that therefore her so-called marriage with the king is null.'

[...] 'I put it to you that on that occasion, your memory failed.'

[...] ‘You have always been a drinker, my lord, which is how, I believe, you are reduced to your present condition. On the day in question, I found you, as you say, at a tavern. Is it possible that when you came before the council, you were still drunk? And therefore you were confused about what you were swearing?’

[...] ‘Your head ached. You were nauseous. You were afraid you might be sick on the reverend shoes of Archbishop Warham. The possibility so perturbed you that you could think of nothing else. You were not attentive to the questions put to you. That was hardly your fault.’

[...] ‘Any councillor would understand your plight. We have all been in drink, one time or another.’

[...] ‘Then consider another possibility. Perhaps there was some slackness in the taking of the oath. Some irregularity. The old archbishop, he was ill himself that day. I remember how his hands trembled as he held the holy book.’

[...] ‘If there was some defect in the procedure, your conscience should not trouble you, if you were now to repudiate your oath. Perhaps, you know, it was not even a Bible?’ (BB 424-425)

Cromwell formulates excuses for Harry by putting himself in his shoes and tries to invent reasons that seem plausible since they could be true. Harry is an opponent who is difficult to convince. Cromwell already destroyed his life when he first convinced him to claim that he had pre-contracted a marriage with Anne, so Percy is even more mistrustful when Cromwell tries to convince him to make a second declaration that contradicts his first and that could ruin his life even more, if possible. That is why Cromwell needs to create so many realities, even if some of them might seem far-fetched.

Even if Percy protests after each supposition, claiming that he was not drunk, the king’s secretary goes on, finding more and more excuses. Those excuses are the way Cromwell creates multiple possible realities, in which Percy would have been drunk, distracted by his nausea or would have sworn on a book which was not the Bible. As a matter of fact, Cromwell shapes the reality by replacing real facts with things that could have happened and that will become his new version of reality. He will just need to choose one at the most convenient moment, and impose it on his opponent.

2.8. By Telling His Interlocutors Exactly What to Do

On several occasions, Cromwell tells people precisely what they must do and say. He sometimes does so in the interest of those people, such as with More, who he tries to save even if he is his enemy. In other cases, he mostly gives his instructions to make sure that people’s actions please the king and that the latter gets what he wants. That way, Cromwell stays in his favour and guarantees his own survival.

After the trial of the prophetess Elisabeth Barton, Cromwell goes to see the people who believe her visions and prophecies. Bishop Fisher is one of them, and Cromwell tries to

convince him to seek for the king's forgiveness. He tells him: "You had better ask the king's pardon. Beg the favour of it. Plead with him to consider your age and infirmities" (*WH* 542). He ends the conversation by advising the bishop: "Fall ill [...] Take to your bed. That's what I recommend" (544). If the bishop accepts to seem weak, the king and Cromwell gain more power over him, which is what they want. Moreover, Fisher knows that it is in his best interest to follow Cromwell's instructions if he wants to survive.

A few pages earlier, Cromwell uses the same technique with Lady Exeter and advises her to appear weak, to claim to the king that she is stupid and that it is why she believed Elizabeth Barton. Rafe is Cromwell's middleman and has to tell Lady Exeter that she must write to the king that she "has not the wit of a flea" (*WH* 511) and that "she is exceptionally easy to mislead, even for a woman" (512). Actually, just before that conversation between Rafe and Cromwell, Henry had told them that all women were "fickle and weak" as well as "easily led into scheming" (510). That is why Cromwell seizes the moment and insists on the weakness of women, even if he does not believe himself that women are weaker than men, since he gave his own daughters a very good education and even allowed one of them to learn Greek. However, if Henry believes that women are stupid and weak, that is what Lady Exeter should plead. Cromwell asks Rafe to "[t]ell her to grovel" (512) and then adds that "[n]othing can be too humble for Henry" (*ibid.*). Once again, Cromwell advises his opponent to place themselves in a position of weakness and agree with the king, who is therefore in a position of power. What is more, Cromwell asks Rafe to "advise her on the wording" (*ibid.*). It is obvious that formulation is important for somebody who masters rhetoric as well as Cromwell does.

