"Words, Words, Just Words": The Dramatic Role of the Narrator in Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall* Audio Book

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Abstract The Royal Shakespeare Company's 2013-14 stage production of *Wolf Hall* sparked an interest in studying Hilary Mantel's novel from the perspective of performance. Overlooked in the hype building up to the show's opening was the fact that one performance of the novel had already been given: Simon Slater's narrative performance for the *Wolf Hall* audio book. This article examines Slater's performance in the role of Thomas More, paying attention to several moments of narration that help shape the audience's understanding of the character. In the process, this article sheds light on the status of audio book narrators as more than mere readers. Rather, any narrator plays an important role in shaping the experience of the novel felt by the listening audience.
Key words Hilary Mantel; *Wolf Hall*; Simon Slater; performance; narrator; audio book

> "…audiobooks embody a dramatic performance that is barely traced when a reader confronts the page alone."
> — Michael Hancher, in *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies* (2011)

Hilary Mantel opens her 2009 Man Booker Prize-winning novel *Wolf Hall* with a pair of prefatory quotations concerning theatre and theatricality. One is a list of the players in John Skelton's 1520 drama *Magnificence: An Interlude* — a list that includes such allegorical figures as Felicity, Despair, and Perseverance. The other is a passage from Vitruvius's *De Architectura* on the classic theatre practice of associating tragedy with upper-class characters, satire with "rustic" individuals, and comedy with members of the lower class. Both quotations serve practical literary functions in *Wolf Hall*; the

introduction of Perseverance as an allegorical character foreshadows Anne Boleyn's performance in the role for the "Château Vert" pageant of 1522, while the quotation of Vitruvius establishes economic class as one of the novel's thematic concerns. Taken together, however, the quotations have the added effect of foregrounding the role theatricality will play in determining the fates of several characters. Indeed, as readers will soon find out, the universe of *Wolf Hall* is one in which keeping a carefully arranged face and a loyal outward appearance are of paramount importance to one's continued success.

Given the extent to which *Wolf Hall* demonstrates Mantel's interest in theatricality, it is fitting that the novel has caught the attention of both the theatre and television industries. Later this year, the Royal Shakespeare Company is set to debut a new dramatization of the novel at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The opening is highly anticipated, with several shows selling out tickets well in advance.[1] Meanwhile, the announcement that *Wolf Hall* will also air as a 2015 television miniseries for BBC Two means that fans of the novel now have twice the reason to wait with bated breath. For her own part, Hilary Mantel has expressed both excitement and anticipation for the projects, calling the RSC's adaptation of her book "a dream come true" and arguing that, with a writing team as strong as the one BBC has hired for the television project, "the original material can only be enhanced" ("Interview with Hilary Mantel", "Mark Rylance to Head Cast").

Ironically, the same fans that are currently clamoring to see Cromwell and company make their stage and screen debuts often ignore the one dramatization of the novel already in existence: Simon Slater's one-man narration of the 2009 *Wolf Hall* audio book. Despite the convincing recent work done by Charles Bernstein, Richard Johnson, and others in demonstrating the theatrical nature of modern audio book narration, popular audiences continue to view narration as something less theatrical, and therefore less interesting, than stage and screen performance.[2] The proposed reasons for this effect are both numerous and wide-ranging, with recent criticism linking it to everything from the lack of a visual component in audio books to the curiously enduring popular belief that "reading aloud is for children" (Rubery 12).[3] Whatever the reason for it, the stigma currently attached to audio book narration as performance art is leading many to overlook the theatrical work being produced by narrators each day.

The following article aims to bring one example of professional narration into the limelight, in the process calling attention to the engagement of audio book narrators with many of the same interpretive issues encountered by stage and screen actors. One part a close reading of Thomas More in the *Wolf Hall* novel and one part a "close listening" of Simon Slater's performance as More for the *Wolf Hall* audio book,

this article examines how each medium handles several important scenes featuring the once-Lord Chancellor of England. Paying particular attention to moments of ambiguity in the text, the article aims to demonstrate how a narrator's vocal performance of a character has the potential to convey aspects of that character absent from the silent page alone.

A preliminary review of listener responses to the *Wolf Hall* audio book reveals the general acceptance of Thomas More as the "villain" of Mantel's story. Few responses, however, discuss the role that Slater's performance as More contributes to this effect.[4] A close listening to Slater's differentiation of voices, pronunciation of key words and phrases, and manipulation of certain vocal tones reveals how Slater paints More as a man driven emotionally numb by his years of persecuting Protestants. It is this interpretation of More's character that listeners generally take away from Simon Slater's performance of the *Wolf Hall* audio book.

