



**MALMÖ UNIVERSITY**  
FACULTY OF CULTURE  
AND SOCIETY

# **Thomas Cromwell's Lesson in Patriotism**

## **Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies* as Literature for Upbringing Russian Minds**

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Bachelor

15 hp

Term 6 2022

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## **Abstract**

The paper analyses Hilary Mantel's novel *Bring Up the Bodies* in terms of how it might correlate with the notion of Russian patriotism. The origin for the research lies in the official list of literature recommended for patriotic education in Russia that was compiled in late 2015 and is thus immediately connected with the surge of state-driven patriotism in the country following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. *Bring Up the Bodies* is among very few contemporary historical novels by non-Russian authors included in the list. The conducted analysis reveals certain features in the novel's protagonist and his behaviour that might correspond with the understanding of patriotism and citizenship in Russians. Moreover, the paper argues that legal pragmatism practiced by the protagonist, as well as the very style of historical representation in the novel, that re-evaluates the historical figure of Cromwell and undermines subjectivity of the historical past, may be seen as legitimising contemporary politics in Russia by way of establishing a "tradition."

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## 1. Introduction

The aggression that Russia is currently waging against Ukraine and, ultimately— on the level of information war— against the entire Western world, has put the West before the uneasy question: how can it be that a majority of the Russian population seems to be supporting what looks like an ugly massacre of a “brother” nation? We have “suddenly” found, to our horror, that the media sphere in the country is almost entirely a playground of belligerent propaganda, made of handpicked dubious facts, sleazy half-truths and blatant lies. Its effect is surprisingly ubiquitous and powerful, affecting huge amounts of people not only in Russia, but also Russian speakers abroad—first of all, in the former Soviet republics— often making them demonstrate a strong reaction of rejection to any alternative view of reality. However, for people to be so susceptible to propaganda, it should fall on a prepared ground, to be compatible with the cultural code wired into their world picture, so to say. As the declared reason for such unquestioning allegiance with the aggressor state is more often than not associated with Russian patriotism, it would seem interesting to make an attempt at exploring some of the components of the cultural code related to this kind of patriotism, as they find their reflection in literary works.

My search got the starting impulse from *A List of Recommended Literature of Civic and Patriotic Orientation (Primernyj spisok literatury grazhdansko-patrioticheskoy napravlennosti*, translation is mine), hereafter referred to as the *Spisok* (The Ushinsky Library), a product of the collaboration between The Ushinsky State Scientific Pedagogical Library (part of the Russian Academy of Education) and the Russian School Library Association. The *Spisok*, published in April 2016, is designed for Russian public schools and includes about 150 books recommended for afterschool reading, with some 120 titles intended for the high school age. After a decade-long pause, efforts in patriotic education were resumed in earnest in the early 2000-s Russia with a number of state-run programs and

initiatives. In 2009, Rapoport argued that “the new emphasis on strengthening patriotic education is not simply a stylistic move ... in Russia but rather a sign of a deeper involvement of the state in educational processes ... to shape, control, and eventually sustain an ideological framework of education” (143). The controlling trend gained new impetus after the first phase of Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea in 2014. In December 2014, Putin signed the Fundamentals of State Cultural Policy (*Osnovy gosudarstvennoi kul'turnoi politiki*, hereafter—*Osnovy*), a document that “emphasizes the preservation and promotion of Russian culture as essential for a unified and powerful country, and thus of primary importance for ensuring national security” (McDaniel 2), underlining the centuries-long role of culture in fostering “patriotic feelings and national pride” in country’s population (*Osnovy* 2). The *Osnovy* gave a lot of attention to issues of cultural education of citizens and cultivating citizenship, which led to the emergence of a multiplicity of initiatives accordingly intended. The list of literature considered here is, obviously, one of these projects.

Quite intriguingly, the *Spisok*, predominately comprised of works of fiction and non-fiction on history of Russia by Russian authors, includes a few translated titles, among which a couple of contemporary historical novels. The focus of this paper is the novel *Bring Up the Bodies* by the British author Hilary Mantel, originally published in 2012. The novel is set in early-modern England and has Thomas Cromwell as its main protagonist. At first glance, it is hard to imagine what principle could make for this book’s inclusion into a list of literature intended for fostering good citizens and patriots of their country among young Russians, which makes the task of looking at it in this context even more interesting.

The very fact of the existence of such a list is symptomatic for contemporary Russia, where the state cannot leave such an important thing as the formation of citizenly attitudes in its youth out of its control. In this sense, one would expect a book that is part of it to engage

in triggering the sense of national belonging in a more or less direct way, which—without knowing the logic behind the list's compilation—is not easy to discern in *Bodies*. Of course, it might be possible to envisage a possibility of a genuine effort on the part of the list's authors to act in the best interests of young Russians and provide them with instruments for developing an independent understanding of citizenship, but that would be contrary to the very spirit of *Osnovy*. At the same time, it is hard to expect this sort of sabotage in the community of state-supporting historians and educators that zealously embraces the ideological shift and appears to be eager to promote the cause (e.g. see Buranok and Tokmakova; Seniutkina). It is especially so, considering that otherwise the list does not offer much space for encouraging free critical thinking in students. And the fact that it, reportedly, underwent a wide public discussion by Russian librarians and educators and a review in the Russian Ministry of Education, leaves very small a margin for subversion of this kind.

Accordingly, I will build my analysis on a suggestion that the novel should, to a certain extent, reflect the notion of citizenship and patriotism of the people who compiled the list, discussed and promoted it. By introducing books in this context, they should have meant to foster and maintain in new generations of Russian people some features that they deem necessary and useful in good citizens of the country, and this opens a two-factor perspective on assessing the approach of “recommendation” of a literary work within a certain, ideologically loaded pre-narrative. On the one hand, such lists should be compiled with a fully formed underlying vision of patriotism in the minds of their assemblers. On the other, the awareness of a book being “recommended” as patriotic literature would inevitably invoke expectations in the reader concerning that they must look for whatever might be classified for this category, thus guiding their attention towards a realisation of such expectations and, eventually, limiting the reader's subjectivity of perception, their critical capacity and the scope of possible readings.