When dealing with Stephen Gardiner, who was Wolsey's and the king's secretary before him, Cromwell uses the same technique and tells Gardiner what to do but, this time, he gives him several possibilities:

My lord of Winchester, a considered statement on the king's supremacy might be welcome, just so that there can be no mistake about your loyalty. A firm declaration that he is head of the English church and, rightfully considered, always has been. An assertion, firmly stated, that the Pope is a foreign prince with no jurisdiction here. A written sermon, perhaps, or an open letter. To clear up any ambiguities in your opinions. To give a lead to other churchmen, and to disabuse ambassador Chapuys of the notion that you have been bought by the Emperor. You should make a statement to the whole of Christendom. In fact, why don't you go back to your diocese and write a book? (*BB* 38)

Cromwell's aim is still to reinforce Henry's power, thanks to declarations that Gardiner would make about his supremacy and his title as head of the church. Master Secretary suggests

to Gardiner that he write a sermon, an open letter or even a book, which seems exaggerated and thus ironic. This last remark is explained by the fact that Cromwell does not like Gardiner and would prefer him to be in his diocese, far away from him, rather than causing him trouble while being at court.

2.9. By Knowing People

One of the main reasons why Cromwell manages to influence people so well is because he knows them, often better than they know themselves. He observes them a lot and makes inventories in his head because he knows that “people are always the key” (*WH* 43). He knows their habits and how they behave. In the passage below, Cromwell thinks about everything he would like to tell Rafe about the king, so that the young man would know how to serve Henry. Actually, Cromwell knows Henry so well that he thinks he could write a book about him and about how to serve him well, which would be called “The Book Called Henry”:

Any activity he finds wearying or displeasing, he will try honestly to turn into an amusement, and if he cannot find some thread of pleasure he will avoid it [...]. He has councillors employed to fry their brains on his behalf, and if he is out of temper it is probably their fault; they shouldn't block him or provoke him. He doesn't want people who say, 'No, but...' He wants people who say, 'Yes, and...' He doesn't like men who are pessimistic and sceptical [...]. Do not expect consistency from him [...]. He is suspicious of any plan that doesn't originate with himself, or seem to. You can argue with him but you must be careful how and when. You are better to give way on every possible point until the vital point, and to pose yourself as one in need of guidance and instruction, rather than to maintain a fixed opinion from the start and let him think you believe you know better than he does. Be sinuous in argument and allow him escapes: don't corner him, don't back him against the wall [...] he wants to be told he is right. He is never in error. It is only that other people commit errors on his behalf or deceive him with false information. Henry wants to be told that he is behaving well, in the sight of God and man. 'Cromwell,' he says, 'you know what we should try? Cromwell, would it not reflect well on my honour if I... Cromwell, would it not confound my enemies if...?' And all these are the ideas you put to him last week. Never mind. You don't want the credit. You just want action. (*BB* 247-248)

Cromwell knows the king so well he can predict his reactions. His observations allow him to know what he should say, when the circumstances are the best to talk, and how he should formulate his statements and requests. As previously stated, observation and rhetoric are intrinsically intertwined, since every argument has to be adapted to the audience. Furthermore, it is because Cromwell knows the persons he deals with so well that he is able to influence them. It is easier for him to influence them if he knows their life, what they like, what they have been through and what they fear. Being aware of those facets of Henry's personality, Cromwell knows how to act and talk not to cross his king, and he also knows how to make him happy.

Moreover, he knows that he needs to behave in a certain way in order to make the king feel superior.

3. Cromwell Manipulates, but He Stays Humane

However, even if he happens to manipulate people, influences them, threatens them to make them suffer and sometimes even ruins their life in order to achieve his goals, Cromwell still has a heart. He does not hate his enemies, and he even tries to help them. When More refuses to sign the bill that acknowledges Henry as the Supreme Head of the Church of England, Cromwell goes several times to his cell and tries to convince him to change his mind, mainly in order to save More's life, even if he does not agree with him.

Furthermore, More is not the only enemy that Cromwell tries to be nice with. After threatening and frightening Mark Smeaton, Cromwell realises that he scared him too much. He also realises that he was really harsh with the young lute-player. Cromwell feels sorry for Mark and thinks about what he could tell him to comfort him:

He wonders, why did I leave mark that space to boast, to undo himself? I could have condensed the process; I could have told him what I wanted, and threatened him. But I encouraged; I did it so that he would be complicit. If he told the truth about Anne, he is guilty. If he lied about Anne, he is hardly innocent. I was prepared, if necessary, to put him under duress. [...]

In France, torture is usual, as necessary as salt to meat; in Italy, it is a sport for the piazza. In England, the law does not countenance it. But it can be used, at a nod from the king: on a warrant. It is true there is a rack at the Tower. No one withstands it. No one. For most men, since the way it works is so obvious, a glimpse of it is enough.

