

Bring Up the Bodies Study Guide

Bring Up the Bodies by Hilary Mantel

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Plot Summary

"Bring up the Bodies" is an historical novel by Hilary Mantel, and is the recipient of the 2012 Man Booker Prize. The novel follows the character of Thomas Cromwell through King Henry VIII's marriage to Anne Boleyn, and later Jane Seymour.

Cromwell is the Secretary to the King, among other positions he holds, and he is Henry's right hand man by Henry's own admission. Cromwell is also something of a friend and brother-like figure to Henry. Henry and his court have spent the summer and autumn in the English countryside to avoid disease and illness common in London at that time. While in the country at Wolf Hall, the home of the Seymour family, Henry meets and begins to fall for Jane Seymour. Meanwhile, Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn quickly sours, and Henry entrusts Cromwell to find a way for Anne to be divorced and dethroned.

Cromwell sets to work, managing - not just handling - Anne's removal, but also the affairs of the state, including diplomacy with France and the Holy Roman Empire, while Henry pursues Jane. Cromwell gathers evidence against Anne by paying people off and deploying spies, and he uses this evidence against her to force her to step down. When she refuses, Henry goes on with a trial against her, which ultimately leads to Anne's execution. For his work, Cromwell is promoted to a baron.



Part One

Part One Summary

Part One, 1 - The Cromwells head back to Wolf Hall after sporting with tamed hawks. Thomas Cromwell, secretary to King Henry VIII, it has been a few months since the execution of Thomas More. It is the autumn of 1535. The days are seemingly perfect. There is no war at the moment, and Henry appears settled with second wife, Anne Boelyn. Cromwell speaks to Sir John Seymour, owner of Wolf Hall. King Henry, John, and Cromwell talk of marriage, and they regard John's daughter, Jane -plain, quiet, and reserved. At dinner, it is announced that Jane Seymour will accompany Henry on a hunt; Francis Weston, a courtier, whispers that Anne will be unhappy about it.

Jane reveals that she, and other girls, have been studying French, and that their lives are not all about gossip. Upon hearing the story of Edgar the Peaceable, who killed an earl for seducing and marrying a bride he himself wanted, Lady Margery says that women are always forced to adapt to circumstances. The king later plays chess with Edward Seymour. Henry relates that things are not going well with Anne, who is angry with him again and again for even the simplest things, such as speaking positively of first wife, Katherine. Later on, Cromwell reveals to his son, Gregory, that he will probably marry him to Jane Seymour. Gregory hopes that his father will not steal his bride the way that John stole the bride of his son years before. But Thomas Cromwell, whose wife is dead and buried, has no such intentions ever again.

After the following day's hunt, Jane and Henry walk alone in the garden, while Thomas handles dispatches. Later, Henry arrives to tend to correspondence, but is distracted. He appears stunned.

Part One, 2 - Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, comes to visit the king. Gardiner is seeking a way to legitimize the authority of the king in the eyes of the church of England. He has written a book on it. As King Henry and his entourage leave Wolf Hall, a wet mist comes on, and everyone knows the harvests will be bad. As they have traveled around through the summer to escape plagues and epidemics in London, the people in the countryside have gathered by the roads to cheer on Henry and his men; now, they blame him and Anne Boelyn for the miserable weather. Henry regards Anne. At thirty-four, she is aging quickly. Henry also dislikes the men that gather about her, from her father to her friends. Henry has further embarked on a campaign to weed out clergy and religious officials not loyal to him - Thomas More among them. Things like monasteries are not necessary, according to Henry, Cromwell, and their fellows: they either serve the king or they are done away with. The church is also a potential source of income for the king, to use for legislation to put unemployed men to work, among other things.

Cromwell and his son return to their city house at Austin Friars. Their relatives and servants all welcome them home warmly. Rumors abound of Anne Boelyn's infidelity.



Richard Riche, protégé of Lord Chancellor Thomas Audley, and messenger between Cromwell and Audley, arrives to say that Gardiner's book is horrible, and that Thomas More is to be made a saint in Rome. Henry VIII confides to Richard Cromwell, nephew of Thomas Cromwell, that he worries something is wrong with his marriage to Anne, something which makes God Himself unhappy. Henry worries that, because Anne was previously contracted in marriage to someone else, and may have given herself physically to Harry Percy before the king.

