***Turning Princes into Pages:***

***Sixteenth-Century Literary Representations of Thomas Cardinal***

***Wolsey***

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Notes on Transcriptions

This thesis silently expands standard early modern contractions (‘Mr’ becomes ‘Master’), abbreviations (with the exception of the ampersand ‘&’), and archaic characters (thorn ‘þ’ becomes ‘th’). Spelling and punctuation is reproduced as it appears in the source text, except where indicated by square brackets: [example]. In some quotes, text has been made bold or italicized to indicate editorial alterations or for analytical purposes, and has been indicated as such in each instance. In the Appendices, some names and titles have been abbreviated in the interests of space: ‘W’ represents ‘Wolsey’, ‘H8’ represents ‘Henry VIII’, and ‘HRE’ represents ‘Holy Roman Emperor’.

## Abstract of the Thesis

This thesis considers a range of sixteenth-century literary texts in order to trace the evolution of the public image(s) of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey (*c.*1470-1530), Henry VIII’s chief minister from 1515 until 1529. The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate and explore the genesis and subsequent evolution of literary characterizations of Wolsey. This process in turn reveals much about the individual authors, editors, and playwrights who generated these images; the readers and audiences who received them; and the social, political, and religious events to which they responded and with which they interacted. Moreover, this thesis argues that through analyzing case studies (like Wolsey’s), we can better understand how sixteenth-century authors conceptualized and represented history itself, as well as the uses to which these histories might be put. To explore this concept, this thesis creates a framework of ‘mimetic’, ‘poetic’, and ‘documentary’ representations of history to better distinguish how Tudor authors organized and created their respective histories.

In order to identify common themes and highlight evolving textual features, this thesis moves chronologically through a diverse corpus, looking at early satires in doggerel poetry and drama; biography and *de casibus* verse; Elizabethan historiographies (both religious and secular); and Jacobean drama. This approach demonstrates how the public images of Tudor political figures were constructed in a web of interconnected texts, and how authors constructed and adapted representations of history over the course of the sixteenth century. In addition, this thesis considers how characterizations of Wolsey in particular demonstrate the means by which a particular image could be adapted to interact with a rapidly changing public sphere.

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## Introduction to the Thesis

Rede me and be nott wrothe

For I saye no thynge but trothe.[[1]](#footnote-1)

So begins *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, a lengthy doggerel satire against Thomas Cardinal Wolsey by Jerome Barlowe[[2]](#footnote-2) and William Roy. Apparently too controversial for English publishers, *Rede Me* was published in Strasbourg in 1528, and the authors were pursued by the Henrician authorities both on the European continent and across England.[[3]](#footnote-3) These opening lines immediately present the reader with one of the major problems facing scholars of historical literature: the authors claim to write ‘nothing but truth’, but what do they mean by ‘truth’? Certainly it is difficult to take *Rede Me* as a dispassionate and objective historical record; the frontispiece (on which these first lines appear) also displays a large illustration of a coat of arms, described and analyzed in verse form:

Of the prowde Cardinall this is the shelde

Borne vp betwene two angels off Sathan.

The sixe blouddy axes in a bare felde

Sheweth the cruelte of the red man /

whiche hathe devoured the beautifull swan.

Mortall enmy vnto the whyte Lion /

Carter of Yorcke / the vyle butchers sonne.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The opening stanza makes it abundantly clear that Wolsey is the satiric target of this text (the specific mention of the “prowde Cardinall” and the “Carter of Yorcke” as well as the “butchers sonne” comment describe no other possible candidates).[[5]](#footnote-5) Yet Barlowe and Roy are not describing Wolsey’s actual coat of arms, which incorporated the silver cross of the Ufford earls of Suffolk, blue de la Pole leopards, Cornish choughs from the arms of Thomas Becket, a red lion to represent Pope Leo X, and the Tudor rose of Henry VIII. Rather, they are using an Aristotelian mimetic version: that is, an imitative version designed to resemble an object or concept while deviating enough from that object to achieve a particular rhetorical purpose. A ‘true’ representation of the coat of arms, in this sense, is not limited to a literal description of an object; rather, a ‘true’ representation of that object might alter details—even substantial elements—in order to provide the reader with a more accurate sense of what the purpose of the object might be, or what experiencing that object might have been like, even what lessons might be learned from that object.

If we apply this terminology to how we think about history as an object to be represented, we must first distinguish between ‘history’—that is, the events that actually took place—and the historical, or documentary, record. The documentary record is composed of items like court records, legal documents, charters, and, to an extent, letters. In this sense, a ‘documentary’ representation of history, or a documentary historiography, is one which adheres closely to the documentary record. However, it must be noted that even a small degree of editorialization (selectivity in the inclusion of source material, summarizing events or documents, or providing profiles of historical figures) would constitute a departure from the documentary record. This concern raises a host of questions: how far can we trust historical literature to provide us with a window into the past? Can we trust any non-documentary evidence for the Tudor period?

The answer is that we must acknowledge the existence of a different cultural attitude to ‘truth’, history, and historiography during the Tudor period. Sir Philip Sidney was not alone in raising concerns about *copia* and the rhetorical manipulation of texts, but his works display a nexus where a concurrent range of ‘truths’ about history interact.[[6]](#footnote-6) This issue, which extends throughout the sixteenth century, requires that we recognize a contemporary spectrum of adherence to the documentary record and create a schema which allows us to categorize historiographical texts according to authorial intention and methodology. A ‘documentary’ text would include a very high degree of adherence to the documentary record, but would be limited to bare recitation of dates, names, statistics, and other attested data and sources without any editorialization. By contrast, Barlowe and Roy’s satirical coat of arms for Cardinal Wolsey acts as an example of texts which consciously do not adhere to the documentary record, and can therefore be placed further along the spectrum of adherence and labeled as either ‘mimetic’ or ‘poetic’. A mimetic historiography is distinguished from a documentary historiography in that it will provide a plausible version of events, but one that consciously departs from the documentary record. It is essential to note, however, that a mimetic representation must remain generally plausible, and that the text has been crafted intentionally to achieve a particular rhetorical purpose. There must be evidence of a tension between the legitimizing force of accuracy and the persuasive force of an ideological argument presented in the text. As we will see in this thesis, texts like John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* often employ strongly mimetic elements as part of a polemical effort to support the Edwardian Reformation’s continuation in Elizabeth’s reign.