He thinks, I will tell Mark that. It will make him feel better about himself. (BB 335)

Feeling sorry for the person he has just threatened happens several times to Cromwell. After threatening Harry Percy to ruin his life if he did not claim that he had not pre-contracted a marriage with Anne Boleyn, Cromwell realises how bad Percy's situation is, and that the Earl of Northumberland is probably going to lose everything he has after he makes this declaration. When he goes out of the tavern where he met Percy, Cromwell says to Wriothsley: "I feel sorry for him really" (WH 379). Even if it made Wriothsley laugh hard, it proves that Cromwell does not just threaten and manipulate people for his pleasure, that he is able to put himself in their shoes and to feel bad for them.

Another way to prove that Cromwell has a good heart is to analyse his relation with his family and his household. He loves them and protects them, as well as new people that he includes in his household from time to time. When he was a little boy, Rafe Sadler was confided by his parents to Cromwell so that the latter would take him in his household and would give

him a good education. He taught him to read and to write, as well as law, French, Latin and Greek. Further in the story, Cromwell meets a young lady who comes to his house and asks for his help. Her husband, who beat her, disappeared and she does not know if he is dead, which she hopes since it would mean that she is free. Cromwell accepts her under his roof, as well as her two daughters. When he was in France during one of his travels, Cromwell also met Christophe, a young man with an impressive physical appearance, and brought him back to Austin Friars to give him a decent home and job.

What is more, Cromwell takes good care of his two daughters, Anne and Grace. He loves them and is there for them. Although, at that time, women were thought to be inferior to men, Cromwell provides them with a good education. Even if he is harsh with his enemies and with the people at court, Cromwell is loved by his family and his household.

Cromwell possesses an impressive number of skills, among which his mastery of several languages, his ability to manipulate and his impressive memory, but he is only a man, he has a heart and he is not able to control everything. There are things that he has no influence on, such as sickness and death, and when they occur, Cromwell's sensitive heart becomes more noticeable. During his life, he has suffered the loss of several members of his family, among which his wife, Liz Wykys, his daughters Grace and Anne, Wolsey, his sister Kat, and her husband Morgan Williams. After his wife's death, Cromwell thinks that "[h]e never expects to make any better sense of it than it makes now. He knows the whole of the New Testament by heart, but find a text: find a text for this" (*WH* 104). As this extract proves, Cromwell always tries to structure the world around him, but sometimes fails. What is more, Cromwell also suffers from a fever for several days, which further illustrates that he is not invulnerable.

Conclusion

The aim of this master dissertation was not just to demonstrate that Mantel's Cromwell understands the art of shaping the self and the world around him. This aspect of his personality had already been studied by others. However, my analysis of Mantel's Cromwell novels made it possible to add more elements to the picture. The theme of fashioning the self and the world was reinterpreted in the context of the Renaissance, and this dissertation investigated how Mantel's concept of the historical novel contributes to a convincing portrait of that crucial period in history. The role of narratological techniques in the representation of the Renaissance has also been analysed for both novels. The narrative perspective gives the reader access to Cromwell's innermost thoughts and feelings, which gives him or her the opportunity to acquire a deep understanding of the main character as a shaper and sometimes a manipulator of destinies, both on a personal and a political level. In addition to an analysis of the narrative techniques, the criteria Greenblatt describes in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* have been applied to demonstrate how Cromwell's Renaissance mind works. His ability to shape his self and the world around him has also been demonstrated. It appeared that many travels and jobs along the years have allowed him to construct himself.

The first chapter highlighted how easy it was to spread new ideas at Cromwell's time thanks to the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg. The Renaissance brought about a change of mentalities. Humanism, which first appeared in Florence, quickly spread among Europe to finally reach England, where men strove to develop their virtue and discovered they could be put at the centre of the universe. What they thought and created was valued, their capacities were considered to be limitless and men were encouraged to develop their artistic and social skills, as well as their knowledge, in as many fields as possible. This new confidence in the *Uomo Universale* and those social changes allowed them to develop not only their skills but also their personality.

As the second part of the chapter explained, the Thomas Cromwell represented in Mantel's books is the representation of an image created for him by the author and needs to be differentiated from the historical Thomas Cromwell. Even if the historian and the novelist have different jobs, they both try to come as close to the truth as possible. Mantel said that her role was to "put the past back into process, into action" and the reviews of *Wolf Hall* confirm that she managed to do so: "*Wolf Hall* brings the past alive, kicking, laughing and crying" (Marr). Mantel's books talk about real people and real events, also relating the rumours of that time but

always sticking to the truth: “There is historical truth, and there is imaginative truth. Hilary Mantel, who has never written better than in this book, respects both” (*Spectator*). Because she was driven by curiosity, Mantel took interest in the man who became her main character, and whom she calls “an interesting villain”. She wanted to challenge what people think of him and make them ready to forget what they learned at school. She hoped to produce a nuanced portrait, not completely black, as people represented Cromwell in the past, but not all white either. She reached her goal, according to the critics, since “she makes her Cromwell human and credible” (Massie).