Thomas Cromwell regards his house in the city. He has brought in foreign workers, like Ercole, to help put the house into a fine state. The house is alive with happy, youthful activity. But not all is well. Word comes that Katherine wants the Pope to officially excommunicate Henry from the Church- or that she is urging French invasion of England. Anne wants Cromwell to get to the truth of things. He then heads up country to Kimbolton, a busy market town, with several of his men. They continue on to the castle where Katherine is kept and looked after by the Bedingfields. Katherine is not doing well, and appears physically diminished. She is, nevertheless, mentally fierce, and knows well all of the intrigues and workings of the inner court of the king, still. She is well-informed. Cromwell realizes that, somehow, she is still in love with Henry.

Cromwell returns to report to Queen Anne. He explains that Katherine is near death, is not dangerous, and a visit with Ambassador Chapuys might do her some good. By December, Katherine's condition had improved some, though death still lingers; and Jane has begun receiving poetry about her beauty from Henry.

Part 2, 3 - It is now Christmas, 1535. Through the winter, the court spends time in Greenwich and Eltham, at the houses of Whitehall and Hampton Court, the childhood homes of Henry. At dinners, they speak of days past, of the retirement and later death of Sir Henry Guildford the diplomat, upon the ascendancy of Anne to the throne. The winter is not good. Fears of French invasion loom heavy. Anne also suspects that Jane Seymour is beginning to have an impact on Henry, and Anne is jealous. Meanwhile, Cromwell recalls taking in a beggar named Anthony, who becomes the jester.

Eustache Chapuys, ambassador from Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, comes to Stepney. A fire breaks out in the ambassador's residence the previous autumn, and he wonders if the Boelyns are the cause of it. Tensions have been high. Speaking with Thomas Cromwell, Chapuys questions him on Henry's plans, such as the rumor that he will force priests to marry. Chapuys also reveals that he has seen how unhappy the English people have become, and Henry's decision to abolish half the sacraments put him in line with heretics. Chapuys has further heard that Katherine is near death, and Cromwell agrees to take him to see her. But first they must go and see the king, who reveals that Anne is with child -and rumor has it, it is not Henry's child. Henry consents to Chapuys's visit to Katherine.

Cromwell, meanwhile, sets to correspondence, helping to settle some petty feuds at New Year's. Suddenly, Maria, Lady Willoughby, arrives to see Cromwell. She has been traveling in horrible weather, urgently seeks an audience with the king, and asks



Cromwell for a pass. Cromwell gives her leave to catch up to Chapuys. Chapuys visits, Katherine recovers for a short while, but ultimately dies.

Back at Henry's court, Anne's pregnancy is announced, and they are both very happy. They have their first child, Elizabeth, paraded about court. Cromwell, meanwhile, goes to see Chapuys, to see how he is doing. Chapuys is beside himself with grief. Jane Seymour, who is now at the court as a lady to Anne, is being advanced upon by Henry. Cromwell learns from his servant, Christophe, that the people believe Katherine has been murdered -and that Thomas Cromwell himself has done it.

Part One Analysis

When Hilary Mantel's novel, "Bring Up the Bodies" begins, events are already moving quickly. Katherine of Aragon Henry's first wife, has essentially been imprisoned and is being looked after by the Bedingfields, while King Henry VIII is looking to produce a male heir with the coveted Ann Boelyn - all the while beginning to make advances on Jane Seymour. Having sought and been denied a divorce, Henry is in the throes of forming his own religion, his own church, much to the chagrin of the people, the Pope, and those who attend England, such as Ambassador Chapuys. At the center of the storm is Thomas Cromwell, born of peasant stock but elevated to power by the king. Cromwell acts as secretary, and unofficial adviser to the king. Cromwell is in a dangerous position, having to keep not only the king happy, but those who attend him and England -both in the court and from other nations- happy.

The events that have preceded the novel, as well as the events currently unfolding, only seem to spell disaster. Beyond Cromwell, none are more in harm's way than the women of the court themselves -notably, Anne and Jane. While Anne attempts to struggle with Henry for power and dominance in their relationship, she unwisely forgets that Henry is king, and used to having his own way. He has only so far favored her because he is in love with her, and because he believes she shall bear him a male heir, despite having already given birth to a daughter, and having suffered miscarriages and stillborn children. Anne's fate seems to rest upon her ability to carry her new pregnancy to term. With Katherine so dispensed with, so too can Anne be dispensed with -and the danger of this looms every day, as Henry has Jane Seymour brought to court, and has begun to make advances on her. Katherine of Aragon, meanwhile, is dying alone -rightfully and legally the queen, she has been relegated to a role similar of a spinster aunt, kept at arm's length, but tolerated. Yet Katherine is dangerous to the King, for she is beloved by the people who ultimately blame her death on Cromwell.