Texts like the *Acts and Monuments* are distinct from a ‘poetic’ historiography, which may employ invented, exaggerated, implausible, or impossible depictions of historical figures or events in order to communicate its message. Texts we might describe as strongly poetic might include *The Faerie Queene*, for example, or Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. In texts like these, there might be little or no attempt to adhere to a strongly evidenced documentary record, but that is not the purpose: rather, in this schema, authors use invented elements to communicate a message that might be unavailable (or lacking in rhetorical strength) from the documentary record. In both mimetic and poetic representations of history, the narrative the author is attempting to construct overrides concerns about accuracy, which, as we will see, were certainly present throughout the sixteenth century.

The purpose in distinguishing between these various types is essential when considering historical literature in general and sixteenth century literature in particular. As this thesis will demonstrate, this warning is particularly apt when speaking about Tudor literature, which employed a variety of these representations in order to achieve a range of rhetorical purposes. That Tudor authors could employ a range of ‘truths’ when discussing history indicates a more fluid social conception of both truth and history in the sixteenth century. This study will therefore employ these three terms in a framework to help readers better understand both the authorial intentions and literary techniques which helped generate the texts in this corpus. To return to our example, that Barlowe and Roy’s text is meant to be both poetic and mimetic (rather than documentary) is made clear by the vivid description and analysis of a fictional coat of arms said to represent Wolsey:

The sixe bulles heddes in a felde blacke

Betokeneth hys stordy furiousnes

Wherfore the godly lyght to put abacke

He bryngeth in hys dyvlisshe darcknes.

The bandog in the middes doth expresse

The mastif Curre bred in Ypswitch towne

Gnawynge with his teth a kynges crowne.

The cloubbe signifieth playne hys tiranny

Covered over with a Cardinals hatt

Wherin shalbe fulfilled the prophecy

Aryse vp Iacke and put on thy salatt /

For the tyme is come of bagge and walatt

The temporall cheualry thus throwen downe

Wherfor prest take hede and beware thy croune.[[7]](#footnote-7)

These verses present a series of densely-packed symbols which, for an early modern English readership, could not have failed to evoke Wolsey. There are several reasons why we can be assured that this connection was made not just in 1528 but throughout the sixteenth century. First, Wolsey himself was the source of several of these images: most notably, the “Cardinals hatt”. Wolsey aggressively promoted a connection between himself and his cardinal’s *galero*, which he received from Rome in 1515. As we shall see, despite the existence of a number of other politically active English cardinals throughout the late medieval and early modern period, images of a cardinal’s hat in Tudor popular culture came to represent Wolsey almost exclusively. Wolsey’s perceived feuds with the ‘white lion’ of the Howards and the ‘swan’ of the Staffords also is referenced; Henry’s first minister feuding with two of the most important families in England would have had serious political ramifications and certainly would have been keenly discussed amongst courtiers and court-watchers.

The second reason why Wolsey was such a readily recognized figure throughout the sixteenth century was because of the repeated adoption, adaptation, and transmission of particular images and characterizations of Wolsey by authors across the sweep of the Tudor period. Some of these features—like the hat—were appropriated from the Cardinal’s own self-figuring. Others, usually satirical in nature, were often generalized insults which came to represent Wolsey specifically through repeated application throughout the century. Simply calling Wolsey a “dog” was hardly a specific insult in itself; however, even as early as 1528, Barlowe and Roy’s calling Wolsey a “mastif Curre” (f. a1v, l. 20) linked *Rede Me* to a number of pre-existing and emergent anti-Wolsey satires, and would help to lay a foundation for further negative characterizations throughout the century and beyond.

Thus this thesis will demonstrate that sixteenth-century characterizations of Wolsey were not merely a chronological series, but trace a more complex developmental trajectory; they participated consciously in a process of adoption and adaptation in producing images of the Cardinal, a process which demonstrates how a variety of literary Wolseys were utilized throughout the sixteenth century to engage with contemporary events. These characterizations fall into three sections or periods.[[8]](#footnote-8) The first, which roughly extends from 1514 to 1530 and in which we find texts like *Rede Me*, John Skelton’s anti-Wolsey satires, and *Godly Queene Hester*, treats Wolsey as a satirical object: a living religious and political figure who could be satirized in the hopes of affecting events during Wolsey’s lifetime. During this period, particular satirical images and metaphors began to be applied to Wolsey with increasing frequency until the Cardinal was readily associated with these features. The second period, which extends from 1530 to 1587, contains texts which adopted Wolsey as a topic of discourse separate from the man himself. George Cavendish, whose *Metrical Visions* and *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* appeared during this era, sought to combat what he identified as inaccuracies (and, in some cases, blatant slurs and mistruths) in the early Tudor chronicles of Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall; he felt he had the authority to do so by virtue of his first-hand witnessing of Wolsey’s fall from power. Despite Cavendish’s efforts, these chronicles began a process of ‘discoursing’ Wolsey which was adopted and expanded by the late Tudor chroniclers (represented in this thesis by Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* and Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles*). It is during this period that we find some of the more improbable anecdotes about Wolsey coupled with sensationalized descriptions and depictions. The third period, which extends from 1587 well into the seventeenth century, considers Wolsey not just as an object of discourse, but as emblematic of the problem of representation itself. Shakespeare and Fletcher’s Wolsey in *Henry VIII* wonders if his enemies and the ignorant will write the chronicle of his life and deeds, which neatly raises a concern with how best to represent history itself that emerged in the sixteenth century. This change both arose from and caused many of the changing attitudes towards history and historical figures, and developed in an evolutionary fashion alongside many of the social changes which took place in the sixteenth century. ‘Evolutionary’ is an apt term; as this thesis will demonstrate, some texts and textual features did not prove popular and were not adopted by later authors (or republished). But, as we have already seen in *Rede Me*, some features associated with Wolsey attracted interest and were imitated and adapted throughout the century.