As suggested repeatedly, in Mantel’s books the reader is in the mind of Thomas Cromwell, has access to his thoughts and only his. Since Cromwell does not know what happens in places where he is not, and does not know what happens in the future, the reader does not know either. The second chapter of this dissertation analysed and explained this phenomenon that is called selective omniscience, which is the equivalent of the Jamesian reflector, the limited point of view, and Genette’s internal focalisation. Because the readers are in the main character’s head, they can understand him and even identify with him, they know what and how Cromwell thinks. Mantel explained in an interview that she could not call her protagonist “Cromwell” because she felt close to him, so she decided to call him “he”. This choice of technique actually influences the readers, giving them, in turn, the impression that they are close to Cromwell. The miniseries, produced by the BBC in 2015 and based on Mantel’s two books, does not put the viewer in Cromwell’s mind, there is no voice-over narrating everything Cromwell thinks. However, several parameters such as the limitation of time and place have been respected and a few techniques have been used to give the viewer a glimpse at Cromwell’s thoughts. Sometimes, scenes from the books are shown as flashbacks in the series, or the camera follows Cromwell’s eyes so that the viewer sees exactly what he sees and focusses on the same things as him. Some things that only happen in Cromwell’s imagination are also sometimes shown as real scenes in the series, before the viewer realises that they are only happening in Cromwell’s head. Lastly, Cromwell sometimes pronounces out loud sentences in the series that he only thinks in the books. Obviously, reducing more than a thousand pages to a few hours on the screen is a complex process, but the producers of the miniseries managed to find solutions in order to let the viewer know what is happening in Cromwell’s mind. In both the books and the series, we are therefore able to install ourselves in the centre of a Renaissance mind.

Written in 1980, Stephen Greenblatt’s book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* explains that the 16th century knew the spread of the awareness that the

construction of people's identity was a "manipulable, artful process". However, there are always several elements that also shape the self, such as culture, the family, the state and religious institutions. Born a blacksmith's son, Cromwell helps his father and works in the kitchen of his uncle before fleeing from his abusive father and fighting in Italy with the French. He later works in the trading of silk and in the counting houses of the Portinari and Frescobaldi before serving Wolsey and eventually Henry VIII. Those many experiences and jobs allow Cromwell to develop many diverse skills and construct himself. In the next point of this chapter, the ten "governing conditions common to most instances of self-fashioning" from Greenblatt's book were applied to Cromwell, showing that he is the perfect example of the Renaissance self-fashioned man. He was born without any title and even refuses later in his life to create himself a pedigree. However, social mobility became easier in the 16th century than in the Middle Ages, and he manages to eventually accumulate the titles, which does not please the elite. Besides fashioning himself, Cromwell also fashions England and the people around him, partly by manipulating them. What is more, as required on the basis of Greenblatt's criteria, Cromwell defends an authority, the legal court, and he fights against an "alien", which is for him the Church and the way it works. Cromwell does not agree with the behaviour of the monks and priests, who take advantage of people's beliefs to grow rich. Even if he is a believer, Cromwell thinks that religion is not the answer to every problem and thinks that priests cannot save him thanks to relics and indulgence. Greenblatt's statement that "one man's authority is another man's alien" can be applied to the controversy between Cromwell and More, who fights for the Roman Catholic Church, does not want it to change fundamentally (although he wanted it to eradicate its abuses), and opposes the parliament by refusing to sign the Oath of Supremacy.

The last points of this chapter demonstrate that Cromwell's self-fashioning also happens through language, thanks to what he chooses to say or not to say, which allows him to create a myth around himself. Moreover, Cromwell's identity is also fashioned by other people such as Wolsey, Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. They enabled him to accumulate titles. Cromwell does not have only one identity, but several, and sometimes needs to choose "which Thomas" he is going to be while getting up in the morning. Lastly, Cromwell's use of art to memorise a great number of facts facilitates his climb on the social ladder. He also makes very clever use of the weaknesses and miscalculations of his opponents. A clear example of such a mistake made by his enemies is the participation of Anne Boleyn's alleged lovers in a stage play mocking his friend Wolsey. Cromwell uses their daring parody as an excuse to charge them, demonstrating

very well how, from son of a blacksmith and brewer, Cromwell fashioned himself into a man who scaled the social ladder.