The death of Katherine, and the miserable autumn and winter weather ultimately turn the people against Henry in ways previously unseen. Indeed, they go so far as to blame the weather on the marriage to Anne. Poor crops further complicate the situation, due to the poor weather -and the reformed church Henry has overseen has made the Holy Roman Emperor and his subjects unhappy and angry. There are rumors not only of French invasion, but of halting food trade with England. Henry, meanwhile, appears oblivious to all of these contingencies, for he is torn between lust for Jane Seymour, and

devotion to Anne Boleyn's child, which he dutifully hopes will be a boy. Cromwell is, in effect, forced into the unhappy position of de facto king, having to handle correspondence and diplomacy even as the king proper is distracted.



Part Two

Part Two Summary

Part Two, 2 - Lady Elizabeth Worcester comes to see Cromwell. She is pregnant, and Anne is spreading rumors that the baby is not her husband's. She desires to go to the country. She also reveals that Anne's doors are often closed, and what goes on behind them is not exactly known.

Saint George's Day arrives. England celebrates the day. Cromwell and others deliberate on the predicament of Anne. Some think that if she enters the religious life, the marriage could be easily annulled because the marriage would simply be dissolved. Everyone is searching for a way to annul the marriage quickly and painlessly. They arrive at the conclusion that without a pre-contract, the marriage is not sound or legal. If Anne was married to Harry Percy, the marriage to Henry would simply be finished, and Henry could select a new wife. Anne could then peacefully live out her days in a convent. Thomas Boleyn and his family agree to speak with Anne. They realize their power and their time has come to an end, and better not to fight it.

Cromwell announces to Henry that Thomas Boleyn is willing to cooperate to retain his good name, but his son is not as willing to cooperate. Mary Shelton, cousin of Anne, reveals that Harry Norris loves Anne. Anne knows she is in danger, and therefore, so are all of her ladies. Cromwell tells her she needs to protect herself. Lady Rochford appears to tell Cromwell that her husband, Anne's brother, has kissed Anne in ways inappropriate for siblings. Cromwell considers all of the evidence mounting against Anne, wondering if it is true or concocted. Mark Smeaten, a musician and courtier, says he loves Anne and has been sleeping with her. But he says he is her only lover. Cromwell disagrees, and Mark is unsettled. If he confesses to his sins, and names the names of other lovers, then he might be spared. The next morning, Mark names names: Norris, Weston, Carew, Fitzwilliam, Thomas Wyatt, and others.

People are arrested and brought in for questioning. Mark is spared harm. Cromwell reveals the names from Mark to Henry; Henry says a simple courtier musician cannot be trusted. Henry further wonders how all of the seedy tales that have circled about Anne's sexual exploits could be possible. But Henry comes around to the idea that Anne lied to him. Anne is to be called before the king. That morning, Harry Norris has confessed.

Cromwell and his associates wonder how things will proceed, for a queen has never before been tried of crimes. Anne is taken to the tower, where some describe her as imprisoned. Meanwhile, the Seymours have begun instructing Jane in the manners of the queen, in manners of civility, and so on. Even her clothes are being carefully picked, in the traditional English style, for French fashion is falling out of favor.



Cromwell has Francis Bryan, a common relative of the Seymours and the Boleyns, brought to him. Cromwell asks Bryan if he can count on Bryan's support at the trial.

Cromwell goes to speak to King Henry, who is thinking about everything going on. He remembers how things began with Anne years before. Rumors circulate that Anne has made a deal with the Devil to be queen, but the Devil has made sure that she shall bear no children. Rumors abound that Elizabeth was smuggled into the chamber while the dead baby was smuggled out. Cromwell goes to see George Norris, but Norris will not confess to anything. He likewise says that all those that have been imprisoned will not confess, either. Cromwell attempts to trick Norris into confession by using the words of others against him; Norris does not take the bait.

Thomas Cromwell meets with George Boleyn. He confronts George with accusations of incest between George and Anne. If George reveals all he knows about his sister and other men, his life might be saved, Cromwell reveals. He reluctantly agrees. Francis Weston's family approaches Cromwell with money to help their son; Cromwell refuses. Francis Weston, himself in debt, is rumored to have bedded the queen for money. Weston says others bedded the queen, not he.