In my work, I will try to find out what features of *Bring Up the Bodies* might have been considered relevant for inclusion of the book into literature recommended for patriotic education in Russia, and answer the following questions: what behavioural, mental and philosophical patterns are presented in the analyzed book and in what modality? What relation do these patterns have to the present-day Russia and its politics? How can the novel be perceived as contributing to the task of making the young generation of Russians good citizens of their country? What are the novel's function and effect in relating historical otherness, as seen through the prism of the Russian patriotic paradigm? And I will establish my argument using the following principal concepts: the historical novel as a genre and its concern with the otherness of the historical past; pragmatism as a philosophical approach to law and life and general; the notion of Russian patriotism.

In the Discussion part of the essay, I will consider how the figure of historical protagonist is represented in Mantel's novel; how pragmatist attitude is realized in the actions of the fictional Cromwell and the real-world Putin; how re-evaluation of historical figures in fiction can provide a ground for manipulations with history in real-life politics; how the implied historical parallels undermine the temporal-spatial otherness of the historical novel and conduce to constructing a "tradition" to benefit Putin's agenda; and how this acts to the effect of legitimizing Russia's political and social present and perpetuating certain elements of the Russian understanding of patriotism.

## 2. Theory and Method

### 2.1. Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies*

Before I move to a discussion of the concepts upon which I rely in my further analysis, it seems reasonable to present quickly the very object of my research. *Bring Up the Bodies*, published in 2012, is the second novel of the historical trilogy *Wolf Hall* by Hilary Mantel, two other books of which are not included in the *Spisok* and therefore not discussed here specifically. The novel won the 2012 Man Booker Prize and the 2012 Costa Book of the Year. It gained a lot of attention among critics and literary theorists.

The main protagonist of the novel is Thomas Cromwell (1485–1540), a prominent political figure in early modern England, who was a state official at the time of Henry VIII. The plot of the book covers the time when Cromwell was the king's most powerful advisor, and sees him become even more powerful as he helps Henry fell his wife, Queen Anne Boleyn, and find a new spouse. At the opening of the novel, Henry VIII is only about three years married to Boleyn after nearly seven years of courting, Anne being as powerful a woman as can be, although Henry is beginning to feel annoyed with his marriage. The narrative is non-linear, with multiple excursions into the past, either as Cromwell's quick flashbacks or extensive accounts of past scenes, that provide us with information about the protagonist's background and the events preceding those of the plot. So, we learn that Thomas Cromwell had been instrumental in the king's dissolution of his first marriage with Catherine of Aragon and in establishing the English Reformation in its early stages. We also come to know facts about the personal circumstances of Cromwell's life: that as a child he grew up under a tyrant father in a humble household in London's Putney; that he spent his young years in different countries of the continental Europe, where he performed in many different roles, learnt many languages and other skills, as well as made many a useful connection; that after getting back to England he had a family and recently lost his wife and



two daughters to a disease, with his son being his only close relative left; that he used to be a trusted clerk and the right hand of Cardinal Wolsey, and took the death of the latter close to the heart. The development of the plot sees Henry come to a decision to break his marriage with Anne Boleyn, with Cromwell taking on the task of ridding the king of his wife. After Anne's resistance renders it impossible to dissolve the marriage quietly, and following the king's desire to put her to trial, Cromwell fabricates a case of adultery and treason against Boleyn, her brother, three other courtiers and one court musician, which ends with the execution of the accused. The whole process brings Cromwell even closer to the king, earns him a title and leaves him a yet more powerful, rich and fear-inspiring minister.

The aspects of the book that appear to give good material for an analysis in the aforementioned context are the following: its belonging to the genre of historical fiction and its sense of historical otherness of the described time; the type of protagonist the novel offers and his philosophy; representation of the protagonist by itself and as compared to the conventional understanding of the historical figure of Cromwell; and the way patriotism might be pictured (or perceived) in the book.

## **2.2. The Genre of Historical Novel**

Literary theory dates the origins of the historical novel back to Walter Scott (1771-1832), and has ever since known a development of theoretical approaches and reassessment of the genre, with the last decades seeing fresh ways of thinking about it. One of most influential philosopher theorists of the traditional historical novel who influenced this development in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was György Lukács, who argued, as referred to by Johnston and Wiegandt, that genre's "particular legitimacy ... derives from [its] capacity for imaginatively analyzing the ways in which a given period's social conditions shape human experience," so that the characters' lives are affected in ways that are determined by the particularities of their corresponding historical period (9), which effectively allows for

studying various real social models by means of fiction. Georg Lukács saw the historical novel as a representation of “historical necessity” and, at the same time, of the effect social forces have on the individual human experience. The “extensive, epic representation shows how human beings and their society develop as part of a process which includes and envelops the present” (Brosch 164). As such, the historical novel is considered an example of “realist narratives,” with the help of which the reader can “reexperience the social and human motives which led men to think, feel and act just as they did in historical reality” (Lukács 42). Such novels offer, accordingly, a teleological view of history and its representation in fiction, following the lives of ordinary people in the face of the historical epoch they live in.

The other prominent approach to historical fiction, contrasting in its essence, is linked with the name of Linda Hutcheon who came up with the concept of “historiographic metafiction” (a term coined in 1988) that encompasses “a decidedly self-reflexive type of fiction that uses metafictional strategies in order to highlight the problematic nature both of fictional and of non-fictional historical writing” by “self-consciously employ[ing] devices such as parody, pastiche or anachronism while simultaneously experimenting with intertextuality” (Johnston and Wiegandt 11), thus rendering any retrospective historical representation dubious and inefficient. In Hutcheon’s view, historiographic metafiction is not just a way to observe history through the prism of postmodernism, but rather a method of expression of the very principles lying in the foundation of postmodernism, whose task is to challenge “teleological narratives,” making a point in showing that it is discourse that defines all historical knowledge. As such, representing historical experience in a disintegrated, imaginary form, using parody, pastiche and devices of intertextuality as means of destroying “any sense of historical authenticity” is very postmodern. The discussion of historiographic metafiction drew, however, considerable critique, and it was argued that the conditions of

postmodernity and a high degree of self-reflexivity, however, do not necessarily make any contemporary historical novel an example of this subgenre (Johnston and Wiegandt 11-12).