This study is therefore concerned with Wolsey not because of the man and his actions—either perceived or attested—but because Wolsey represents an opportunity to trace how authors with disparate views represented moments and figures from history throughout a rapidly changing century. During the reigns of the Tudors, England went from being a bulwark of the papacy (as evidenced in part by the existence of Henry VIII’s 1521 *Assertio septem sacramentorum*) to a hotbed of Reformist culture rivaling anything found on the European mainland; it saw that culture splinter into a variety of competing factions, the brief (but certainly significant) return of Roman orthodoxy during Mary I’s reign, and the subsequent uncertain reformation(s) of the Anglican church under Elizabeth I. As the last Roman clergyman to hold the Lord Chancellorship in England in addition to his cardinalate, Wolsey attracted criticism and commentary from evangelicals as well as a range of disaffected conservatives throughout this period. This interest was not exclusively religious: because of Wolsey’s extraordinary centrality to the Henrician government, much of the literature about him is also concerned with his secular roles. These questions about corruption, class consciousness, and Machiavellian realpolitik were expressed in conjunction with concerns about the influence of foreign powers on the nascent English nation-state. As Thomas Betteridge has observed, the Henrician historiographer Edward Hall criticized Wolsey not just for his unpopular policies or beliefs, but—as was the case with the Amicable Grant of 1525—that these policies were conducted privately, and that privacy is the enemy of just governance.[[9]](#footnote-9) This fear is a common theme throughout English (and European) history, but by looking at representations of Wolsey, we can see how we see how authors connected these fears (as seen through the lens of the Reformation, from all religious perspectives) to Wolsey and to broader questions about how truth and history might (or ought to) be represented.

This thesis thus seeks not to discuss Wolsey in a strictly historiographical or biographical sense, but instead aims to fill a gap in current scholarship by considering the motivations and mechanisms that produced such intensely negative characterizations of the Cardinal that even after more than four hundred years after his death, the dominant popular image of Wolsey is still overwhelmingly of a bloated and cunning Machiavellian politician.[[10]](#footnote-10) There have been a number of studies which have done a great deal to uncover biographical information about Wolsey, of which Peter Gwyn’s *The King’s Cardinal* is most authoritative. There also have been an array of examinations of particular representations of Wolsey (often placed within considerations of Cavendish’s *Life*) or his political life and legacy, as exemplified by John Guy’s invaluable *The Cardinal’s Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber.* Perhaps most similar to this study is Stella Fletcher’s recent *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe*, which discusses Wolsey’s biography as well as depictions of the Cardinal in many media up to the present day. Fletcher’s monograph is an exceptional resource for surveying Wolsey’s life and posthumous legacy, but differs from this one in that it focuses on the historical figure himself, rather than on the literary characters to be found in this corpus.

If we look more broadly at studies of key sixteenth-century figures, we can see that the problem of representation is one that is common to many of Wolsey’s contemporaries. Henry VIII is a prime example: modern scholarship perennially debates what the historical Henry might have been like, or how characterizations of Henry might have been used.[[11]](#footnote-11) Thomas Betteridge has made several studies of Henry VIII and his afterlives, and collaborated with Thomas Freeman to edit a collection of essays on Henry and his historical and cultural footprint until the modern day.[[12]](#footnote-12) This study aptly demonstrates the need for this thesis: while the collection provides an excellent study of Henry’s legacy in a wide variety of academic and popular media, it is restricted in scope from providing an in-depth study of the generation and adaptations of the characterizations and images of Henry, focusing instead on his posthumous legacy. By contrast, this thesis demonstrates the value of a firm foundation of study to be laid by considering historiographical legacies from their earliest manifestations.

All of these studies, while extremely valuable for the achievement of their respective aims, did not seek to provide a comprehensive study of how particular images were generated and how those images were applied to a variety of purposes. Through placing this thesis in this scholarly context, we can see how the representations of Wolsey have a much broader significance than just one man and his posthumous reputation: we can better understand how a wide range of Tudor and Jacobean authors conceptualized and represented history itself.

### Speaking nothing but truth: Problems, Structure, and Subject

One of the difficulties with a study of this nature is highlighted by reading the various extant accounts of Wolsey’s death. George Cavendish—who was present at the event—describes a pious end, with Wolsey gently expiring after denying himself food on a fast day, and whose body laid in Leicester Abbey on display for a week. His final words are devoted to urging his listeners to guard against the new Lutheran heresies and the rebellions that have historically coincided with religious upheaval, and he was discovered to have been wearing a hair shirt under his finery: a secret he had kept even from Cavendish.[[13]](#footnote-13) By contrast, John Foxe’s account of Wolsey’s death is heavily loaded with unholy imagery, describing a blackened and bloated corpse being tipped into its grave by guttering torchlight in the dead of night.[[14]](#footnote-14) Naturally, both cannot be literally true (not least of all because they directly contradict each other): rather, they demonstrate how Wolsey’s public image was utilized for a broad range of purposes, and how differing interpretations of ‘truthfulness’ during this period unsettle any attempt at recreating a purely factual timeline of events. This issue reveals the concern with representations of truth that lies at the heart of this thesis. Accounts of Wolsey’s life and career were co-opted by writers even during Wolsey’s own lifetime, and this process continued well after his death. It is not that Wolsey was unique among Tudor political figures by virtue of his being satirized; rather, Wolsey is unique because his public image came to be utilized for a variety of purposes long after his death. It is for this reason that Wolsey serves as an ideal focal point for examining how Tudor writers characterized political figures, their motivations for doing so, and how these mechanisms and motivations evolved in response to the social, political, and religious changes that took place in sixteenth-century England. This study therefore takes a wide angle view of the literature of the sixteenth century, and aims to fill a gap in current scholarship by demonstrating the necessity for understanding the ways and means through which Wolsey was characterized in order to better challenged received notions of historical ‘truth’ in this period.