"Words, Words, Just Words"

Mantel first introduces Thomas More in a scene that flashes back to Cromwell's youth. In this scene Cromwell, roughly seven years of age, is serving as a food carrier at Lambeth Palace. It is in this capacity that he initially meets Thomas More, who, by the age of fourteen, has established himself as a scholarly prodigy and a respected page for Cardinal Morton. Because cardinals' pages like More often imitate their ostentatious schoolmasters — men who "[pass] up and down the house holding nosegays and pomanders" and who speak almost universally "in Greek" — Cromwell intimates that it is not uncommon for cardinals' pages also to demonstrate outward displays of pomp and superiority (104). To offer one example, it is not unheard of for pages to throw food or other objects at fetchers such as Cromwell. Yet in the opening interaction between Thomas More and Cromwell, Mantel chooses not to have More participate in such an overtly condescending practice. Rather, the initial exchange between the two is marked in its ambiguity with regards to More's take on the inquisitive Cromwell. Mantel writes:

> One day [Cromwell] brought a wheaten loaf and put it in the cupboard and lingered, and Master Thomas said, "Why do you linger?" But [More] did not throw anything at [Cromwell]. "What is in that great book?" [Cromwell] asked, and Master Thomas replied, smiling, "Words, words, just words" (104).[5]

Professional actors, audio book narrators, and recreational readers alike are presented in this passage with an important interpretive decision, for although Mantel tells her readers that More is "smiling" as he delivers the line "Words, words, just words," she

gives no definitive indication as to what type of smile More is wearing. Earlier on the same page, Mantel notes Cardinal Morton's opinion that More is "pleasant [of] wit," opening up the possibility that More's smile is merely an indication of how amused he is by the joke he is about to tell (104).[6] Reflecting back on this moment much later in the novel, More also admits the possibility that he was privately laughing or mocking Cromwell as he delivered the line (549-50). If this is the case, More's smile actually represents an act of condescension towards what he perceives to be a dim-witted Thomas Cromwell.

The interpretation of More's smile is particularly important to those who are dramatizing the text, for any decision regarding the emotional status of More during the scene will greatly influence how an actor or narrator delivers More's dialogue. Conversely, any delivery of More's dialogue in the scene has the potential to reveal information regarding the actor or narrator's interpretation of the character. In narrating the *Wolf Hall* audio book, Simon Slater interprets More's smile as an act of amusement rather than condescension. This is reflected in his delivery of the line "Words, words, just words" in several ways (03n, 1:12-1:15).[7] First, the line is delivered in a noticeably sing-song manner, with Slater regularly oscillating between high and low vocal intonations. Likely reflecting the "pleasant wit" Cardinal Morton referred to earlier in the text, Slater's delivery of the line next emphasizes the speed with which More thinks of his humorous response. Rather than pausing for a lengthy period of time before delivering the line, which might characterize More's response as colder and more calculated, Slater only delays his delivery of the line for between a quarter-second and a half-second. This seems an appropriate amount of time for a witty individual to think of a humorous reply, but not so long that the reply feels cold and premeditated. Finally, there is the voice itself that Slater provides young Thomas More. Both higher-pitched and quicker-paced than that of Slater's default voice of narration, the voice of the fourteen-year-old More effectively conveys both youth and exuberance. This becomes even more evident through contrast upon the introduction, a mere sixteen minutes later, of the grown-up Thomas More. The latter character's slow, smooth, and deep voice produces a very different effect that is examined in the next section of this article.

Despite its short length, Cromwell and More's conversation as children generates a number of interpretive questions that both actors and narrators are forced to answer. How does More react to the presence of Cromwell? What is More's opinion of Cromwell? What type of voice should be offered in the performance of More? At what speed should one speak when delivering More's dialogue? How do the answers to each of these questions impact what audiences will take away from the scene? All of these questions, and then some, must be considered by performers before delivering

More's single line of dialogue in this scene. Each of these questions, meanwhile, is to some degree answered through a narrator or actor's delivery of More's witty reply to Cromwell.

Given that this scene represents the first appearance of Thomas More in *Wolf Hall*, the interpretation of the character that readers and audiences take away from it will almost certainly influence the way they interpret More in future scenes. In the case of the *Wolf Hall* audio book, fourteen-year-old Thomas More is portrayed as youthful and energetic. Amused by his own sense of humor, young Thomas More comes across as strikingly normal for an individual who spends the majority of his time in isolated study. Though it may not stand out to first-time listeners of the audio book, the full impact of More's normalcy in this early scene will be demonstrated a few moments later, when a very droll, yet very angry, adult Thomas More is introduced to the listening audience.