In the last decades, there has been an increasing interest among novelists “in historical fiction as a means of interrogating historical experience” using methods and styles that are closer to the traditional historical novel, with a focus on “probing the alterity of the past” (Johnston 537). In contrast to the novels written primarily in the historiographic metafiction paradigm, these works are “more concerned with the ways in which fiction *can* lay claim to the past, provisionally and partially, rather than the ways that it can not,” while being aware of the “problematics involved in seeking and achieving historical knowledge” (Mitchell 3). Such novels interest themselves in the immediate historical experience of their characters, at the same time maintaining features of self-reflexivity and intertextualising. Still, a growing number of works of historical fiction tend to fall in the interim between the subgenres or combine them to an extent (Johnston 538). Some critics argue that the historical novel is self-reflexive by nature, “with respect to the manner in which it negotiates temporal otherness,” that is how, by what literary means it solves the problem of relating the distinctness of the past; and it is only the degree with which this self-consciousness is pronounced that distinguishes historiographic metafiction from any other works of the genre (Johnston 547).

The recent concept of the “neo-historical” novel, introduced by Roussetot is concerned with yet another approach to creating and analysing historical fiction. “Neo-historical fiction is ... aimed at answering the needs and preoccupations of the present” by employing strategies of “exoticism,” which simultaneously is based on perceiving otherness of other spaces, objects and people and works to the effect of making spaces and people look “strange,” thus, in turn, creating otherness. The “commodification of cultural difference carried out by the neo-historical – like that performed by the exotic – relies on that aestheticisation of otherness, on treating the historical Other as a subject of artistic

expression, and consequently, on making it palatable to contemporary audiences” (Rousselot 8). This commodification is related to nostalgic attitudes towards the past and a desire to establish a connection to it through aesthetic means. An example of such aestheticising technique will be further briefly discussed in the context of the narrative strategies in *Bring Up the Bodies*.

The other problematic of the historical novel, related to the otherness, is “an implicit endorsement of a traditional Western *grand récit*” (Johnston 550) that critics often ascribe to the genre. Traditional interpretations of history, be it in fiction or non-fiction, for a long time tended to promote metanarratives of Western progress and superiority by explaining historical events through a teleological approach of an inherent logic and order of events in historical progression.

### **2.3. Legal Pragmatism**

One of the most important concepts for the following discussion is that of legal pragmatism, for it appears to be pivotal in comparison of actants in the analyzed narrative and the real-life context, in which the narrative is being considered. Legal pragmatism is a legitimate child of philosophical pragmatism, a school of thought that was built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>—the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century on works of such American thinkers as James, Pierce and Dewey and later developed by other philosophers. In essence, pragmatism is “the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, ‘categories,’ supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts” (James 22); that is to say, a philosophical approach, focusing, in choosing the course of action, on practical results and not abstract considerations. In its outlook, pragmatism shuns “any remote, abstract or general principle that we might look to in order to guide our actions” and that is strongly associated with the Western (liberal) philosophical approach, and, in contrast, strives to “give us some understanding of the world of practicality and action by showing us that, in the end, only

practicality and action matter” (Kenny 112). In its approach to the notion of truth, pragmatism does not believe in the existence of objective truth in the matters of morality or human conduct, and is inclined to see the social world as a complex construction where everyone perceives things from a specific perspective, thus insisting on subjectivity of every worldview. Here we may observe, in parentheses, that pragmatism shares with postmodernism this epistemological scepticism—though not irony; or, probably, postmodernism borrows the pragmatic approach to truth and abstract principles, only to mock it by stripping it of purpose, the final destination of the pragmatist.

The pragmatic attitude extrapolated to law, rejects “any formalist or liberal understandings of law and the way it works,” because no neutral and politically unbiased way of setting up and application of rules can be possible. As a result, we are left without that, which is “core to law’s self-presentation: idea of justice,” that is the understanding that the same “general rule” is to be applied to any number of different people without being affected in any way by bias grounded in “prejudice, interest, or caprice” (Kenny 114). The very notion of a general rule is absent in the pragmatist worldview, for any application of rules is determined by the point of view, and it is law’s function to establish a practical outcome, focusing on the objectives and not moral considerations. As Rorty puts it, in the world of social relations, in order to get practical results, “some particular social practice needs to block the road of inquiry, halt the regress of interpretations” (Rorty xli). Such an approach resolves “the debate about the problematic of justice ... within the discipline of law” concerning “the difference between legal, or legalistic, justice and ethical/moral justice” (Ziarek 34): pragmatism does not admit “ethical/moral justice” per se. And this seems to condition pragmatism’s intrinsic conflict. As per Kenny, if you adopt the pragmatist worldview,

“you will still believe in the importance of law ... because the reason you believed in it was, in the end, pragmatic: you think a system of law makes the world better.

Pragmatism recommends simply that you see law for what it is and pursue your aims within it with clarity of purpose. ... For similar reasons, ... pragmatists are not unrestrained in how they act; they are restrained by the effect of different choices on their goals and visions of the good, and their the calculation of long term effects of their action.” (Kelly 116)

Such an account appears to be controversial for it suggests that the pragmatist should, first, be interested in “making the world better” (better for whom?) and, second, clearly distinguish the good and the bad, which are moral categories, thus associated with the realm of principles, that, in my understanding, should not be included into the scope of the pragmatist’s concerns and discussion. A related issue is that of goals and visions to be defined. Are pragmatic goals not informed, as a general rule, by a certain set of recurring determinants that consistently shape the pragmatist’s choice of goals and actions? If so, in which way, except for modality, these determinants, or objectives, differ from principles? For the purposes of this paper though, we may put these controversies aside and focus on the above mentioned characteristics of legal pragmatism.

#### **2.4. Patriotic and Civic Identity in Russia: Loyalty, Belonging, Fatalism**

The other crucial notions to be considered in the context of literature for patriotic education are, naturally, those of patriotism and civic identity. Citizenship and patriotism are complex concepts, perception of which is historically, contextually and socially dependent (Krupets et al. 252). In the post-Soviet Russia these notions have been subject to continuous re-evaluation and re-imagining, as the norms, conditions and forms of political, social and individual life changed and found new definitions. A new decisive state claim on appropriating the right to define the content of these notions and promote them is linked to

the aforementioned *Osnovy* that list among their objectives “fostering civic identity” and “providing conditions for upbringing citizens” (*Osnovy* 7). In the latter, “upbringing” is a very approximate translation of the original “vospitaniye,” which, in the context of educational and cultural governmental policy, is seen by some researchers as “a hangover from Soviet concerns about the moral and social education of youth” realized in continuous state-driven interventions into the spheres of cultural and social life and education in the Soviet time with the purpose of producing “morally educated” citizens who “would always know how to act in the spirit of the social and political aims of the state” (Krupets et al. 253). With the *Osnovy*, Putin’s state resolutely announced a return to a similar policy of state domination in the questions of forming civil identity in young Russians.