Due to Wolsey’s centrality to the Henrician government, it is perhaps unsurprising that there are a large number of contemporary and near-contemporary texts concerning the Cardinal. Necessity dictates that not all can be discussed in this thesis, so a selection of core texts spanning the sixteenth century was identified to act as exemplars. They have been chosen to act as stepping-stones across the sixteenth century, each demonstrating in an emblematic fashion a new characterization of Wolsey or a response to, or adaptation of, a previous figuring. Chapter I considers how the early Tudor laureate John Skelton (c.1460–1529) took generalized satirical features and applied them to Wolsey with increasing vitriol and clarity from 1515 until 1523, when he conducted an apparent about-face and obsequiously identified Wolsey as his patron. In applying general insults to those royal advisors he saw as unscrupulous (of which Wolsey was decidedly foremost after 1515), Skelton came to increase gradually both the strength of his invective and his focus on Wolsey. As a result, the terms and images Skelton adapted to fit Wolsey began to be identified increasingly with the Cardinal: establishing a Wolsey lexicon and beginning a process which would continue throughout the sixteenth century.

Beginning with *Against Venemous Tongues* (1516) and following with *Magnyfycence* (*c*.1516), *Speke, Parott* (*c*.1521), *Collyn Clout* (*c*.1522-3), *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (1522), *The Garland of Laurell* (1523), *The Douty Duke of Albany* (1523), and *A Replycacion* (1528), this chapter identifies how each of these texts demonstrate the evolution of Skelton’s characterization of Wolsey. The chapter finishes with analysis of the anonymous Henrician satire *Godly Queene Hester* (c. 1529). *Hester* is closely linked with Skelton and has occasionally been labeled (likely erroneously) as a product of Skelton’s.[[15]](#footnote-15) It owes much to *Magnyfycence* in particular, however, and this chapter will use the similarities between these two texts to reinforce both the argument that *Magnyfycence* is an anti-Wolsey text (and was certainly viewed this way after Wolsey’s death, when it was first printed) and to demonstrate the substantial debt owed by the *Hester* author to Skelton. However, it is essential to note that while *Hester* owes much to Skelton, it is a distinct text and features innovative adaptations of those earlier anti-Wolsey images. The inclusion of *Hester* will demonstrate how subsequent authors adapted Skelton’s early characterizations, reflecting the continuing market for anti-Wolsey satire in the years immediately following the Cardinal’s fall.

There was a substantial volume of anti-Wolsey literature that appeared during Wolsey’s fall from power and in the decades after his death, ranging from Jerome Barlowe and William Roy’s *Rede me and bee nott wrothe*, printed in 1528, to Thomas Churchyard’s Wolsey poem in the 1587 edition of the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The presence of these critical texts and a lack of oppositional pro-Wolsey texts indicate that Wolsey’s reputation had suffered considerably in the period following his death to the point that Wolsey was increasingly being singled out as one of the most vilified men in England. One of the most significant groups of anti-Wolsey literature came in the form of the mid-Tudor historiographies. Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall wrote two of the earliest: Vergil’s *Historia anglica* was first printed in 1534, though Wolsey material did not appear until the third edition of 1555; Hall’s *Chronicle* (*The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & York*) was printed in 1542. The presence of these emerging historiographies meant that the reading public was being given a new opportunity to develop an awareness of the actions attributed to historical figures (including Wolsey). That the characterizations of Wolsey found in these accounts were overwhelmingly negative reinforced the already-dominant negative images of the Cardinal present in the public mind.

It was in this atmosphere—and in response to these attitudes—that George Cavendish (1494-c.1562) wrote his *Metrical Visions* (c.1552-1558) and *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (c.1554-1558), which are considered in Chapter II.[[16]](#footnote-16) Cavendish served as Wolsey’s gentleman-usher for the final decade of the Cardinal’s life and witnessed both the major diplomatic triumphs of the early 1520s and Wolsey’s sudden fall from power first-hand. However, little literary analysis has been conducted on this text, and few of Cavendish’s sources or motivations have been scrutinized. In addition, the *Life* has largely eclipsed the *Metrical Visions* in modern scholarship, leaving a substantial gap in the treatment of Cavendish’s work. These two texts provide readers with rare mid-century defenses of Wolsey in poetry and prose, both constructed around a didactic *de casibus* framework. These are defensive texts and demonstrate a clear respect for the fallen Cardinal, but they are far from obsequious: instead, they attempt to provide a comparatively balanced view of Wolsey’s strengths and flaws as part of a moral warning to readers against indulging in sinful pride. This chapter sets these two texts against the previous examples of anti-Wolsey literature and by doing so illuminates how Cavendish was struggling to work against a rising and increasingly codified tide of negative public images of Wolsey.

It is unclear to what extent Cavendish intended his texts to be published. While the *Life* appears to have circulated reasonably widely in manuscript, the *Metrical Visions* are extant in only one holograph collection (BL MS Egerton 2402). Cavendish’s attempt to moderate the dominant anti-Wolsey images rooted in Skelton and *Hester* were largely unsuccessful in part due to the religious turmoil of the mid-Tudor period. Moderate and reform-minded Catholics were unwilling to embrace Wolsey because of his lack of effective ecclesiastic reforms, and conservative Catholics were generally angered by Wolsey’s monastic suppressions and conglomeration of Church offices.[[17]](#footnote-17) Equally, Reformists viewed Wolsey as the antithesis of a godly Church leader and increasingly identified him as such. In addition, virtually all religious denominations appear to have taken exception with his public displays of his enormous wealth.

Chapter III focuses on the martyrologist John Foxe’s seminal *Acts and Monuments* and will consider how Foxe used rumor, hyperbole, and fiery Reformed polemic to turn Wolsey from an object of satirical ridicule into a metonym for all the perceived evils of the Roman Church. For the first time, Wolsey came to represent far more than just an immoral and over-proud churchman: for Foxe and his contemporaries, a hyperbolized Wolsey stood for the greedy, pompous, and ungodly misinterpretations promoted by the Pope, and played a central propagandist role in the struggle to maintain the Reformation in Elizabethan England. This text demonstrates conclusively that while Wolsey had died decades before, his legacy had been appropriated for a variety of purposes that had little to do with Wolsey’s personal reputation. I use the four editions of the *Acts and Monuments* produced during Foxe’s lifetime (1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583), along with an appendix providing a comparative list of every Wolsey-related anecdote, to analyze how Foxe appropriated previous material and adapted it over the course of those four editions.