May arrives. Cromwell goes to see Ann, to talk to her and to question her. He reveals to her that confessions have poured out against her. She seems to be resigned to her fate. Cromwell later goes over the indictments against Anne, dictated by the king. They include numerous instances of adulterous behavior, all instigated by Anne. Other families -like the Courtenays and the Poles- say they are not surprised at Anne's behavior, for she is a heretic. With her gone, the king could return to the auspices of Rome. There is the final matter of Anne's possible previous marriage to Harry Percy, and Cromwell goes to see him. Percy, who has in the past been threatened by the king and Cromwell to get out of the way so the king can marry Anne, is now stubborn and will not say he was married to Anne.

As the King's relationship with Jane commences, the people begin to support her. They have suspected Anne of being French, but Jane is one of their own country. Offers pour in from across Europe for marriage for Henry.

Meanwhile, writs for trials are drawn up, with different people being tried separately for different reasons. People take bets on who will live and who will die. The Duke of Norfolk presides over things. Only Mark declares his guilt and pleads for mercy. Word arrives from Rome that if Henry should seek return, they would gladly welcome him back into the fold.

The Queen, Anne, is brought before trial. Anne denies all rumors, all affairs, all charges of incest, everything except giving Weston money. George Boleyn is also brought before trial. The others are also put on trial. Death sentences are prepared, and taken to Henry to sign. A French executioner beheads the guilty.



Gregory accompanies his father on the day that Anne is beheaded. As she is executed, the people watching bow and pray. Many believe Anne's death will bring about peace in England, once and for all.

Part 2, 3 - Henry orders all of Anne's clothing destroyed. He quickly and quietly marries Jane at Whitehall. Anne's debts are paid, as is the executioner. New council members are appointed, and the court is transformed with new faces. It is now summer, 1536. Cromwell is made Baron.

Part Two Analysis

Desperate times call for desperate measures, and desperate people do desperate things. This is certainly true of Anne, who seems to be spiraling out of control between the death of her last baby, the king's courting of Jane, and the loss of Anne's own power and influence with Henry. Anne is bound to fate by the king from the start. She has no chance to for reprieve, as the king and his men conspire in countless ways against her, seeking reasons to nullify the marriage. But Anne is tempestuous at best about the idea of giving up the power she has held onto for years, and so she refuses the initial prods to force her to step down, and to go and live in a convent. Having refused this offer that should not have been refused, Cromwell and his allies go to work for the king, soliciting any and all information they can to bring to bear against Anne.

Indeed, the second part of the novel (the final three chapters) revolve around the efforts of the king's men, with Cromwell at the head, to find a way to eliminate Anne from the throne. At the same time, Cromwell is again forced to cover the king's slack with diplomacy and matters of grave internal concern. At one point, the king even goes so far as to snap at Cromwell, asking Cromwell if he thinks himself king. The king later recants, and indirectly apologizes to Cromwell, by heaping eloquent praise and respect upon him. Cromwell is himself a difficult character to understand: he professes to be a Christian, and stands by Christian tradition and observance and ritual, but he does not behave as though a Christian: he lies and manipulates others around him to the king's wills and desires.

As the novel progresses, Cromwell -who certainly fears for his own life, his own position, and his family- does the king's bidding, and betrays his own Christian ethics, in order to do so. He pulls out every stop and goes to every length possible in order to build a case against Anne. The case that he builds warrants execution not only for her, but for her suspected lovers as well -even when they confess to save their lives. The offer of life Anne has been given has been refused to her detriment; rather than living at a convent, she shall die as queen. Yet, she appears to have had only that choice: to either live or die in shame. Anne has ultimately selected the latter, for whatever reasons. And Cromwell, for all of his efforts, rises once more through the ranks of the king's circles, as he is promoted to baron. Yet the title does not mean so much to him as his success in maintaining his position and his influence on the king.



Characters

Thomas Cromwell

Thomas Cromwell is the main character in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. Cromwell is middle-aged, and is the Secretary to King Henry VIII. Raised as a blacksmith's son, Cromwell served the right people at the right time, and was brought up through the ranks of England's elites, all the way to be the right hand man of the king himself. In addition to his role as Secretary, Cromwell is Master of the Rolls, Chancellor of Cambridge University, and Deputy Head of the Church in England. Cromwell is the widower of Elizabeth Cromwell, and father of Anne and Grace Cromwell, also deceased. But Cromwell is the father of his living son, Gregory, and uncle of Richard.