But what comprises the substantial part of patriotism as understood in the Russian society? Referring to a number of Russian researchers, Rapoport writes that patriotic idea lies in a “spiritual unity” of a citizen and the Russian society and finds actualization in citizens’ expressed “pride” for their country (“Fatherland”) and their active participation in “strengthening” and development the state in all its functions, which participation is referred to as “serving the Fatherland”: “compared to the vague, blurred, and badly defined concept of citizenship, patriotism is a clear and theoretically better developed construct that represents a unity of spirituality, civic maturity, and social activity—qualities that motivate people to serve their fatherland” (Rapoport 145). Despite this opposition, however, the notion of citizenship in the perception of the Russians is traditionally being built up from “ideological metanarratives around loyalty and patriotism” (to be a “good citizen” means to love one’s country and be its loyal patriot), but also “include[s] a sense of belonging according to birth, performativity and affect” and is linked, on the personal level, to certain fatalism in that the notion of belonging is seen as “something ‘inevitable’ and ‘inherited’ from the parents” (Krupets et al. 258). This fatalistic sense of belonging has a long tradition in Russian

concepts of identity, dating back to at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Maiorova 222), and is related to another “traditional” type of Russian fatalism, stemming from the history of Russian democracy and a sense of one’s inability to influence the state of affairs in a highly centralized authoritarian state (Klimina 559). This finds projection in the deep-rooted understanding of patriotism as loving one’s country “despite” its imperfections (Krupets et al. 262). Yet another related tradition embedded in the Russian culture from old times that is worth mentioning here is that of associating the country and the people with its ruler (Maiorova 198). This kind of bonding results, it appears, in two effects: a natural extension of loyalty to the country onto its current leader/government, and inclusion of the leader/government into the fatalist picture of indisputability, “givenness” of state power.

## **2.5. Method**

In the following section, I will provide an analysis aimed to answer the questions set in Introduction that can be summed as: in what ways may *Bring Up the Bodies* be considered relatable for patriotic education of the Russian youth? Using the methods of close reading and comparative analysis, I will present argument on how the aforementioned concepts and notions are introduced in the book, and how it corresponds with the political, social and ideological realities of the present-day Russia. I will try to show how Mantel’s Cromwell’s conduct and worldview, his approach to politics and power resembles those of Putin’s regime in modern Russia, and how such presentations of political figures of the past may be instrumental in legitimizing the regime and its doings in the public’s perception within the country.



### 3. Discussion

#### 3.1. *Bring Up the Bodies* as Historical Fiction

To be able to talk about the relevance of *Bring Up the Bodies* for particular purposes, such as those of the Russian educational politics, it seems necessary to take a look into what type of historical fiction the novel is, for these types differ in their functions and effect, which might be important for my endeavoured analysis.

In his discussion of the two first novels of the series in this context, Johnston concludes that, while the books fully demonstrate self-reflexivity and “awareness of the complexities involved in representing the past, the two novels’ overall affiliation is with the kind of historical novel that has moved beyond historiographic metafiction in the strictest sense” (Johnston 538). Indeed, the book does not, to a great extent, rely on characteristic techniques of this type of fiction. So, of anachronisms, there are not many examples in the novel, although small things may occur here and there in the text. For example, in this passage, referring to the king and representing, most probably, Cromwell’s inner speech: “Notice how he speaks of Jane: so humble, so shy. Even Archbishop Cranmer must recognise the portrait, the black reverse portrait of the present queen” (Mantel Part II, I The Black Book), the “black reverse portrait” is most reminiscent to the modern reader of a photographic negative, which can in no way be contemporary in the context of what Archbishop Cranmer might possibly have recognized. Self-reflexive, intertextual narrative strategies characteristic of historiographic metafiction find maximal realization in the trilogy, as Johnston argues, referring to Lehtimäki, in the references to the visual art of the Renaissance (Johnston 542). But they are, according to him, not sufficient for considering the novel as belonging to the subgenre.

On the other hand, one of the most notable literary techniques deployed in the novel is a peculiar (modernist) use of present-tense narrative, which is very unusual for a historical

novel and lets Johnston suggest looking at the book through the concept of the neo-historical novel, discussed above. His interpretation suggests that

the present tense, so uncommon in historical fiction, prevents the past from becoming submerged in the timeless narrative past tense that is familiar and ubiquitous in storytelling. Instead, the events of *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* gain in historical specificity precisely because we realise that the past we are being told about is not some general story-past, but an actual former present, a past once very much alive and inescapable to those who experienced it first-hand. Paradoxically, the present tense thus restores to the narrated moment in history its quality of being particular, of possessing its own experiential existence in time. (548)

Essentially, the argument suggests that the present tense in the novel allows for emphasizing the singularity of the narrated past, its temporal and substantial otherness, through “a distancing effect” that actualizes the time gap between the past and the present. This is an example of the “aestheticisation of otherness” that is seen as characteristic of the neo-historical novel.

I would argue, however, that this same technique is, inevitably, actively engaged in erasing the time gap and reinforcing a sense of immediacy of the historical experience with the modern reader. Eventually, the combined outcome might be a subconscious tendency in the reader to extrapolate historical events onto the present with the effect of perceived continuity of history and non-uniqueness of any historical experience, thus contesting the sense of alterity, replacing it with a notion of recurring and sameness. This would also facilitate addressing the past in the teleological tradition, as a source of narratives explaining and justifying the events and human behaviour in the present. This intentional confusion and blending of narrative styles and objectives produce together an effect closest to being perceived as postmodern, and we can talk about it as “covert postmodernism” of the novel.