"The Tide of Filth Never Abates"

When Thomas More next appears in *Wolf Hall*, he is considerably older and much more politically important than he was when he and Cromwell first met. A fourteen-year-old scholar back then, More, by Spring 1528, has emerged as a fifty-year-old councilor to King Henry VIII on matters of state and religion (111). Mantel reveals that, in his capacity as an advisor to the king, More dedicates much of his time to defending the Catholic Church against accusations of corruption and false teachings — accusations typically issued by Protestant scholars such as Martin Luther and William Tyndale. Another responsibility of More's is the recommendation of Protestant texts for religious censorship, a responsibility to which he alludes in his first non-childhood exchange with Cromwell. Mantel writes:

> Thomas More, ambling along, genial, shabby. "Just the man," he says. "Thomas, Thomas Cromwell. Just the man I want to see." […] He is genial, always genial; His shirt collar is grubby. "Are you bound for Frankfurt this year, Master Cromwell? No? I thought the cardinal might send you to the fair, to get among the heretic booksellers. He is spending a deal of money buying up their writing, but the tide of filth never abates." (111)

In addition to discussing More's numerous professional responsibilities, Mantel also goes to great lengths to emphasize how far in the past More has left his comparatively innocent days as a child scholar. Discussing More's work as the author of religious pamphlets, Mantel describes how More "calls [Martin Luther] shit. He says that his mouth is like the world's anus. You would not think that such words would proceed

from Thomas More, but they do. No one has rendered the Latin tongue more obscene" (111). When considered in conjunction with the novel's earlier flashback to More's youth, the introduction of Thomas More as an adult powerfully illustrates the change his character has undergone over the last four decades. If humor and wit were the chief characteristics of More as a youth, abject hatred of Protestants appears to be his most noteworthy characteristic as an adult.

Mirroring the changes to More that Mantel hints at in the novel, Simon Slater's performance as the adult Thomas More is, from an aural perspective, nearly the antithesis of his performance as young Thomas More. While the younger More is a fast speaker, the elder More delivers his dialogue in a slow and methodical manner. Whereas the fourteen year-old More's voice is higher pitched than Slater's default voice of narration, the fifty year-old More's is the lowest pitched voice of any prominent character in the audio book. Although More delivers his dialogue in a playful, sing-song manner as a youth, as an adult his speech is marked for being droll and, at several times, monotonous. The contrasts between Slater's performances as the elder and younger Mores are thus both numerous and significant.

With regards to establishing the elder More's anger and frustration towards Protestants, one feature of Slater's performance stands out as especially important — his relatively consistent emphasis of words or phrases that paint Protestants or Protestant-friendly cities in a negative manner. Though most of the elder More's dialogue is delivered in the same smooth, deep, and monotonous style, Slater does emphasize certain words by either increasing the volume with which he delivers them or pronouncing specific syllables of emphasized words with a rising intonation. This becomes exceedingly evident as More and Cromwell continue their conversation about the proliferation of texts that have been censored by the Catholic Church. As Mantel writes and Slater narrates:

> Oh, but once these Bible men get over to Antwerp, you know…What a town it is! No bishop, no university, no proper seat of learning, no proper authorities to stop the proliferation of so-called translations, translations of scripture which in my opinion are malicious and willfully misleading…But you know that, of course, you spent some years there. And now Tyndale's been sighted in Hamburg, they say. You'd know him, wouldn't you, if you saw him? (04c, 3:46-4:18)

In delivering this passage, Slater consistently chooses to emphasize the terms and ideas that make Protestant cities sound bad: "No bishop," "no university," "no proper seat of learning," "no proper authorities," "proliferation," "malicious," "willfully misleading," and "Tyndale" all receive the emphasis of added volume or abnormal

intonation. The same is true of "the fair," "heretic booksellers," and "tide of filth" in the previous paragraph (04c, 3:02-3:18).

