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## Broken Minds and Shattered Bodies: Re-mapping the British Society in Hilary Mantel's *Every Day is Mother's Day* and *Wolf Hall*

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**Abstract:** Hilary Mantel, a well-established British novelist, needs no introduction as her fame rests not only on the basis of the volumes of works she has published but also on the basis of awards and honours she has received due to her prominent works. The present research paper seeks to explore some hidden aspects of the British society and the hollowness of the relationships. She has taken the themes how even the family members do not show the ultimate devotion, keenness and loyalty to one another. There is no comfort even in the royal court. She has depicted the Tudor dynasty in her novel *Wolf Hall*. This novel has won the Booker Prize in 2009 and after that its sequel *Bring up the Bodies* has also won the same prize in 2012. Mantel is known as a historical novelist and present paper encompasses such recurring themes and motifs in her select novels. In this paper two novels *Every Day is Mother's Day* and *Wolf Hall* have been taken for analysis from the critical camera. The theories 'Simulacra' and 'Hyperreality' coined by Jean Baudrillard also have been applied on Hilary Mantel's novels.

**Keywords:** British History, Tudor Dynasty, English Reformation, Hypocrisy, Relationships, Introvert Nature of People, Modern Impact, Depiction of British Society, Historical Fiction.

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"You'll never gain strength if you don't eat."

(Mantel: *An Experiment in Love* 52)

Dame Hilary Mary Mantel is a British novelist who was born in 1952 in Glossop, Derbyshire in England. She has two siblings and she was the eldest among them. She has seen the unreal world of England very keenly and that's why her works are based on what she has seen from her eyes herself. Her first novel *Every Day is Mother's Day* (1985) marks the beginning of her writing career with a very positive note because this novel gives her an inspiration to keep her writing continuing in future also. She has written two historical novels and apart from that she has written *The Vacant Possession* (1986), *Eight Months on Ghazal Street* (1988), *Fludd* (1989), *A Place of Greater Safety* (1992), *A Change of Climate* (1994), *An Experiment in Love* (1995), *The Giant O'Brien* (1998), *Beyond Black* (2005), *Wolf Hall* (2009), *Bring Up the Bodies* (2009) and *The Mirror and the Light* (2020). Her works are based on her personal experiences, historical fiction and few short stories. She was the first woman who bagged the Booker Prize twice J. M. Coetzee, J.G. Farrell and Peter Carey. She has written a personal memoir *Giving up the Ghost* which was published in 2003.

Hilary Mantel's works can be analysed on the basis of Jean Baudrillard's theories. Baudrillard was a leading intellectual figure who had his friendship with Roland Barthes and published his book *The System of Objects* in 1968. Though he has overtly never wrote that he deals with postmodernism, yet it is clear that he is more or less related with postmodernism like Lyotard. His philosophy deals with twin concepts of 'simulacra' and 'hyperreality' and both these terms symbolise the unreal or the virtual nature of the contemporary world in which most of the people try to pose something else while they are something different from what they look from outside and it can be easily found in Hilary Mantel's two novels *Every Day is Mother's Day* and *Wolf Hall*.

Jean Baudrillard defines Simulacra in these words, "A simulacrum is a copy of a copy, so far removed from its original, that it can stand on its own and even replace the original. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal.... substituting the signs of the real for the real" (Baudrillard 1983). He writes that the modern world is based on the concept of real and virtual. According to Baudrillard, "We cannot imagine how much the virtual as though running ahead of us-has already transformed all the representations we have of the world (Baudrillard 2002, 108). So far as simulacrum is concerned, it has true value because modern world is based on different signs and symbols as, "The simulacrum is true. We live in a world full of signs and symbols" (Baudrillard 1). In the present context, hyperreal takes the place of the pure reality and thus, the dividing line between the two is eroded. Baudrillard's treatise *Simulacra and Simulation* is a well-known work now because this book deals with the signs, symbols and images and their relationships in the modern world. Hilary Mantel's novels also, to some extent, deal with these twin concepts and present paper attempts to examine it from that perspective.

Hilary Mantel's novel *Every Day is Mother's Day* (1985) is about the unreal world in the modern world in which a mother-daughter and a husband-wife relationship have been narrated. The story deals with only few characters who live nearby and have different mentalities. The main protagonist of this novel is Muriel who is a mentally-retarded girl. Hilary Mantel has tried to depict how her pregnancy remains a mystery even to her mother Evelyn because she does not allow Muriel to cross the threshold of her house. She keeps her locked indoor and stops her classes in the Day Care Centre. Muriel also knows that her mother hates her but still they live together due to compulsion.