In Chapter IV, I look at Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, which appeared in two editions in 1577 and 1587 respectively. The *Chronicles* are roughly similar in scope and organization to the *Acts and Monuments*, but while Foxe was writing an ecclesiastic history of the English church, Holinshed and his associates were endeavoring to create a secular historiography. To ascribe the *Chronicles* to Holinshed alone (1529–1580) is overly simplistic, however; Holinshed was the primary author and editor for the 1577 edition, but was assisted by a number of assistants, primarily William Harrison (1535-1593) and Richard Stanyhurst (1547-1618). The 1587 edition was compiled and printed after Holinshed’s death in 1580 by Abraham Fleming (c.1552–1607). Fleming made substantial editorial revisions and massively expanded the *Chronicles*; as a result, the 1587 edition is distinctly different in tone and content from the 1577 edition. One similarity between these two editions is that they both relied on external contributors: as a result, the *Chronicles* is a patchwork collection of opinions and motivations, which have been smoothed and organized by the editors in an effort to create one image from many. While there are many parallels between the *Chronicles* and the *Acts and Monuments* (which is reflected in the similar approach to both texts adopted by this study), their goals and resulting influence were markedly different. This chapter considers the authorial and editorial mechanisms which distinguish the *Chronicles* both from previous historiographies and from each other as discrete editions, a feature often overlooked by scholars.

The *Chronicles* are particularly well-known to literary scholars, though few have made it the focus of study. This is because the *Chronicles* were famously employed by William Shakespeare as a reference for the majority of his history plays, including *Henry VIII*, *Richard II*, *Henry IV1* and *2*, *Henry V,* *Henry VI 1*, *2*, and *3*, and *Richard III*, as well as *King Lear*. In Chapter V, I use Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII: or, All is True* to provide a summative case-study of how Wolsey was represented after the end of the Tudor dynasty. *Henry VIII* is an unusual play, known primarily for its pageantry (and for having burned down the Globe during its inaugural performance in 1613); however, it has generally been derided for a lack of otherwise interesting features, with drama critic Charles Spencer calling the play “inert”.[[18]](#footnote-18)

While it does not stick exclusively to the historical record, the play broadly follows a series of narrative arcs charting the falls of the Duke of Buckingham, Cardinal Wolsey, and Katherine of Aragon, and the birth of Elizabeth I. Historically, directors have cast Wolsey as a Machiavellian schemer, engineering the execution of Buckingham and the King’s divorce: in contrast, this chapter proposes a reassessment of Wolsey’s character. However, no major production has yet portrayed the Wolsey of this play as anything but a scheming villain, despite clear textual opportunities for presenting a more nuanced character. Instead, Jacobean and modern audiences alike have been presented with images of what Garrett Mattingly described in 1942 as an “unwieldy hulk of corrupted flesh bearing perilously the supple, powerful, brain, a demoniac incandescence of ambition and pride driving and lighting from within the bloated, rotting body.”[[19]](#footnote-19) By closely reading and analyzing Wolsey’s in-text reputation and characterizations (by himself, friends, and enemies) and juxtaposing these against his on-stage actions, we can see clearly that Wolsey can easily be portrayed as the victim of the jealousies and misapprehensions of his noble counterparts. That this textual opportunity has not yet been taken up by any major production—coupled with a lack of scholarly recognition—signals the extent to which the negative portrayals of Wolsey developed in the sixteenth century have dominated the public image of the cardinal until the present day.

These diverse authors and texts have been selected intentionally to act as stepping-stones which demonstrate how Wolsey was characterized, how these characterizations evolved over the course of the sixteenth century, and how they reflect the social, political, and religious changes which took place during the Tudor dynasty. That this multiplicity of voices was expressed in such a wide range of genres—ranging from the low-brow Skeltonic to the state-sponsored historiography—provides us with an ideal opportunity to see the process by which history was made in Tudor England.

## Chapter I

## Rayling and Scoffery: Henrician Portrayals of Cardinal Wolsey

The earliest literary images of Cardinal Wolsey are difficult to date with a satisfying degree of specificity, but almost certainly begin appearing in 1514-1515, as Wolsey rose from a royal almonership to a bishopric and subsequently to the Chancellorship and the Archbishopric of York. Though Wolsey’s increasing centrality in the Court must have been widely discussed for several years prior to his rapid accumulations of high offices, it is only in this period that we begin to see the emergence of literary texts which figure Wolsey. When discussing early Henrician literary images of Cardinal Wolsey in any context, the works of John Skelton must figure prominently. When the field of study is restricted to poetic texts, Skelton is not merely prominent, but is indeed dominant. His poetry contains images that both Skelton and his audiences adapted to fit the changing political landscape in Tudor England; these images proved to be so particularly fitting with the public considerations of Wolsey that Skelton’s images became the predominant representations of the Cardinal for the entirety of the sixteenth century. Skelton’s portrayals of Wolsey (or the subsequent adoption and application of those images by readers) thrived despite Skelton’s fluctuating reputation. George Puttenham included Skelton in his list of significant English poets, but condemned Skelton as a “sharpe Satirist, but with more rayling and scoffery than became a Poet Lawreat”.[[20]](#footnote-20) Despite this rather dismissive stance, it is clear that Skelton’s works enjoyed some popularity during his lifetime and after the poet’s death in 1529. While the general trend in the publishing of his texts across the sixteenth century tended towards decline, there was at least enough market interest to maintain a moderate level of general public awareness about Skelton. Particularly in the mid-1550s a number of prominent printers—including John Day, Wynkyn de Worde, John Rastell, William Rastell, and Richard Pynson—published new editions of Skelton’s works which helped to sustain Skelton’s influence on mid- to late-Tudor literature. This modest popularity helped to diffuse images in Skelton’s works throughout the public consciousness: these images—which Skelton himself may or may not consciously have attached to Wolsey—came to represent the Cardinal.