Both Mantel and Slater go to impressive lengths to communicate that More, despite his generally genial outward appearance, is a man who harbors a great deal of inner hatred for Protestant theologians and believers. Yet Slater's performance as the adult Thomas More adds one additional element that is absent from the text alone. By providing More with a stodgy, dull, and monotonous voice, Slater demonstrates the toll that years of anger and frustration have taken on More's outlook on life. Though as a child scholar his voice was full of energy and exuberance, the elder Thomas More's voice demonstrates little enthusiasm for anything but persecuting others. When discussing politics, family affairs, and other details of daily life, Slater's delivery of More's dialogue is generally very slow and consistent, demonstrating little or no strong emotion at all. Only when he is angry at something does the elder More's voice truly come to life with varied volume and intonation. This is a fact that is later reinforced through multiple scenes in which More is either very sad or fearful for his life.

"He Died in My Arms" and "I Am Very Much Afraid"

Two of the most memorably emotional scenes involving Thomas More in *Wolf Hall* deal with the Lord Chancellor's separation from his family. The first occurs near the novel's mid-point, when More's father, Sir John More, passes away of old age. The second occurs near the novel's conclusion, when More is locked in the Tower of London and forced to await his own execution. In Mantel's text, the two scenes are noteworthy in that they demonstrate a range of emotions from Thomas More; he is profoundly saddened by the loss of his father and extremely fearful as he awaits his execution. In Slater's audio book narration of the text, the opposite effect emerges. Despite the seeming need for strong displays of emotion in each of these scenes, Slater adds emotion to More's voice only in the most minimal of ways. The effect is quite profound, for the audio book's version of Thomas More comes across as much more robotic and emotionally stunted than the character offered in Mantel's text.

In the *Wolf Hall* novel, the death of Sir John More marks a turning point for the Lord Chancellor. Not only does he begin to demonstrate a range of emotions outside of anger, but he also begins, as he explains to Cromwell, to pay attention to his own mortality. Mantel writes:

> "He died in my arms." More begins to cry; or rather, he seems to diminish, and his whole body to leak tears. He says, he was the light of my life, my father. We are not those great men, we are a shadow of what they were. Ask your people at

> Austin Friars to pray for him. "It's strange, Thomas, but since he went, I feel my age. […] God has snapped his fingers, and I see my best years are now behind me." (259)

In many ways this scene is a surprising one. Up until now, the majority of the scenes featuring More have focused either on his dry wit or his general anger towards Protestantism. As such, the somber tone that Mantel establishes in this scene is rather unexpected. Certainly the image of the Lord Chancellor's "whole body" leaking tears must catch Mantel's readers off guard. Heretofore depicted as a fireball of anger and frustration, it comes as something of a shock to imagine More suddenly crying in response to an emotional loss.

Equally surprising is Slater's take on the same scene through his narration of the audio book. Despite Mantel's explicit note that More "begins to cry" as he talks to Cromwell in this scene, Slater delivers More's dialogue in much the same manner as he delivered the Lord Chancellor's dialogue in previous scenes. Particularly when delivering More's proclamation that his father "died in [his] arms," More retains the clarity and articulation of a man who is not at all emotionally choked up (08j, 0:00-0:02). Likewise, if not for the fact that the line is delivered even more slowly than Thomas More typically delivers his lines in the audio book, More's claims that he now feels "his age" and that his "best years are now behind [him]" are pronounced with striking clarity (08j, 0:23-0:34). If More is emotionally shaken up at the loss of his father in this scene, it is not effectively communicated through Slater's delivery of More's dialogue.

Slater's tendency to suppress emotion through his delivery of More's lines is also on display in the novel's penultimate chapter, when More is awaiting his execution in the Tower of London. While there, he receives a visit from Thomas Cromwell, who persuades More to admit that he is afraid of the violent execution he faces in a few days. Mantel writes:

> "Will you think me sentimental, if I say I do not want to see you butchered?" No reply [from More]. "Are you not afraid of the pain?" […] "Oh yes, I am very much afraid, I am not a bold and robust man such as yourself, I cannot help but rehearse it a little in my mind. But I will only feel it for a moment, and God will not let me remember it afterward." (588)

For the same reason that More's sudden display of sadness is surprising in the earlier scene, the Chancellor's unprecedented admission that he is "very much afraid" of something in this scene is also somewhat unexpected. Having previously disagreed

with high-ranking diplomats (like Ambassador Chapuys), prominent families, and even the King of England, More has established himself as a generally unflappable individual to this point. Such, however, is apparently not the case as More approaches his impending death.