## 3.2. Mantel's Cromwell

### 3.2.1. *Representation, Relatability, Re-evaluation*

The protagonist of the novel is its constant focal point and the one who lends the reader the narrative perspective that is, arguably, the most peculiar feature of the book, in terms of narrative techniques. The novel uses almost continuous internal focalization on the main protagonist, giving the reader a notion of his mental processes, emotions and sensations, and we see the world of the book through the eyes of the character, with limited omnipresence of the narrator. Even though the style of narrative resembles the character's inner monologue, with all the narrative related in the present tense, throughout the text the protagonist is referred to using the pronoun *he*, extended as "he, Cromwell" where necessary, to avoid confusion, as in: "A decade of self-aggrandisement ... has made Boleyn rich and settled and confident. His era is drawing to a close, and he, Cromwell, sees him decide not to fight it" (Mantel Part Two, II Master of Phantoms). Johnston mentions that the book's "third-person narration is consistently marked by character-specific word-choices reminiscent of free indirect discourse," while breaking the general rule of rendering free indirect discourse in the past tense rather than the present (Johnston 544). Through thus combining a very close focalization on the mind of the protagonist and third-person narration, the author manages to create an impression of the character referring to himself in the third person.

The reader can follow Cromwell in his communicating with the outside world, his worries, his plotting and his affections. Seeing his actions this way, as though from inside of him, allows the reader to understand his actions, his worldview and its origins, making him a relatable, even likable character. At the same time, the third-person reference gives some sense of objectiveness, thus reaffirming, in a way, the legitimacy of the impression. Here, however, the author appears to be not quite impartial. So, we are more likely to penetrate intimately the protagonist's mind in moments when he is touched with affection, fear, pain or

compassion: in other words, when he experiences normal human feelings. This is especially evident in his attitude to his children, which is always tender and concerned. So, when we have a rare example of his emotions, it is that of care about his son, as in this example: “he is always somehow anxious about Gregory” (Mantel Part I, I Falcons), which sounds very parental and relatable. On the other hand, we never encounter a single example of malicious or sinister thinking, even in the midst of Cromwell’s most atrocious intrigues. In general, despite the modernist style of narrating, the mental picture of the protagonist, his representation in the novel is lacking the self-reflection and candid exposure of his interior that one might expect from the use of modernist narrative strategies. Brosch considers this phenomenon as an attempt on Mantel’s side to simulate the absence of subjectivity characteristic of the pre-modern and early modern world that Mantel’s novels are “thoroughly grounded in extensive knowledge about,” when “pursuit of self-knowledge was suspect to say the least” (Brosch 175). It would seem, however, that such omitting Cromwell’s self-reflection is instrumental for smoothing of his image, justifying the character, and, by transition, also whitewashing, vindicating the historical Cromwell with the purpose of re-evaluation of his personality and actions.

Combined, this works to the effect of reinforcing a perception of him as a fine, even sympathetic person, and transfers the figure of Cromwell from the category of otherness into the category of relatability and sameness, which, in turn, obscures the distance between the past of the character and the present of the reader. What Johnston calls the “otherness of historical constructions of subjectivity” (Johnston 537) comes to the point of general human subjectivity that appears to be universal across ages.

### 3.2.2. *Loyalty, Belonging*

What is characteristic of Cromwell, is his, arguably, unquestioning loyalty to the king. Indeed, he is bent on following Henry’s every whim, eager to clear the king’s path to his

desires, be it women, money, property or courtiers. Although it might be argued that Cromwell seeks not so much to serve his king, as to serve the king only to be able to serve his own interests and objectives so far as conditions allow. The king is rather one such condition for Cromwell that allows him to get his ends. Sometimes it might be an annoying condition, but, as Cromwell realizes the moment he thinks the king is dead, his, Cromwell's, whole well-being and probably his mere life completely depend on the king being there (Mantel Part II, I The Black Book). This is also very well fitting the protagonist's general pragmatist pattern of conduct.

However, Cromwell has other true affections and objects of loyalty. He, it appears, is quite a faithful husband while his wife is yet alive. Then, he always keeps in his heart allegiance to his former master, Cardinal Wolsey, to a degree that the legal process he wages against Anne Boleyn and her alleged lovers is, at least partly, motivated by Cromwell's old grudge at Cardinal's ill-wishers, although he denies it when the revenge is underway. He is also a loyal friend, to a degree that he takes on risks of being evoking suspicions when he helps Thomas Wyatt to avoid the accusations and execution, while Wyatt is at least just as close to being charged in the Boleyn process as are the others men (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms). And, finally, he is a loyal citizen of his England, with concerns about the country's well-being always on his mind: so, Mantel's one of the earliest characteristics of Cromwell is "his indefatigable attention to England's business" (Mantel Part I, I Falcons)).

This brings us to the issue of belonging and how it is shown in Cromwell's characterisation. His country is his home, even when he is far from it; it is an object of constant care and examination for him: "If you would defend England, and he would – for he would take the field himself, his sword in his hand – you must know what England is" (Mantel Part I, I Falcons). He often ponders on England and its people, with genuine interest and even affection:

Daily he ponders the mystery of his countrymen. He has seen killers, yes; but he has seen a hungry soldier give away a loaf to a woman, a woman who is nothing to him, and turn away with a shrug. It is better not to try people, not to force them to desperation. Make them prosper; out of superfluity, they will be generous. Full bellies breed gentle manners. The pinch of famine makes monsters. (Mantel Part I, II Crows)

Cromwell sees the kingdom's imperfections and roughness. He allows himself a certain amount of scepticism, as in this short scene: "In any well-ordered country, Suffolk said yesterday, the trial of a noblewoman would be conducted in seemly privacy; he [Cromwell] had rolled his eyes and said, but my lord, this is England" (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms). Still, he is optimistic about the country's people and future prospects; and he would not leave it, even though it is Italy he recalls with nostalgia. Such an attitude may rightfully be considered a good example of patriotism in any account, not the least in the lens of the Russian notion of patriotism, as we have seen.

### 3.2.3. *Cromwell's Legal Pragmatism*

In his article "The Human Pared Away: Hilary Mantel's Thomas Cromwell as an Archetype of Legal Pragmatism" David Kenny convincingly argues the case of Mantel's Cromwell realizing pragmatist way of thinking. "With the pragmatist," he writes, "Cromwell shares a deep epistemological doubt and a sense that knowledge and insight come from experience" (117). Indeed, many a detail in Cromwell's representation in *Bring Up the Bodies* fall neatly into the checklist of pragmatism, much helped with his acquired empirical system of gaining knowledge. His experience in life is comparable to no one's in the world of the book, with a background that encompasses, we learn, a wild childhood in lawless London suburbs, stricken with hunger, paternal violence, humiliation and a lack of proper schooling; vagabonding to and in continental Europe; fighting in unnamed European wars as a mercenary; being many times near death—on the battlefield, from beating, disease, wounds

or from the hand of a killer; living and serving in different capacities in various countries, including the Vatican; learning and practicing languages, trades, people and law; being a wool trader, a banker, a lawyer, and growing to become an advisor of Lord Chancellor and then of King of England himself. One might expect that such a way of maturing would be good soil for fostering a worldview of pragmatism, focused on practical matters and objectives; though it might also be seen as a result of a pragmatist worldview, successfully realized in one's career.