Cromwell appears as an antihero in the novel, serving both good and bad ends through the king. Cromwell is tasked standing in for the king in diplomatic and internal affairs while the king pursues women. He does what he can that is best for the country in terms of negotiations and treaties, yet must also satisfy the king's wishes and demands. Cromwell professes to be a Christian, and though he prays and goes through the motions, he does not appear to be a passionate believer, for he uses decidedly un-Christian means to achieve the aims of the king. Cromwell's principal role in the novel, especially through its second part, is to find a way to remove Anne as queen.

Cromwell sets to his task by enlisting allies and spies, and begins collecting information which he can then use against Anne. At first, he offers her family the chance to help annul the marriage, and to remove Anne to a convent, but not all the Boleyns are on board, including Anne. With peaceful means of removal refused, Cromwell goes in for the kill. He uses the information he has collected and solicited to entrap supposed lovers of the queen, turning them against each other, and against Anne. They are all brought up on charges of treason and adultery, and are executed, including Anne. For all of Cromwell's machinations, he is able to preserve his power, his wealth, and his family's prestige, while serving the king and England, most of which is against Anne anyways. Cromwell is ultimately promoted to baron for his efforts, and continues to stay in the good graces of the king through the end of the novel.

King Henry VIII

King Henry VIII is of the Tudor family, and is the ruler of England, and the head of the new church he is reforming there. Henry is balding, is gaining weight about his midsection, and is the husband of both Katherine, whom he has divorced, and Anne Boleyn, whom he has subsequently married. Henry longs for a male heir to the throne, and tries unsuccessfully with Anne multiple times to create such an heir. But Anne's tempestuous ways and inability to carry a male child begin to weigh in on Henry, making him wonder if God Himself has come down against the illicit marriage. With the mood of the people of the country against Anne as well, Henry is determined to have the



marriage with Anne annulled. At the same time, Henry has begun developing feelings for Jane Seymour, and is making advances on her.

In so doing, he solicits the help of his Secretary, Thomas Cromwell, who commences to have information against Anne collected to be used against her. Adultery and incest percolate the information, and Anne is executed for her crimes. This leaves Henry free to pursue and marry Jane. For Cromwell's efforts, Henry makes him a baron.

Jane Seymour

Jane Seymour is the daughter of Sir John Seymour, and his wife, Margery. Jane is a plain and childlike girl in her late twenties, and she captures the heart of Henry. She refuses to have anything to do with him unless they are married, so the king makes vows that he shall indeed marry her. Jane spends much of the novel preparing to be queen, trained by her family members, who relish her royal future. After Anne Boleyn's death, Jane quickly and quietly marries King Henry VIII.

Anne Boelyn

Anne Boleyn is the second wife of King Henry VIII. Once pretty, she is now in her thirties, and has begun to age quickly. She and Henry have a daughter, Elizabeth, but have not been able to have a boy. Anne blames everything possible on her miscarriages, including being cursed by others and being overly stressed by Henry's flirtations with Jane Seymour. Anne is tempestuous and in love with power, and in the effort to have a boy and stay queen, she is rumored to have bedded many men. Rumors abound of incest with her brother. This information is collected by Thomas Cromwell and used against her to attempt to get her to abandon the throne; when she refuses, she is put on trial, found guilty, and executed, along with her lovers.

Katherine of Aragon

Katherine of Aragon is the first wife of Henry VIII. She is being kept at Kimbolton, at the home of the Bedingfields, under house arrest, along with her and Henry's daughter, Mary. Katherine is sad and despondent, and is slowly dying. Cromwell suspects that she is dying of a broken heart, and that she still loves Henry in some way. Katherine is loved by the people, so she cannot be executed. When she dies, rumors abound of her being murdered or poisoned.

Eustache Chapuys

Eustache Chapuys is the ambassador to England from the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V. Chapuys is kindly and brave, arguing with the king over foreign policy and diplomacy. Chapuys is an enemy of Anne, refusing to recognize her as queen, instead only recognizing Katherine as queen.



Gregory Cromwell

Gregory Cromwell is the sole surviving child and son of Thomas Cromwell. Gregory is a dutiful and loyal son, who much admires his father. He helps tend to his father's business, and protects his father's privacy.

Rafe Sadler

Rafe Sadler is the chief clerk and loyal ally of Thomas Cromwell. He is married to the beautiful Helen. Rafe is nominated to the privy council of the king, and bears for Cromwell news, information, and rumors.