Though Skelton’s reputation was rather mixed by the end of the sixteenth century partially as a result of critics like Puttenham, it is clear that he was considered a significant poet throughout the Tudor period. Skelton’s popularity can be traced through more subtle or obscure references as well as the sustained interest in publishing Skelton’s works. [[21]](#footnote-21) John Bale’s 1557-1559 *Catalogus* (*Scriptorum illustrium maioris britanniae catalogus*) mentions Skelton in the august company of writers like Gower, Lydgate, Tyndale, and More, but it was Thomas Marshe’s edition of 1568 (titled *Pithy, Pleasaunt and Profitable Workes*) that first attempted to make available a substantial portion of Skelton’s works.[[22]](#footnote-22) Marshe’s edition became the standard edition of Skelton until Alexander Dyce’s significantly expanded 1843 edition, which included a large number of works that had previously only circulated in limited fashion (either in manuscript or in smaller printed collections). The production of Marshe’s edition (along with the numerous smaller editions printed throughout the mid- and late-Tudor period) indicates an interest in Skelton’s poetry continuing for decades after the poet’s death: a public awareness that maintained itself throughout the length of the Tudor period and well into the Jacobean period. This reasonably moderate level of public interest is further supported by the numerous posthumous printings and re-issuings of various individual poems or small collections, most notably the first print editions of *Magnyfycence* (John Rastell, *c*.1530) and *Collyn Clout* (Thomas Godfray, 1531); *Certayne Bokes,* Richard Lant’s *c*.1545 collection of several poems including *Speke, Parott*; and numerous editions of texts like *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, *Philip Sparrow*, and *Collyn Clout*.[[23]](#footnote-23) In addition to the continued interest in Skelton’s works themselves, there was a mid-century spate of imitators and admirers of Skelton and of the Skeltonic, most notably Luke Shepherd’s Skeltonic satires of the 1540s.[[24]](#footnote-24) The 1561 publishing of the anonymous interlude *Godly Queen Hester* is also notable in that the interlude has often been supposed to have been written by Skelton himself, as we will see below.[[25]](#footnote-25) Jane Griffiths has admirably traced Skelton’s influence, both obvious and subtle, on a variety of mid- and late sixteenth-century texts.[[26]](#footnote-26) In particular, Griffiths highlights the influence of the Skeltonic on religious protest poetry, with imitations and allusions to Skelton’s poetry extending as late as the anonymously authored *A Skeltonicall Salutation* (1589), an anti-Catholic text celebrating the defeat of the Spanish Armada, and beyond to Arthur Dent’s *Plaine Man’s Pathway to Heaven* (1601).

A more substantial reference is found in Edmund Spenser’s 1579 *Shepheardes Calendar,* which takes its narrator Colin Clout directly from Skelton’s *Collyn Clout*. Spenser’s pastoral visions are themselves enormously significant satires, touching on several themes which would have evoked sympathy in Skelton’s own Collyn Clout:

Some gan to gape for greedie governaunce,

And match them selfe with mighty potentates,

Lovers of Lordship and troublers of states:

...Tho under colour of shepheards, somewhile

There crept in Wolves, ful of fraude and guile,

That often devoured their owne sheepe,

And often the shepheards, that did hem keepe.[[27]](#footnote-27)

This excerpt uses pastoral images to connect corrupt priests with wolves that devour both sheep and shepherds; indeed, Shakespeare himself has the Duke of Buckingham reference this same proverbial image when speaking about Wolsey in *Henry VIII*:

This holy fox,

Or wolf, or both—for he is equal rav’nous

As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief,

As able to perform’t. (1.1.158-61)

Nearly a full century after Skelton’s death, Ben Jonson used the Skeltonic in three masques dating from the early 1620s.[[28]](#footnote-28) It is clear then that while Skelton may not have enjoyed an overwhelmingly popular posthumous reputation, his texts and stylistic elements were readily adopted by diverse authors in the century following his death.

Though Skelton had a traceable influence on other authors on a variety of subjects, one of the key aspects of his legacy was imagery of Cardinal Wolsey, which was mostly—but not exclusively—negative. In this chapter we will consider Skelton’s Wolsey characterizations broadly organized into three categories: the early satires (those written prior to 1520), the established anti-Wolsey satires, and the pro-Wolsey poems. Following these three sections, I will discuss the anonymous interlude *Godly Queene Hester* (*c*.1529), a secular morality play with many connections to Skelton (and, in particular, to Skelton’s *Magnyfycence*). By analyzing these poems in this chronological fashion, I hope to demonstrate that Skelton’s images reveal three equally important elements of these early Henrician texts: first, that Skelton intentionally engaged closely with contemporary politics and the public, though his intentions appear inconsistent. Second, Skelton’s Wolsey poetry and poetic features evolved over the period 1515-1529, which largely indicates the growing anti-Wolsey trend which would become dominant by Wolsey’s death in 1530. Third, Skelton’s anti-Wolsey texts left a poetic legacy which is perhaps best exemplified by *Godly Queene Hester*, a play which both demonstrates that legacy and reveals new elements of Skelton’s works in retrospect.

Most of Skelton’s Wolsey images are taken from his anti-Wolsey satires (or supposed anti-Wolsey satires). These poems were produced towards the end of the poet’s career: *Against Venemous Tongues* (*c*.1516), *Magnyfycence* (*c*.1516), *Speke, Parott* (*c*.1521), *Collyn Clout* (1522), and *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (1522). These texts represent a gradual move towards open criticism of the Cardinal; or, at the very least, were viewed as criticism of Wolsey in hindsight after the death of both poet and Cardinal, as we will see below. However, it must be recalled that not all of Skelton’s poetry was anti-Wolsey satire. Setting aside the substantial poetic material that is simply unrelated to Wolsey, we must also consider Skelton’s texts that were authorized or patronized by Wolsey towards the end of the poet’s life. The change from antagonistic satire to (apparently) generous praise is sudden; only a few months after writing *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?*,Skelton dedicated his self-laudatory *The Garlande of Laurell* to Wolsey, with high praise for the Cardinal. This reversal has fuelled much speculation about Skelton’s quest for patronage, his religious beliefs, and his personal relationship with Wolsey; as a result, most Skelton scholarship has focused on this period of Skelton’s life to the detriment of study of his earlier works. After this abrupt change, Skelton’s works remained positive about the Cardinal until the poet’s death; to demonstrate this, we will discuss elements from *The Garland of Laurell* (1523), *The Douty Duke of Albany* (1523), and *A Replycacion* (1528). With so little extant textual evidence, it is difficult to say with any certainty exactly why Skelton changed his poetic attitude, so this section will consider how these late poems reflect on Skelton’s earlier, more neglected works. Thus the corpus of Skelton’s poetry manages to encompass both strident insults and obsequious praise of and relating to Wolsey.