The characteristic Cromwell gives to one of a very few people whom he openly admires, the poet Thomas Wyatt ("a gentleman of unlimited intellect" (Mantel, *Cast of Characters*)), might be considered a manifesto of philosophical pragmatism in its distilled version: "He has studied the world without despising it. He understands the world without rejecting it. He has no illusions but he has hopes. He does not sleepwalk through his life. His eyes are open, and his ears for sounds others miss" (Mantel *Part II, II Master of Phantoms*). Kenny suggests that Cromwell might have said these words about himself (117), and it is easy to agree with the conclusion, for this is what the character does throughout the story—and what the pragmatist does: he takes the world for what it is and adapts to it, constantly keeping the focus on his objectives. Where a person of principle or idealist would have retreated to a hermitage, committed suicide or become a martyr, being unable to face the naked reality of the social world, the pragmatist accepts life as is, remaining opportunistic and accommodating his ways to the world in order to accommodate the world to his goals. In the face of circumstances, principle is nothing in this paradigm: "There is a time to stand on your dignity, but there is a time to abandon it in the interests of your safety" (Mantel *Part II, II Master of Phantoms*) or whatever goal is at hand at the moment.

As Cromwell is a lawyer and a statesman, this worldview transfers seamlessly into his activity in the legal field, and blooms there. Cromwell is sincerely convinced of the

importance of law and insists in his actions on maintaining the legal framework, but he is not using it to seek truth or justice, which would mean a just reward or just punishment according to one's actual deeds. He is using it, in a very pragmatist way, to achieve his goals, and finds it appropriate to only use the form, filling it with whatever content he manages to get hold of, without much caring whether he is prosecuting people rightly or not: "He needs guilty men. So he has found men who are guilty. Though perhaps not guilty as charged" (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms).

Cromwell's dealings with law are multifaceted, but, of course, the pinnacle of his sophistry is the fabricated process on charges of treason and adultery against Anne Boleyn and the six men who are, allegedly, her lovers. Mantel's account of the case is perfectly exemplary of the way the pragmatist does his business in a court of law. When King Henry VIII, Cromwell's master, decides to get rid of his wife, it is up to Cromwell to find a "legal" method. And he would deny that he might use any methods but legal. When Anne suggests him to send a seducer to Mary, Henry's daughter from the first marriage, to ruin the princess' reputation, he declines, saying, "That is not my aim and those are not my methods" (Mantel Part I, III Angels). And in saying so, he is both honest and duplicitous: it is not that he by any means shuns base methods; it is that he must have his base methods sanctioned by law and justified by the aim, while the mentioned effect is, indeed, not his aim at the time. When he stands before the task to fell Anne, his objective is to drown his personal enemies together with her. For this, he is glad to use most atrocious slander (that he himself, probably, does not believe) from people who are ready to make false accusations on oath, either out of spite, foolishness or fear; and it is not his slightest concern whether there is any truth in the accusations: as he says to Wriothesley, "We are lawyers. We want the truth little by little and only those parts of it we can use" (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms). The goal justifies any means, and the goal is, ultimately, to serve England, making it a better place by use of



good laws; and for this to be possible—first to clear the way to the king of the courtiers who intrigue against Cromwell. The following dialogue, where Cromwell explains why he is sparing Wyatt (who is in the same way as the other men endangered by the slander) from the accusation, is very illustrative of how Cromwell’s pragmatist logic works:

‘It is not Wyatt,’ he says, ‘who stands in my way with the king. It is not Wyatt who turns me out of the privy chamber when I need the king’s signature. It is not he who is continually dropping slander against me like poison into Henry’s ear.’ Mr Wriothesley looks at him speculatively. ‘I see. It is not so much, who is guilty, as whose guilt is of service to you.’ He smiles. ‘I admire you, sir. You are deft in these matters, and without false compunction. (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms)

These few phrases X-ray the whole skeleton of Cromwell’s pragmatist paradigm of thinking. His main goal is to improve England, for which he needs the king’s assent and authorisation on his bills of law. There are people causing him impediments (“stand[ing] in my way with the king”) who have to be eliminated, and this is the intermediate objective. Due to Cromwell’s belief in law, it is the legal framework that should be used for the purpose (to find the guilty), but its application may be just formal and even falsified (“It is not so much, who is guilty, as whose guilt is of service”). Eventually, the means chosen do not matter much as long as they let keep the appearance of law in action, and the pragmatist does not bother to cherish abstract moral considerations (he is “without false compunction”).

As Kenny puts it, “Mantel’s work encourages us not to wait on a certainty that will never come, but to act as best we can to pursue the ends we care about. It shows that we can and should admire Cromwell not for the ends he pursued but for the means by which he brilliantly pursued them” (132), and Mantel does it by picturing a relatable and “nice” character who is successful (at least as long as this novel goes) and therefore “right.” This teaches flexibility and practicality. As Cromwell puts it, pondering on the accused George

Boleyn, who tries to resist the prosecutor: “He needs to learn to bend with the breeze” (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms). George ends up being executed. And here, we may have another lesson that can be read both as guidance and as a warning against resistance to the power: don’t stick out, don’t take on risks, bend with the wind, and you’ll be fine (maybe even better off—if you are lucky to get the spoils after those who fell).

### **3.3. Pragmatism of Putin’s Regime**

In the untangling the lines that might connect the fictional Cromwell with the Russian understanding of state and citizenship, it seems interesting to explore Russian President Putin’s and, wider, the Kremlin’s politics as a real-life case of state-scale pragmatist approach in the legal field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Russia, which appears to be bearing semblance to that of Mantel’s Cromwell in her fictional early-modern England.