Mark Smeaton

Mark Smeaton is a musician and a courtier at the court of King Henry. Mark has an affair with Anne Boleyn, and is quick to pronounce others of the same crime in exchange for the chance to save his own life. Nevertheless, he is executed for his crimes against the king.

Henry Norris

Henry Norris is a kindly and gentle man who is head of the king's privy chamber. He is suspected of an affair with Anne Boleyn, and executed for his crimes. Unlike his fellows suspected of and charged with adultery, Norris will not condemn his fellows.



Objects/Places

England

England is an island nation north and west of the European continent, often considered part of Europe. It is a kingdom ruled by King Henry VIII, and is the main setting for the novel.

London

London is the capital city of England, and home to King Henry VIII. For fear of disease, plague, and infection, Henry only stays in London in the cold months.

Whitehall

Whitehall is King Henry's childhood home, and where he hosts court. Much of the novel takes place at Whitehall.

Wolf Hall

Wolf Hall is the ancestral family home of the Seymour family. It is where King Henry, Thomas Cromwell, and the court visit and stay throughout much of the summer and autumn. It is at Wolf's Hall that Henry meets and begins to fall for Jane Seymour.

Kimbolton

Kimbolton is a town up country in England, where the Bedingfields have a castle. There, Katherine of Aragon and her daughter, Mary, are kept under house arrest. Thomas Cromwell goes to Kimbolton to see Katherine and her condition.

Rome

Rome is the seat of Catholic power in the world, and the head of Christendom. From Rome, the Pope threatens excommunication if Henry does not return to the church.

France

France is a western European nation. Parts of it are owned by England through marriage and war. France threatens invasion of England throughout the novel.



Sword

A sword is wielded by the imported French executioner, who carries out the sentence of death on Anne Boleyn and her lovers.

French Styled Clothing

French styled clothing is very much in fashion when Anne Boleyn is queen. Many English people resent this. When Anne is executed, French styled clothing quickly goes out of fashion.

Paper

Paper is a rare and highly valued item, and is used for official correspondence and legal documents throughout the novel. Thomas Cromwell, however, seems to have no short supply of it.



Themes

Intrigue

Intrigue is a major and dominant theme in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. Intrigue includes mystery, deception, rumors and rumor spreading, plotting, forbidden romances, and the like. Intrigue is found throughout the entirety of the novel, in various forms, and in various ways. Intrigue can be found mainly about three specific individuals: Anne Boleyn, King Henry, and Thomas Cromwell.

The intrigue that surrounds Anne Boleyn has to do with her existence and position as queen, and the rumors circulating about her. While still married, Anne compelled Henry to abandon Katherine to remarry, defying even the Pope in Rome to do so. This illicit romance, and the following marriage, produces only a daughter, and no male heirs. In order to produce a male heir, Anne conducts numerous illicit affairs with every man she can in order to increase her chances of pregnancy. Indeed, she blames her inability to conceive an heir on the king's own illicit romances, and on curses placed against her.

King Henry's intrigue has mainly to do with his illicit affairs - first with Anne Boleyn, and then later with Jane Seymour. He craftily disguises his intentions and advances as chivalric in nature; he then moves in for the kill. Yet neither Anne nor Jane will divest themselves to the king, forcing him into marriage to secure his ends. He likewise uses his subordinates to carry out his ends, making intimations about his goals, and allowing them to do his dirty work through whatever means necessary or expedient.

The intrigue that surrounds Thomas Cromwell has to do with power and the king's machinations. Thomas Cromwell seizes upon these rumors and deploys spies against Anne and her allies to solicit more information to use against her. He then lies to and deceives her allies and her lovers into betraying one another, and into revealing even more information -all of it to be used against Anne. In the end, Anne's own ways of intrigue work against her, and Cromwell's path of intrigue works for him.

Love

Love is a major and dominant theme in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. Love exists in at least three ways in the novel, and each influences the novel in various ways. First, there is romantic love. Second, there is familial love. Third, there is brotherly love. Each of these forms of love not only influence the novel, but have various devastating events for the people involved.

Romantic love exists primarily between Henry and his wives. Once in love with Katherine, Henry is no longer returning the feelings that she retains for him, even on her death bed. Henry's love for Anne Boleyn has also faded with her age and her inability to bear him a son. And Henry's newest romantic inclinations are toward Jane Seymour, whom he ultimately marries. Romantic love also exists in at least one more place in the



novel, and that is the love that Thomas Cromwell possesses for his late wife, Elizabeth. He has many chances to remarry, but his love for Elizabeth is so great that he cannot move on to any other women. It is perhaps, besides Cromwell's fatherhood, that is the most tender and human side of him.