The last chapter analysed the techniques used by Cromwell to influence the people around him. Cromwell has perfected his art of persuasion, as his nephew points out: “[S]ometimes it’s quite difficult, sir, to distinguish being persuaded by you from being knocked down in the street and stamped on” (*WH* 438). Even if the techniques he employs can be used on their own, Cromwell sometimes combines them. His knowledge of the world often allows him to have an advantage over his opponent. He knows things that other people do not and has friends in different countries who can be his sources of information. In his case, the old adage applies that knowledge is power, and in the power structures of the state, his knowledge is superior to anyone else’s. What is more, Cromwell has a way with words, he masters rhetoric and *kairos*, he is eloquent and knows what to say, how and when. He also knows when he needs to adapt his arguments to his audience. Threatening his opponent is a technique he quite often uses, when he feels he can allow himself to do it without putting his life in danger. However, when threats are not efficient anymore, Cromwell does not hesitate to flatter his opponents, to charm them and “spin words” around them. Master Secretary knows people, their habits and how they behave, which allows him to adapt his behaviour. He knows them so well that he can even take advantage of their beliefs about signs and omens, about religion, and about himself. To achieve his goals, he sometimes happens to shape the truth and even reinterpret religion or, at least, see it in a different way than other people. Finally, Cromwell is “as cunning as a bag of serpents” (*WH* 631) and can trick his opponents thanks to his ability to put himself in other people’s shoes and thus predict how they will react. Although he can seem ruthless, Cromwell does not hate his enemies and even tries to help them on several occasions.

The first chapter of this dissertation prepared a theoretical framework inside of which each one of the following chapters developed one major argument, and each of those arguments was a puzzle piece. Now that all of them are put together, it can be claimed that *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* put their readers inside the mind of a Renaissance self-fashioned man who masters the art of persuasion. It was Mantel’s choice to represent Cromwell as someone who can influence and sometimes manipulate people, but who also has many other facets, one of them being a loving father and protective master. In the past, authors only depicted Cromwell as a villain. Maybe the future still hides hidden facets of Cromwell, unexplored up to now.

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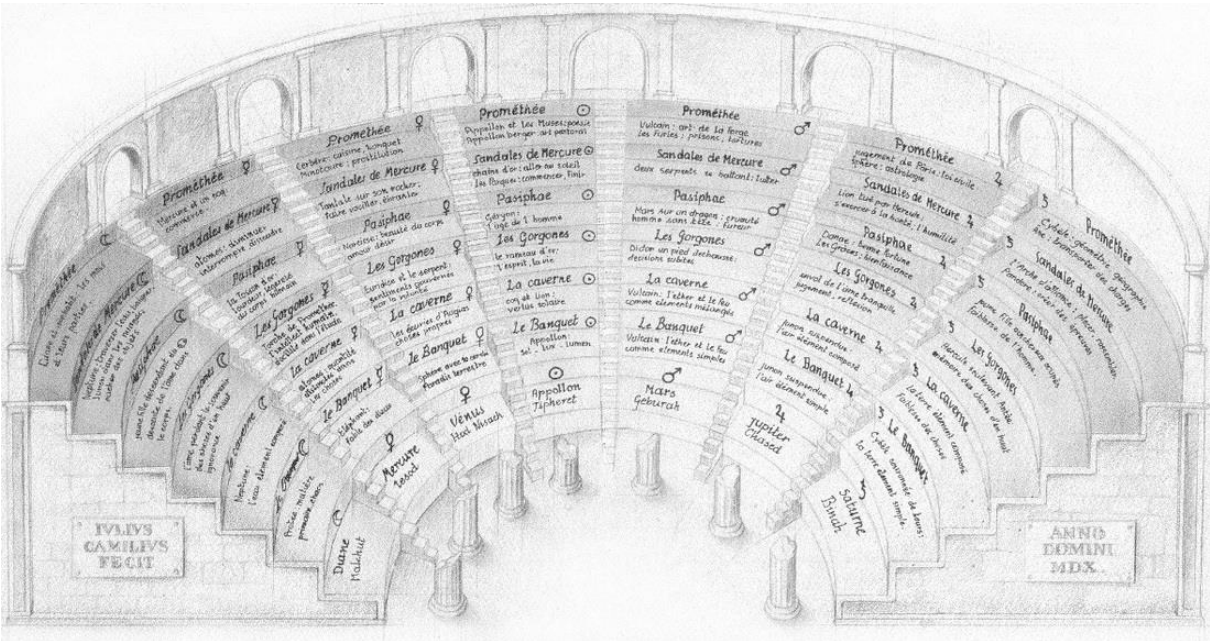
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Guido Camillo's Theatre of Memory



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