#### *3.3.1. “Putin-Style Rule of Law”*

Putin’s policy and practice in the legal field since the time of his ascent to power, as they are often observed, correspond to a great degree to the notion of legal pragmatism and the functional abuse of law by the fictional Cromwell, as we have seen. As Cromwell, Putin is a lawyer by education. At the time of his appearance in the domain of the Russian top-level politics, Putin promised Russians “a revolution in legality, the creation of a law-based state” (Lewis 117), which he has been re-asserting ever since. However, as Popova summarizes, in the realities of the country, “the regime uses the law and legal institutions to fulfil political goals, to communicate them to society, and to manage the authoritarian coalition that helps the president govern” (64).

In particular, it finds actualization in the way Putin has been using the Russian Parliament, first moulding it according to his needs through falsified elections’ results, coercing or threatening political opponents, concocted judicial obstacles for political competition, and heavy usage of state apparatus for enticing the population into voting for his

party; and then passing by means of his puppet legislators laws of all sorts that he might need, including most repressive legislation and anti-constitutional acts. Cromwell can be seen as doing similar things in his contemporary democracy: the English Parliament gets dissolved when it proves to be too stubborn for passing a Cromwell-lobbied bill; otherwise, he seeks to introduce to the Parliament new members who would be loyal to him, as when he thinks about giving Wales members to have better leverage against the Welsh lords (Mantel Part II, I The Black Book). In general, “when Mantel’s Cromwell uses Parliament, he is always using it for a reason: in a cynical reading, to bolster the legitimacy of an already chosen course of action” (LaCroix 70), which precisely describes the way Putin’s system is using law for achieving its goals.

Another crucial example of Putin’s manipulations with law is fabricating charges and legal cases as a way of removing political opponents (and personal enemies). This is the way Putin has sent to prison, among others, Khodorkovsky, Navalny and many dozens (maybe hundreds) of other political oppositionists and ordinary dissidents. And, of course, this strategy is the foundation on which the whole plot and intrigue of *Bodies* are built. Here, a crucial point about this kind of (ab)use of law is that all external attributes of diligent employment of law should be present and carefully documented, even though these documents’ judicial value is nil. It is the appearance that matters—just as with Cromwell who gets into great pains in order to maintain a perfect semblance of rule of law in all cases. This commentary that Cromwell gives his son Gregory is quite illustrative of this last thesis: “When your acquaintances tell you, as they will, that it is I who have condemned these men, tell them that it is the king, and a court of law, and that all proper formalities have been observed, and no one has been hurt bodily in pursuit of the truth, whatever the word is in the city” (Mantel Part II, II The Master of Phantoms). Indeed, for Cromwell, too, “observed

formalities” and the fact that it is “a court of law” serving as the tool of eliminating his enemies are of great importance.

However, the hammer of law is instrumental not only in dealing with one’s political opponents. In Khodorkovsky’s case, economic factors were not limited to the means, that is, the fabricated charges. One of the main goals of the prosecution, besides removing a headstrong potential political opponent, was snatching his oil empire and redistribution of the benefits among Putin’s closest friends. The same approach flourishes on all levels of the unjust system of justice: courts all over the country have been used by officials of all ranks, security services and other people with means and connections for raiding others’ property or business or just for getting even with someone. In Mantel’s account, this is not something the fictional Cromwell would stop before. So, when he sees something he desires for himself, he finds a “legal” way to get it, as in the case with a woman, the keeper of an inn, whom Cromwell, allegedly, took into his house after he lost his wife, and whose “husband has been seized and locked up, for a new crime invented by Thomas Cromwell,” or at least such is the “rumour in the country” (Mantel Part I, II Crows). “As a result,” Popova concludes about Putin’s way of dealing with judicial procedures, “the law is highly consequential and important, but its use tends to be arbitrary, expedient, and instrumental, rather than predictable and principled” (Popova 64), which observation can be fully extrapolated to the actions of Mantel’s Cromwell.

### 3.3.2. *Historical Pragmatism—History as a Tool of Propaganda*

Another aspect of Putin’s policy relevant here was his pronounced intrusion in cultural politics in 2012 with a move against what he calls “distortion” of historical truth in humanitarian studies. It concerns, first of all, evaluations of actions of Russian and Soviet governments at different moments in the past; assessment of the role the Soviet Union played in the Second World War; and questioning the personality of Stalin. The move is

immediately connected with the “memory wars” that have been taking place in the media space ever since, and “purges” in the ranks of Russian academicians in the 2010-s.

Throughout the period, there were registered a number of initiatives in fiddling with history education in schools, whose goal was for “the political elite to control and manipulate textbook content, testing objectives, and the structuring of curricula in order to maximize exposure to, and absorption of, its preferred narratives” (Nelson 37). These initiatives are no less pragmatic in their essence: “correct[ing] alleged historical distortions and to produce a unified historical narrative” (McDaniel 1) suggests choosing one interpretation of the past events—the one, most fitting the idea of “pride” for Fatherland—and establishing it as the actual (true) course of history, so as to “pump” the patriotic myths of the “glorious” past. Such meddling with history is also related to the legal field, for it led in Russia to the passing of numerous repressive laws, restricting scientific research and the general public’s right to access historical data. And all—with the pragmatic purpose of “bettering” the past in order to “better” the present according to the Kremlin’s vision.

One aspect of the novel relevant here is that the very making of Cromwell a relatable and even likable character—contrary to the conventional reading of his persona that is “hardly ever [presented] as a character winning the readers’ sympathies” (Johnston 539), in fiction of history books—corresponds with the trend in the Russian politics and state-loyalist historiography of reassessing the role and personality of Stalin and other questionable personalities of the Russian past, all in accordance with the state orientation on “cultivating civil pride/identity is reinforced with a historical narrative that cultivates an appreciation for Russia’s and its leaders’ and peoples’ past accomplishments” (McDaniel 3).

The other observation here might be that such an approach to history is reminiscent of Mantel’s Cromwell himself and his readiness to manipulate the past. As Johnston puts it, “[w]hen it comes to doing the will of the king, even history and fact must bend to give way”:

first, the king wants to marry Anne Boleyn and insists on one (false) version of events, “Anne was not married, he had not slept with her sister—to enable his second marriage”, and this version gets verification through a court of law by way of Cromwell, but then the king wants to annul the marriage, and “these facts must give way” (123). The past should be legally transformed, and Cromwell sees no contradiction or judicial problem here: “now our requirements have changed, and the facts have changed behind us” (Mantel Part II, I The Black Book). Such power over the past looks enticing, and, indeed, presented in a historical novel, it appears to “create a precedent,” so to say, as though endorsing such practice perpetually.