Familial love exists primarily among the members of the Boleyn, Cromwell, and Seymour families. The Boleyns are a close-knit family that savors the power they have come to hold through Anne's marriage to Henry. As such, they encourage her and support her in her endeavors to bear Henry a son, and do everything they can to keep her in the good graces of the king. However, the familial love among the Boleyns is fickle, for they do little to help Anne once she has been condemned, and seek only to preserve their own good name. The Seymours are an old family, and have their share of intrigue among them. But on the whole, they are supportive and caring people, and tend diligently to their daughter Jane, especially after the king sets his sights on her. They help train her to be queen. But one must wonder how deep their familial love and loyalties go. Perhaps the only true and unchangeable appearance of familial love in the novel comes through the Cromwells. Thomas Cromwell deeply loves his departed daughters and his living son and nephew, and as such, cares for his entire family. Everything he does is to benefit his family, and advance them.

Brotherly love also exists in the novel, perhaps to the greatest effects anywhere among the plot. Brotherly love occurs principally between King Henry VIII, and Thomas Cromwell. This brotherly love includes everything from respect to loyalty. Henry, for example, tolerates defiance and argument from Cromwell where he will not tolerate it from others. Indeed, acts of anger against others go unchecked, while a singular instance of anger against Cromwell is met by greater respects and praise. It is partially Cromwell's brotherly love of Henry that spurs him on to do the king's bidding, and to seek to find a way to supplant Anne with Jane as queen.

Betrayal

Betrayal is major, recurring theme throughout the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. Betrayal includes hurting a loved one, an ally, or a friend, by nefarious means, leading to a downfall, exposure, imprisonment, rejection, death, and so on. Betrayal in the novel revolves around the Boleyn family, King Henry, and the lovers of Anne Boleyn.

Betrayal for the Boleyn family has to do with the members of the family turning on one another as Anne's days appear to be numbered. Lady Rochford betrays her husband, Anne's brother, claiming he has had an incestuous relationship with Anne. Whether or not this is true is unknown; yet it leads to George Boleyn's execution. Thomas Boleyn, who has helped push his daughter, Anne, into the king's arms in order to advance his own family, just as quickly abandons Anne when Cromwell reveals that her days are numbered. indeed, all Thomas Boleyn cares about in the end is preserving his family's own good name.



Betrayal for King Henry has to do with his wives and his former allies. Thomas Wolsey, dead before the events of the book, is dismissed for opposing the king's plans against the church and against Katherine. Katherine's marriage to Henry is betrayed by his lust and pursuit of Anne, divorcing Katherine and beginning a new religion in order to be rid of Katherine. Henry next betrays Anne, as Anne betrays Henry, with affairs with extramarital partners. There are at least four for Anne; Henry's sights are set solely on Jane Seymour.

Betrayal also arises among the lovers of Anne Boleyn. As they are fingered one by one, Cromwell uses the power of his office, and the information from his spies, against them. Mark Smeaton, for example, declares his own innocence while indicting and condemning his fellow adulterers. They in turn, with the exception of George Norris, do the same. They are eager to preserve their own lives at the expense of selling all of the others out.

Style

Point of View

Hilary Mantel writes her novel "Bring up the Bodies" in the third-person omniscient narrative from the perspective of Thomas Cromwell. She explains in her note at the end of the book that little is written of Cromwell, and so she has offered this account for her readers, focusing on the events of a few weeks from the perspective of Thomas. The third-person omniscient narrative works best for the novel as is told, for at least three reasons. The first is that, in order to set the right mood for the story, a third-person narrator's voice can use modern and medieval language combined, giving the reader a feel for medieval England without actually overwhelming the reader in older forms of English. The second is that the cast of characters is so large, so interrelated, and so vast in every way (class, rank, homes, etc.) that a third-person narrator best manages conveying these people to the reader. The third reason is that, because the novel is historical, set in a time widely-known but little understood, and incorporating a wide range of events, the third-person narrator offers clear and concise transition between these places and events.