### *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*: early anti-Wolsey texts

*Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence* in particular present an opportunity to see how Skelton’s texts were interpreted by the author, by publishers, and by the public. Both these texts were written in a more subtle vein than the later, explicit anti-Wolsey satires; nor has either text been generally accepted to be about Wolsey. *Against Venemous Tongues*, probably composed in late 1515 or 1516, has been discussed rather less than *Magnyfycence*, for a variety of reasons. *Magnyfycence* represents the first secular morality play in English (or at least, one of the first known). This innovative feature alone makes it worthy of examination, setting aside the substantial satirical focus of the play. By comparison, *Against Venemous Tongues* has often been described as something less than good poetry: H. L. R. Edwards describes it as “an obscure and rather dull little poem”.[[29]](#footnote-29) Only a very few scholars have given the poem any substantial treatment, with some surprising omissions: for example, Greg Walker’s landmark *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* does not mention it, nor does his Everyman edition of Skelton’s poetry include it. It also is neglected by Stanley Fish in his 1965 *John Skelton’s Poetry*, and none of the essays collected in A. S. G. Edward’s 1981 *Skelton: The Critical Heritage* mention it. Maurice Pollet, Arthur Kinney and H. L. R. Edwards are convinced that Skelton specifically singled out Wolsey for criticism in this poem, and John Scattergood cites Pollet’s argument in his definitive 1983 Penguin edition of Skelton’s works. Edwards concludes his argument with an assertion that “*Against Venemous Tongues* turns out to be the first poetic result of Skelton’s hostility to Wolsey.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Kinney agrees, writing that the poem is “openly against” Wolsey.[[31]](#footnote-31) As we will see below, to support these claims scholars generally have focused on the jibe about livery. Scattergood cites Pollet’s assessment that the insults regarding livery make “it plain that the poem is about Wolsey’s anger at certain lords”.[[32]](#footnote-32) However, Jane Griffiths disagrees, noting that *Against Venemous Tongues* is “cryptic”, and gives the date of composition as after “Skelton’s…dismissal from court in 1517”.[[33]](#footnote-33) By linking *Against Venemous Tongues* to Skelton’s dismissal, Griffiths argues that the poem is too ambiguous to support a claim about a specific target; instead, Skelton may well have simply been writing a general invective against “courtly back-biting” in response to his change in fortunes.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Despite the difficulties in conclusively identifying Wolsey as the target of the poem, *Against Venemous Tongues* represents an excellent starting point for analyzing Skelton’s images of Wolsey. The poet employs several categories of images and stylistic features which he returns to repeatedly throughout his anti-Wolsey corpus: of these, clothing and poison/venomous creatures are most common. However, in the final lines of the poem Skelton also mentions “Cerberus the cur”: the first negative dog image found in a Skelton poem possibly associated with Wolsey and representative of a trope which would come to mark Wolsey indelibly.

As we have seen, arguments about Wolsey’s presence in the text tend to center on the first category of images, clothing. This textual element, which appears early in the poem, would resurface throughout Skelton’s later poems and became one of the most common themes identified with Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century. The key image in this category is servants’ livery; allegedly, Skelton contrasts the attention paid to the holy symbols on Wolsey’s servants’ livery with Wolsey’s lack of concern with his spiritual duties. Kinney makes this argument cogently: he writes that “what appears especially galling to the poet is the Cardinal’s new ostentatious display of his badge of office”: namely, the symbols of his recently-acquired cardinalate. That Skelton was criticizing overwrought livery is made plain by his Latin statement preceding the stanza, which reads, “*Hic notat purpuraria arte intextas literas Romanas in amictibus post ambulonum ante et retro*.”[[35]](#footnote-35) Having made clear that the following section is explicitly about livery, Skelton continues on to point out the hypocrisy evidenced by such behavior:

For before on your brest, and behind on your back

In Romaine letters I never founde lack

In your crosse rowe nor Christ chrosse you spede,

Your Pater noster, your Ave, nor your Crede.

Who soever that tale unto you tolde,

He saith untruly, to say that I would

Controlle the cognisaunce of noble men

Either by language or with my pen.[[36]](#footnote-36)

The argument made by Kinney, H. L. R. Edwards, and Scattergood states that here Skelton is referencing Wolsey’s penchant for dressing his servants in elaborate livery; in particular, he required his servants’ livery to bear the letters “T” and “C” (for *Thomas Cardinalis*) on their fronts and backs.[[37]](#footnote-37) H. L. R. Edwards hypothesizes that Skelton was not criticizing the livery for its ostentation. as it was expected that great men would dress their servants in such a manner as to demonstrate their wealth and station. The argument centers on the reader’s interpretation of the word “lack” in line 17:

The point of this [stanza] is not made any clearer by the pun on *lack*, which then also meant ‘blame’. He seems to be saying: ‘No, I don’t object to the letters on your clothes, as you accuse me of doing. It’s the lack of them in your mind that I dislike. You, an illiterate fool, have the cheek to calumniate me, Skelton!’[[38]](#footnote-38)

Though H. L. R. Edwards is correct in observing that ‘lack’ can mean ‘blame’, the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites only one remotely contemporaneous usage agreeing with this definition, found in Nicolas Udall’s *Apophthegmes*, which he translated into English in 1542 and was published in 1563.[[39]](#footnote-39) By comparison, the more common meaning of ‘lack’ as meaning a “Deficiency, want, need (of something desirable or necessary)” appears three times in the *OED* in the period 1500 to 1548, which cites William Dunbar, Sir Thomas More and Sir John Cheke.[[40]](#footnote-40) It therefore seems more likely that Skelton simply meant that the livery had “Romain letters” on them and, if we accept him as the target, though Wolsey paid much attention to these marks of status and Roman affiliation, he did not serve his ecclesiastic duties with commensurate effort. Regardless of which sense of ‘lack’ Skelton meant, the lines which follow retain the same meaning. Skelton finds fault with his subject’s ignorance of and lack of attention to basic religious elements: “In your cross-row nor Christ-cross you spede, / Your Paternoster, your Ave nor your Crede.”[[41]](#footnote-41) Edwards describes these as the “contents of the schoolboy’s hornbook.”[[42]](#footnote-42) The point the poet is trying to make with this juxtaposition is that while Wolsey has eagerly embraced the symbols and trappings of his new legatine role, he has neglected even the most basic religious duties of his office.