If Slater's Thomas More is afraid in this scene, it is difficult to tell from his vocal performance. Just as he side-steps Mantel's textual mandate that More begin to cry when discussing his father's death, Slater also eschews the infusion of fear into his delivery of More's dialogue when discussing his upcoming execution. Though he assures Cromwell that he is indeed "very much afraid," of death, since he is not "a bold and robust man such as [Cromwell]," the tone of More's voice as he delivers the line in the audio book strikes the ear as discordant with what he is saying (18h, 2:28-2:44). Rather than actually being fearful for the loss of his life, Slater's Thomas More sounds resigned to his fate. Whether or not it will hurt, he finally declares in uncharacteristically quick-paced fashion, "God will not let me remember it afterward" (18h, 2:42-2:44).

As Simon Slater demonstrates at different points in the audio book, strong emotion, or lack of emotion, in a narrator's vocal performance can have important implications on an audience's understanding of the story being told. In the case of the *Wolf Hall* audio book, Slater typically has Thomas More emote in noticeable fashion only when he is angry. Whenever Mantel's text calls for a display of a different emotion by the character, Slater either adds a minimal amount of the emotion or ignores the textual mandate altogether. Because of this and other choices made by Slater, listeners to the *Wolf Hall* audio book walk away with a much angrier understanding of Thomas More than readers of Mantel's *Wolf Hall* novel.

"Words. Words. Just Words"

By the time Thomas More is arrested and thrown in the Tower of London, he has long since established himself as a very different individual than he was as a child scholar. Between Mantel's textual highlighting of More's anti-Protestant obsessions and Slater's droll-yet-angry performance as the elder More for the *Wolf Hall* audio book, this is made quite clear.[8] Yet in addition to this, Mantel also chooses to have More undergo a symbolic transformation in the novel. Although the entirety of More's adult life has represented a break from his comparatively innocent childhood, More's symbolic transition out of childhood and into a very dark adulthood is complete only upon his delivery of the same "Words. Words. Just Words" line that he originally uttered as a youth. Indeed, it is upon More's unenthusiastic and disinterested delivery of the same witty joke he amusingly delivered as a youth that the character's symbolic transformation is complete.

While More is locked in the Tower of London, he and Cromwell engage in a series of conversations to pass the time. In one of the final conversations between the two men, Cromwell mentions to More that all he must do to be released from the Tower of London is take the Oath of Supremacy — or, as Cromwell puts it, "You have to say some words. That's all" (548). After Cromwell proceeds to describe, in lengthy fashion, the life of happiness that More might return to if he agrees to take the Oath of Supremacy, the former Lord Chancellor of England compliments Cromwell on his talent for persuasively using words. It is here that More once again utters his signature line in *Wolf Hall*:

> "You should write a play," More says wonderingly.
> [Cromwell] laughs. "Perhaps I shall."
> "It's better than Chaucer. Words. Words. Just words." (549)

Thinking More is mocking him by referring to their conversation as children — a conversation in which Cromwell admits he thought More was "laughing at [him]" — Cromwell explodes at More, interrogating him about what he was thinking as the two conversed as youths (549). More, it turns out, has no recollection of the incident that has bothered Cromwell for decades. "'Oh, nonsense,' More says genially. 'I didn't know you when you were seven.'" (549).

More's fundamental inability to remember anything related to the incident is itself telling; he is so far removed from the days of his childhood that he can no longer remember many of the events that took place in it. Yet perhaps the most striking difference between More as a child and as an adult is revealed through Slater's delivery of the "Words. Words. Just words" line in this scene (17e, 0:09-0:11). The reoccurrence of a line that was originally spoken in a flashback to More's childhood allows for a direct comparison of that delivery to the one he offers as an adult. Whereas the younger More sounds playful and sing-song, the elder More comes across as disinterested and dismissive. As an adult, all three utterances of the word "words" are performed in the same low, monotonous voice that has characterized much of More's speech to this point. The word "just," meanwhile, is emphasized with extra volume and rising intonation, as if to dismiss Cromwell's claim that taking the Oath of Supremacy is a mere issue of formality. In no way does this delivery of the line retain any of the playfulness and wit that characterized More's earlier response as a youth. The implication is clear: More's days of levity are now very far behind him.

Although the novel outlines the major changes Thomas More undergoes between his childhood and adulthood, the audio book allows for a side-by-side aural comparison, thus affording us an additional means for trying to understand More's

complicated character. Whereas Slater's delivery of the joke as the younger More is noticeably enthusiastic and energetic, his utterance of the line as an adult is very much the opposite. This seems a direct reflection of the lifestyle that More leads at the two different points of his life. Comparatively innocent and isolated as a child, More transforms into an aggressive and violent defender of the Catholic Church as an adult. Years of religious violence ultimately take their toll on More, leaving him emotionally tired and only really capable of demonstrating further anger. If this characterization is hinted at in Mantel's text, it is fully illuminated through Slater's vocal performance for the audio book.