Setting

Hilary Mantel sets her novel, "Bring up the Bodies", in sixteenth-century England. Because the novel is historical, and details the events of King Henry's marriages with Katherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, and Jane Seymour, there is no alternative setting to sixteenth-century England. Indeed, the times of the setting, and the setting itself, offer a rich tapestry of characters, customs, and culture reminiscent of, but not entirely similar to the modern day. In particular, Mantel focuses her novel between the locations of Wolf Hall, home of Jane Seymour and her family, and London's Whitehall, home of King Henry VIII. Doing this allows the reader to see the characters, historically-based, in their own historical environments. It is thus easier to understand the events of the book with the grounded historical setting.

Language and Meaning

Hilary Mantel writes her novel, "Bring up the Bodies", in language that is at once both poetic and simple, but also modern and traditional. The medieval era, known for things like courtly love, chivalry, and the recognition of elements of beauty in music and in art, is properly reflected by the simple, yet poetic prose that Mantel uses. She also deftly blends together traditional modern English with contemporary English, giving the plot, characters, and events a sense of authenticity. Her descriptions are not anachronistic; neither are they so remote that modern readers cannot understand them. Using these forms of language in such a way is compelling to the reader, rather than distancing to the reader, and makes the book itself very believable.

Structure

Hilary Mantel divides her novel, "Bring up the Bodies", into two main parts. Each part is subsequently divided into three chapters. The division of the parts have to do with the leading up of the king to want to dispel Anne from marriage and her position as queen, and actually working to ensure that it does happen. The chapters themselves focus around particular points of that decision. The second chapter of part two, for example, mainly deals with Cromwell's efforts to gather information together against Anne Boleyn, and to see her executed for her actions. This simple and uncomplicated book structure allows the reader to focus on the events of the novel, and the characters responsible for, and participating in those events, rather than on the structure of the book itself. When the subject matter is centuries old, and the cast of characters boundless, such a simple structure greatly benefits the novel.

Quotes

"My boy Thomas, give him a dirty look and he'll gouge your eyes out. Trip him, and he'll cut off your leg. But if you don't cut across him, he's a very gentleman. And he'll stand anybody a drink."

-Part One, 1, p. 7

"Where will you strike next, Cromwell? You are going to pull all England down."

-Part One, 2, p. 42

"Go knows our hearts, madam. There is no need for an idle formula, or for an intermediary." No need for language either, he thinks: God is beyond translation.

-Part 1, 2, p. 91

"Those who are made can be unmade."

-Part One, 3, p. 111

What is the nature of the border between truth and lies? It is permeable and blurred because it is planted thick with rumor, confabulation, misunderstandings, and twisted tales. Truth can break the gates down, truth can howl in the street; unless truth is pleasing, personable and easy to like, she is condemned to stay whimpering at the back door.

Part Two, 1, p. 159

"Who can understand the lives of women?"

-Part Two, 1, p. 179

"I really believe, Cromwell, that you think you are king, and I am the blacksmith's boy."

-Part Two, 1, p. 232

"Anne is dead to herself. We shall have no trouble with her now."

-Part Two, 2, p. 303

"We must look into a glass of truth. I think I am to blame, as what I suspected I did not own."

-Part Two, 2, p. 315

He thinks, strive as I might, one day I will be gone and as this world goes it may not be long: what though I am a man of firmness and vigour, fortune is mutable and either my enemies will do for me or my friends. When the time comes I may vanish before the ink

is dry.
-Part 3, 3, p. 407

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the theme of intrigue in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. What is intrigue? Where does it appear in the novel, and which characters are responsible for it? How do these characters sow intrigue, and what forms of intrigue do they use to their own ends? Are they successful? Why or why not?

Why does King Henry turn away from Anne Boleyn to Jane Seymour in the novel? What does he hope to gain by divorcing himself of Anne, and marrying Jane? What are the consequences of the king's actions for the Boleyns, including Anne? What are the consequences of the king's actions for Jane and her family?

Discuss the theme of love in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. What forms of love appear in the novel? Between whom does love occur? Are any of these appearances of love truly genuine? For the appearances of love that are not genuine, can these appearances truly be called love? Does love have an overall positive or negative effect on the events of the novel? Why?

Thomas Cromwell appears as a morally ambivalent character in the novel, though he has his motives for being so. Is he a hero, an antihero, a tragic hero, or a villain? Why? Provide evidence to support your claim.

Discuss the theme of betrayal in the novel "Bring up the Bodies" by Hilary Mantel. What is betrayal? Among which characters does betrayal occur? How? How do these instances of betrayal affect the course of the novel? In the novel, such betrayals are oftentimes punishable by death - as is the case with Anne Boleyn. Do you feel this is a fair punishment for betrayal? Why or why not?