Evelyn's husband dies and she communicates with him due to her magical powers. Even her neighbour Mrs. Sydney also comes to her house so that she can also communicate with her husband with Evelyn's help. Evelyn helps her communicate with late Mr Sidney.

Evelyn seems to be a cruel woman in this novel. She is devoid of a motherly respect. She does not pay much attention for the welfare of her daughter. She shows a selfish attitude. When Muriel gives birth to a child, Evelyn plans to drown it into the canal. Hilary Mantel writes about this incidence:

They watched the box growing sodden, tipping into the water. 'It must be moving', Evelyn said, then darkness sucked it away. They waited on the bank for ten minutes. It was quite dark now. 'It must be dead,' Evelyn said at last. 'They won't give you anything in exchange for a corpse. Well, I did the best I could for you, Muriel.' (191)

There is another story of husband and wife in this novel in which Colin and Sylvia are husband and wife but Colin is in love with Isabel Field. He spends his time with Isabel and has extra-marital relationship with her. But when he shows a bit responsibility that he denies to marry Isabel saying that her wife is pregnant and he cannot leave her alone in this condition. This step taken by Colin is really praiseworthy.

Hilary Mantel has depicted the futility of human life, marriage, divorce, live-in relationships and break up of marriages through this novel. Colin and Isabel are in live-in relationships and they have no feelings for each other except physical desires. There are no fellow-feelings between the Axons and Sydney families which show the devastating impact of the modern age where even neighbours remain like strangers. Muriel's pregnancy without her marriage is also a good proof to show this nature. That's why Evelyn tries her level best to hide Muriel from her neighbours and the social workers of the Day Care Centre. Christmas is the day of celebration and sharing the joys with others but Evelyn does not want to interact with anybody on this day and she does not like the entry of her neighbours and the social workers of the Day Care Centre.

The frustration of Evelyn has been narrated from the incidence of locking of Isabel Field by Evelyn in the store room. Isabel interrupted their peace and Evelyn gets angry. Isabel requests Evelyn to unlock the door but Evelyn does not listen to her. Colin comes to rescue Isabel and in the attempt of rescue, Evelyn gets injured and dies. After her death, Muriel becomes an orphan as she has lost her father and mother now. As they did not have any relationships with their neighbours, they also pay no attention to Muriel and every one remains busy in his personal work.

The impact of modern world is clearly seen in this novel. Though there is no dearth of materialistic comforts in the present time but the bond of relationships of the human beings is not much strong. The people think that only money can give them comfort and this mentality makes the people alienated and isolated. In this novel, the characters suffer from alienation. When Clifford was alive, Evelyn could not attach with her mentally because of his rude behaviour and abusing nature.

Mrs Sidney also experiences the same isolation after the death of her husband. There is a love triangle among Colin, Sylvia and Isabel Field. Colin and Sylvia's married life is not going on the smooth track because of Colin's extra-marital affairs.

Isabel Field is another character who is also the victim of the devastating impacts of the modern world. She also tries to show what she is not. The case of Muriel is given to Isabel field because the other social workers do not want to take any tension given by Evelyn. Miss Isabel has only her lewd father in home and in the pursuit of peace and happiness, Isabel tries to find it elsewhere. She knows that Colin is a married school teacher, still she has relationships with her in the hope that Colin will marry her but her dreams of marrying Colin are shattered when Colin denies to marry her stating that he cannot divorce his wife. This news gives her a mental shock. She becomes pessimistic and it increases her drinking habit. She loses the control of other official activities also and that's the reason, she lost Muriel's file and that's why she does not visit her house and Evelyn remains successful in hiding Muriel's pregnancy. The hope of a human child in the exchange of the changeling leads the drowning of the newly-born baby. The transformation comes in Muriel's life when Colin comes to rescue Isabel Field and Muriel helps Colin. Evelyn gets angry with Muriel and she tries to prevent Colin from bringing her outside. In this effort, Evelyn gets a blow and dies. This death makes Muriel a pitiable figure and her institutionalization to the hospital later her disguise as Lizzie Blank. She decides to take revenge on some characters after ten years with Mrs. Wilmot.