### **3.4. Historical Sameness as Justification of the Present**

This brings us to the one reading of the novel that can be functional for the objectives of the Russian state-boosted patriotism narrative, and it is a teleological reading: times do repeat themselves, which suggests non-otherness of historical subjectivity despite temporal and/or spatial otherness. As a reassessed historical figure, Cromwell works as a rather appealing character and a good advocate for his case: legal pragmatism as the optimal option of ruling, which can be favourably transferred to the present-day Russian reality.

Strictly speaking, there is no behaviour alternative to pragmatism that would be sympathetically shown in *Bodies*. None of the prisoner noblemen charged with adultery and treason along with the queen is able to stand on principle to the end and openly fight in the court for the honour of his name, although none of them admits his guilt either. In the end, they choose to be pragmatic too and accept their fate without much struggle, in an attempt to help their families keep their wealth and position after they are prosecuted. Wiltshire, Anne’s father, also shows that one can always “rethink” one’s position, depending on the circumstances, as he does twice in regard to his daughter (Mantel Part II, II Master of Phantoms).

Pragmatism and fatalism, intrinsically intertwined, are represented in the book as the only philosophical approach viable in situations where law and state are involved. This kind of a literary “precedent” might also, probably, be seen by the enablers of Putin’s agenda in the Russian culture and education system as a demonstration of a universally acknowledged tradition. Such forms of legitimization, through “tradition” are important for Putin and his policy and can even engender the creation/reinforcing of new-old grand-ish narratives, such as that of Russia’s superiority over the European civilization, and its “special way” and “special spirituality.” These narratives currently play a considerable role in the Russian external aggression, as well as in the military hysteria intended for in-country use. “We are always right and therefore cannot be wrong” is the main resulting postulate of this narrative, which is crucial in preventing the Russian population from seeing clearly what their government does in and outside of the country.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Bring Up the Bodies* may not be historiographic metafiction in the true sense of this notion, but it does demonstrate in its techniques a strong influence of postmodernism. Emerging in the metacontext of historical literature, fiction and non-fiction, the story questions existing interpretations of events and opens for alternative readings, while playfully avoiding assessments and conclusions. Mantel offers an imposing and sympathetic image of the protagonist against the somewhat blurred backdrop of his crimes against morality and justice, which can be understood either as vindication of a dubious historical figure or mocking the very idea of a possibility of retrospective evaluation and/or vindication. The paradox with the postmodernist approach here, as combined with traditional and modernist narration techniques, is that it presumes multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations, thus suggesting the futility of all attempts at seeking historical parallels and justifying the present through the past; while, at the same time, allowing for situations where certain perspectives may, as a result of conscious manipulation or sincere self-delusion, ignore the mere postmodern irony of this multiplicity and dubiousness, with the aim of appropriating historical events for their purposes. Moreover, postmodernism can be instrumental for conscious historical misuse, for it insists on the impenetrability of the “fog of history” and thus delights in destroying any foundation for assessing the past and, eventually, for distinguishing between the good and the bad in history. Ironically, by renouncing the teleological approach to history and related grand narratives, it gives space to new grand narratives and new teleological explanations.

As applied to *Bodies*, the implied parallels of the cross-epochal comparison, paradoxically, fight the subjectivity of the historical protagonist, rendering his truth as a relative teleological objectivity of the connected time-space of history. A brilliant, strong-minded and purpose-oriented politician, demonstrating, on top of that, great qualities of



loyalty and a strong sense of “fatherland”-belonging appears to have a strong appealing potential for Russian patriotism. And if he is using law in a questionable way to achieve his ends, then, well, what matters is that these ends are for the best of the fatherland. Simply speaking, if we are to assume that law could be used this way by a “nice guy” in the past in a country that is assumed to be successful in its development, then it can be used in a similar manner by a contemporary political leader at home and this does not imply his “badness.” The underlying understanding that anyone might fall victim in a system of such “unlawful law” fits nicely the “citizenly/legal fatalism” of Russians, concerned with the unpredictability of action of law, or of those applying law.

In a nutshell, the basic things that the novel might teach young Russians in terms of relations to their country and state are the following: 1) It is useful and acceptable to be unprincipled in the interest of the state, law can be manipulated with higher goals in mind. It is a normal practice all over the world and across times; arguing the opposite is mere hypocrisy and pretence, which means that we are living in a normal state and no urgent change is needed. 2) Nothing is certain and each appearance has a reverse, which suggests caution in making assessments, having a definite opinion and taking sides. One needs to just accept things as they are, which corresponds with the well-established Russian fatalism of disbelief in a principal possibility of a fundamental political change, and helps to legitimize and sustain this attitude. 3) He who serves his ruler/state well and bends with his will is safe and well-provided, as the state can always find a way to reach its goals, that is, loyalty pays off. 4) The best place to apply one’s abilities is one’s fatherland, and this is true for all times and all countries, which justifies relying on the inner sense of belonging.

It is hard to argue, to what extent the idea of linking the contents of the books from the *Spisok*, which has been originating and haunting my research throughout, to the real-world politics of the Russian President is plausible at all. It is unlikely that Putin was

personally involved, to any considerable degree, in the making of the *Spisok*. However, the system he has built is, no doubt, quite effective in reproducing and promoting his worldview in all ways possible, including such lists. It should also be noted that the authors of such lists are no less Russian citizens who might, consciously or subconsciously, seek historical parallels with the present time. With this in mind, my argument seems to gain in cogency.

Understanding how an English novel may be instrumental in the state-driven agenda of civic and patriotic education in Russia might be of use not only in terms of better comprehending the phenomenon of Russian patriotism, its role in Russia's political life and the workings of the Russian state propaganda in and outside of Russia. It might also help us see the hidden mechanics of this propaganda, aimed at wiring certain comparative patterns into the minds of the Russian people. Furthermore, it might contribute to the processes of self-reflection for the Western culture and society themselves. Are our democracies resilient this kind of manipulations? What values and attitudes are being wired into the minds of young Western citizens; by whom and by what means? What is the content and meaning of the currently re-emerging local patriotic discourses in European countries in the realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What role literature and other media do and should play in the formation of civic identity of the population? These and other related questions that we might want to ask ourselves may prove to be rather urgent in the face of a collapsing world security system and disintegration processes in Europe that we witness at the moment.

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