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# Hornbeck II, J. Patrick. Remembering Wolsey: A History of Commemorations and Representations

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**Hornbeck, J. Patrick, II.**

***Remembering Wolsey: A History of Commemorations and Representations.***

New York: Fordham University Press, 2019. Pp. xi, 289 + 20 plates. ISBN 978-0-8232-8218-0 (paperback) US\$35.

Patrick J. Hornbeck's attempt at surveying the representation and commemoration of Cardinal Wolsey, over five centuries, is unique in two manners. First, his study is comparative, examining a rich variety of sources that represented and commemorated Wolsey in several different ways. Second, he uses a chronological method, in what seems like a "long-durée" approach, to investigate some of the most influential anglophone sources—from just shortly after Wolsey's death in 1530 through the early part of the twenty-first century. In *Remembering Wolsey*, Hornbeck aims to show how historians and theologians over centuries have used the representation of Wolsey as a churchman and an ecclesiastical statesman, to contest the events known collectively "as the English Reformation" (4). Hornbeck further demonstrates that Wolsey's representation fits into three main prototypes as a form of analysis: Wolsey as a papist representing all that was wrong with Roman Catholicism, as an author of English schism by influencing King Henry VIII in a manner that broke England away from the Roman church, and as a "repentant sinner" (15, 50).

Taking a chronological approach first, chapter 1 examines contemporary works of historians and theologians shortly after Wolsey's death in the Tudor era, overlapping with chapter 2, which analyzes parchments, pamphlets, and plays during the early Stuart period. Chapter 3 looks at texts and places of commemoration from the Restoration to Catholic emancipation. Chapter 4 focuses on three contrasting genres—historical fiction, academic history, and Civic Pageantry—followed in the next chapter by two popular examples of mass media during the twenty-first century. A selection of plates in the mid-section of the book provides a visual representation of Wolsey in art and architecture and in literary genres. If one needs to consult further sources of Wolsey's life, Hornbeck has referenced in his notes a significant number, which is outside the analysis of this text.

According to Hornbeck, "the contest to shape Wolsey's" life began shortly after his death (19). One of the first and most influential contemporary sources was the biographical attempt by George Cavendish in the *Metrical Visions* and *Life of Wolsey*. Cavendish admits Wolsey's voracity for power

and grandiosity but argues that Wolsey's repentance for his sins is evidence of transformation; moreover, he partly blames Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII for Wolsey's disgraceful fall (41). Hornbeck argues that throughout the Tudor period, Wolsey's representation was influenced by his contemporaries, such as Cavendish and others who relied upon their memories to write accounts shaped by the religious and political climate of late-Tudor rule. This period also saw the growing publication of chronicles of Wolsey, which Hornbeck labels as "hybrid representation," based on Cavendish's biographical text and the politically and religiously motivated writings of the late Tudor era (46). Catholic writers portrayed him as politically corrupt and, because of his failings, as the author of schism who caused the break of England with Rome (23). Others provided a more favourable approach to Wolsey as a proud papist who called into question "theological errors" of the Roman church while asking for religious reform (50–51).

Hornbeck demonstrates that several factors, such as chronological distance from Wolsey's life, the tense climate of the reformation period, and the approaching civil war, brought about a different set of representations. Wolsey appeared at times as a villain, at other times as a hero caught in the game of political crisis and theological disputes (54). During the Early Stuart period, much of this historiography was influenced by the wide and frequent circulation of both Cavendish's manuscript and revised versions of Wolsey's life written by other scholars and theologians (81). Focusing on manuscripts, pamphlets, and plays, Hornbeck shows how Wolsey's life was no longer a narrative but rather interpretations constructed from the various forms of writings that appeared after his death. With the civil war approaching, Stuart-era writers were focused on the "independence" and reformation of the Church of England; they used Wolsey's life to further their own agendas for politics and religion. Puritans portrayed his life as "divine providence," and others wrote competing narratives in the context of Henrician Reformation and "England's discredited Catholic past" (86–87).

The last three chapters of Hornbeck's book cover the period from the Restoration to Catholic emancipation leading up to present day. Wolsey's "life" experienced periods of neglect and then of popularity as the chronological and cultural distance from England's Tudor past widened with the age of industrialization (89, 119). Hornbeck suggests that the development of new academic traditions of examining primary sources and other innovative

forms of analysis in the modern period, such as oral history, blurred the line between academic history and historical fiction (121). Some forms of fictional history, such as civic pageants, used Wolsey as a moral example, while public representations were generally commemorations. Academic writers took diverse approaches in examining primary texts related to his life (145, 155). Mass media, such as movies and television, brought about a different set of representations of Wolsey altogether, based on the public's curiosity and appetite for visual forms of historical fiction. The perception of Wolsey's life has thus depended on the importance of his character given by the creators of these media, such as in the popular series *The Tudors* or *Wolf Hall*.

As Hornbeck demonstrates, the volume of work devoted to Wolsey's life and his personality has been massive. Not all of the sources Hornbeck examines are based exclusively on Wolsey, yet Wolsey remains a vivid and crucial figure. Hornbeck's chronological approach allows the reader to move at ease between chapters and to observe how Wolsey's representation is shaped by the various events that influenced the political and religious climate of Britain. While Hornbeck is not attempting to write a biography or historical narrative, his in-depth analysis of the collection of historical, literary, and visual mass media gives us a historiographical and comparative narrative of Wolsey's life as an exceptional layman, a cardinal, and an influential political figure in the history of Tudor and Stuart England.

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**Hueber, Frédéric.**

***Antoine Caron. Peintre de ville, peintre de cour (1521–1599).***

Collection Renaissance. Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2018. Pp. 383 + ill. ISBN 978-2-86906-683-0 (hardcover) 45€.

The style of Antoine Caron is, on the one hand, recognizable—bodies constructed of elegantly elongated limbs and delicately diminutive heads, arranged in gracefully twisting poses and inserted into sweeping compositions—yet his oeuvre has been conflated with those of such diverse artists as Nicolò dell'Abate, Maarten van Heemskerck, and Henri Lerambert. Frédéric Hueber's catalogue