Hilary Mantel's novels usually remain replete with the moral impressions and didactic messages. There is always a good message behind her works. One thing is clear from her works that some of her works are historical fictions such as *Wolf Hall* and *Bring up the Bodies*. However, there is another work entitled *The*

Mirror and the Light which is also the part of her trilogy. Hilary Mantel has written about the Tudor dynasty in her historical fiction like other novelists such as Alison Weir, Karen Harper, David Starkey, Philippa Gregory C. J. Sansom, Jean Plaidy etc. but Hilary Mantel's historical novels remain much different from other novelists because of her depiction of the events and the unique style of writing. Manasvinee Mukulargues, "Hilary Mantel is not the first novelist to write about Tudor history. Many novelists have chosen Tudor age as the background of their bestselling novels before Hilary Mantel's novels about Tudor era published" (Mukul 443). Hilary Mantel has chosen Thomas Cromwell as a central character in her novel *Wolf Hall*. He has been the pivotal figure behind the plan of Henry's annulment with Catherine of Aragon and his remarriage to Anne Boleyn. He played an important role in the separation of the Roman Catholic Church from England and the establishment of the Church of England. For some time, he was not liked by the people of his kingdom but later Geoffrey Elton presented his good image in his novel *Tudor Revolution in Government* (1953). Likewise, Hilary Mantel also presents very positive image of Cromwell in her novels. This book narrates his personal life and his political achievements and his gradual development from Cardinal Wolsey's assistant to King's right handman.

The novel *Wolf Hall* has been written in six parts and each part has three chapters. The first part of the novel is about Cromwell's early childhood in 1500 and Hilary Mantel remains the first novelist who has shed light on Cromwell's personal life. His birth in a blacksmith family and his rise as a right hand man of the King of the nation remains one of the biggest achievements in his life. The novel describes how hard life had been for him. The novel begins when Cromwell is lying wounded and helpless. He fears his father's advances to him who has beaten him almost up to his death. The first scene is set in the town of Putney in England where his father Walter beats his black and blue in a drunken state. The lines describe this incidence thus:

'So now get up!' Walter is roaring down at him, working out where to kick him next. He lifts his head an inch or two, and moves forward, on his belly, trying to do it without exposing his hands, on which Walter enjoys stamping. 'What are you, an eel?' his parent asks. He trots backwards, gathers pace, and aims another kick. (WH 3)

This beating opens Cromwell's eyes and he leaves his home and joins the army to become a soldier. He becomes a soldier, banker and practices law. He develops good relationship with Wolsey. Cardinal tells him that Henry is willing to annul his marriage with Katherine because she could not give her a son and Wolsey is a bit apprehensive that Katherine will put up a fight. When he reaches his home, his wife Liz informs him that she has received a mysterious package from Germany. They talk about their children also. Later Cromwell gets a seat in the Parliament and he wants to help in the cardinal's case. He becomes the supreme head of the Church of England and the Vicar General. Many people become his enemies during his journey to access power. Thus, this novel describes Cromwell's life in a unique and impressiveway.

Identity remains as a prevalent theme in this novel. From the beginning to the end of the novel, Cromwell remains as a historical figure who is bullied by his abusive father. Hilary Mantel has presented a much balanced image of Cromwell through this novel. Oliver Cromwell's journey from rags to riches, the rises and falls in his life, malleable and flexible decisions, obstacles on the way and the evolution of his self has been depicted through this novel.

Power and ambition also remain as powerful themes in this novel. Not only Oliver Cromwell, the readers come to notice even in the few pages of the novel that the characters of the novel are power mongers and remain highly ambitious. The politics and religion also remain at the forefront in the novel. The people of the church such as priests, popes, bishops, archbishops and cardinals remain highly ambitious. They become blind in the wake of wealth and high ambition. The powerful people have only a little to do with the spiritual matters. The church plays an important role in shaping a nation and defining the culture of a nation.

Hilary Mantel's works fit on Jean Baudrillard's theories and how Hilary Mantel's ideas are seem quite detached from the empirical experience. Hilary Mantel's writing style is provocative, enlightening, persuasive and informative. His book *Simulacra and Simulation* remains the full-length work which theories suit on Hilary Mantel's novels.

In conclusive remarks, it can be stated that Hilary Mantel's both novels *Every Day is Mother's Day* and *Wolf Hall* deal with some common issues such as identity, conflicts, shattered self, fragmented souls, distorted mentality, alienation while there are some differences such as the characters in the first novels are farcical while the characters in the historical novel *Wolf Hall* have a prominent place in the British History and Hilary Mantel has presented a very justified, defensible and unprejudiced image of Oliver Cromwell in *Wolf Hall*.

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