Conclusion

Both Mantel and Slater contribute much to the characterization of More as a man who takes pleasure in the religious persecution of Protestants. This is a fact pointed out on multiple occasions by reviewers of the audio book for Audible.com.[9] In terms of developing More's character, though, Slater's performance as Thomas More for the audio book goes one step further than Mantel's description of More in the novel. Whereas Mantel remains ambiguous in her description of More as a youth — leaving open the possibility that he was full of condescension and hatred from the start — Slater's performance as the younger More does not support this interpretation. In the audio book, More is not presented as a mean-spirited youth. Rather, he is a young, energetic scholar who is later made cynical and emotionally numb through his constant and never-ending religious persecution of others. Though part of this is communicated through Mantel's text itself, an additional part of this understanding is communicated by Slater through his differentiation of voices, tones, and emphasized words and phrases in the audio book.

Whether or not popular audiences view audio books as dramatic to the same degree as stage and screen acting, it is impossible to deny that a narrator's performance in reading for an audio book adds a dimension of theatricality absent from the silent page alone. If, as the years pass, audio books continue to gain in popularity at their current rate, it is likely that they will begin to be examined more frequently by academic and popular art critics alike.[10] Perhaps this will be the point at which audiences begin to accept the dramatic role that an audio book narrator plays in shaping the audience's understandings of the story being told. As this article illustrates, audio book narrators like Simon Slater have the potential to dramatically change the audience's understanding of a particular character. For the moment, however, the fields of literary and popular culture criticism seem uninterested in taking notice. Only the future will tell whether these dramatic performers will be appreciated or whether they will continue to represent a neglected and marginalized

field of artistic performance.

Notes

1. Per the Royal Shakespeare Company's website, all but one of *Wolf Hall*'s fourteen first-month shows are sold out as of the date of this article's authorship.

2. See Bernstein's introduction to *Close Listening: Poetry and the Performed Word*, in which the author argues for the term "audiotext" as a distinction between a printed text and a speaker's acoustic performance of that text. See also Johnson's "Audiobook Confidential," in which the journalist interviews professional audio book narrators about the performance of their craft.

3. Matthew Rubery's critical introduction to *Audiobooks, Literature, and Sound Studies* offers a comprehensive overview of the most common complaints issued against both audio books and audio book narrators. See especially pp. 10-17.

4. Of the 189 listener responses available on Audible.com as of this article's authorship, 16 refer to Thomas More specifically. Only 3 discuss or hint at the role Slater's vocal performance contributes to the characterization of More. See the Audible.com customer reviews of *Wolf Hall* by users "RM Simon", "Luke MacDonald", and "Erika."

5. More's response to Cromwell echoes Hamlet's famous response to Polonius when asked what the prince is reading: "Words, words, words" (2.2.192). Even a fictional Thomas More would have no way of knowing this, as Shakespeare was born nearly three decades after More's death. Nonetheless, the echo of Hamlet represents an additional way in which Hilary Mantel demonstrates her interest in theatricality in *Wolf Hall*.

6. The historical Thomas More was well-known for his sense of humor, particularly for his use of irony. Thomas Wilson describes More's reputation in the 1560 book *The Art of Rhetoric*, writing that "Sir Thomas More with us here in England had an excellent gift not only in this kind [his use of irony] but also in all other pleasant delights" (175). More's reputation may play a role in certain readers' interpretations of More and his dialogue in this opening exchange with Cromwell.

7. All in-text citations of audio clips refer to disk number (i.e. "03"), track (i.e. "n"), and time (i.e. "1:12-1:15").

8. One feature of Mantel's text not explored in this article is More's reputation for happily participating in the whipping and burning of religious heretics, typically Protestants. There are repeated allusions to the practice in *Wolf Hall*. For two examples, see page 259, in which Cromwell refers to More's "whipping schedule," and 582, in which More claims to have the "whole body of law" and "the whole might of Christendom" behind him when he tortures and burns heretics.

9. See the Audible.com reviews written by "Charles Lawton," who refers to More's character as a "butcher;" "Alexandra," who calls More's dialogue and behavior "drippingly evil and snakelike;" and "Craig," who notes that "if you hate Thomas More, you'll love this book."

10. See Alexandra Alter's "The New Explosion in Audio Books" for a full account of the explosion in recent audio book sales and downloads.

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