The second category of imagery is thematically based on ‘poison’ or ‘venomous animals’. This theme is represented most strongly in the title of the poem itself, ‘Against Venemous Tongues’, and is used primarily to support the argument that the power of a liar or slanderer far exceeds anything else found in nature:

Malicious tunges, though they have no bones,

Are sharper than swordes, sturdier then stones.

*Lege Philostratum de vita Tyanei Apollonii.*[[43]](#footnote-43)

Sharper than raysors, that shave and cut throtes,

More stinging then scorpions that stang Pharaotis.

*Venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum. Ps.*

More venomous and much more virulent

Than any poisoned tode, or any serpent.[[44]](#footnote-44)

Skelton combines a plea to God with a series of comparisons; he lists evocative images which, though terrible themselves, are not as dangerous as a false tongue. Key among these images are the venomous toads and snakes, whose forked tongues in particular created an evocative parallel between the poisonous animals and the dangerous words of evil men. The Latin text “*Venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum”* is significant; here Skelton is quoting from the Vulgate Bible, Psalm 139, which constitutes a prayer to God for strength against venomous tongues:

Eripe me Domine ab homine malo a viro iniquo eripe me

qui cogitaverunt iniquitates in corde tota die constituebant proelia

acuerunt linguam suam sicut serpentis venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum

custodi me Domine de manu peccatoris ab hominibus iniquis eripe me qui cogitaverunt subplantare gressus meos[[45]](#footnote-45)

[Deliver me, Lord, from the evil man and deliver me from the iniquitous man

who have devised iniquities in their hearts: for the whole day they planned conflict.

They have sharpened their tongues in the manner of a serpent: they have the venom of asps under their lips.

Keep me, Lord, from the hand of the sinner, and deliver me from unjust men who have thought to divert my path.][[46]](#footnote-46)

The most pertinent line is the fourth, which Skelton interjected into his text. But by referencing this psalm, Skelton makes clear that the danger posed by slanderous men is twofold. First, there is a personal threat of a spiritual nature. These ‘unjust men’ can not only cause physical harm, but they can also cause spiritual harm by forcing good men to sin. The second element is broader: ecclesiastical figures in secular leadership roles—like Wolsey—not only have the power to cause physical harm to political opponents, but they are able to lead entire societies astray into sin. Skelton’s meaning is made clear by the following stanza:

Quid peregrinis egemus exemplis? Ad domestica recurramus, etc. li. ille.

Such tunges unhappy hath made great division

In realms, in cities, by suche fals abusion.

Of fals fickil tunges suche cloked collusion

Hath brought nobil princes to extreme confusion.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Skelton alleges that men in England have caused social division by “fals abusion” and “cloked collusion”; furthermore, these men have led “nobil princes” astray. These lines foreshadow the vice characters in Skelton’s *Magnyfycence*, which is exclusively concerned with what happens to a prince (and, by extension, a realm) when that prince’s innate nobility is overthrown by ‘abusion’ and ‘cloaked collusion’.

It is this apparent concern about evil advisors that forms the basis of Skelton’s explicitly anti-Wolsey poetry. It is possible that Skelton may not have been thinking of Wolsey when he wrote *Against Venemous Tongues*, as it is just vague enough to encourage debate about its target. Yet he clearly was concerned with what he perceived to be a domestic threat from Henry VIII’s advisors, and Wolsey—as Cardinal of York and Lord Chancellor—was by far the most significant of these. After all, *Against Venemous Tongues* is certainly written against a high-ranking target: the jibes about the target’s livery makes clear that this is a man of high estate, and an English subject at that (“Let us revert to our own land”). Though the poem is vague enough to be applicable to any number of targets, the concerns that Skelton raises here came over time to represent Wolsey and Wolsey alone.

Concerns about ambiguity in regards to an apparent target is not limited to *Against Venemous Tongues*. There has been considerable debate about Skelton’s intentions in writing *Magnyfycence*, with scholarship dating from before the 1960s tending to believe that Skelton had targeted Wolsey specifically and more recent scholarship generally supposing that this was a post-production association. William O. Harris convincingly laid out the argument for Wolsey not being an intentional target in his 1965 *Skelton’s Magnyfycence and the Cardinal Virtue Tradition*. However, Harris’s argument hinges on the assumption that Skelton’s patrons in 1515-16 were the Howards; at that time, Wolsey and Thomas Howard (second duke of Norfolk) appeared to be working closely together, so an attack on the Cardinal would not make particular sense.[[48]](#footnote-48) Greg Walker has subsequently demonstrated that the question of Howard patronage is hardly settled; therefore it is difficult to conclude that Harris’s argument—predicated on the assumption of Howard patronage—is correct. At the likely time of composition (1515-1516) Skelton had not yet openly declared his distaste for Wolsey, but he clearly was concerned about the rise of advisors whom he considered unscrupulous in Henry’s court. Regardless of whether or not Skelton explicitly wanted to single out Wolsey for condemnation, the same satirical elements were developed by Skelton into clear anti-Wolsey themes later. As we have seen, these concerns were first raised in *Against Venemous Tongues*; Skelton carried many of the same thematic elements over to *Magnyfycence* from this earlier text and, in developing these images for the allegorical characters in that play, he began to codify the types of images which would later become strongly associated with Wolsey.

*Magnyfycence* is a warning to princes about the subtlety and wiliness of unscrupulous advisors. Skelton’s didactic tendencies were not as unusual or presumptive as they might initially appear: Skelton was tutor to the young Henry Tudor when he was still Duke of York and felt it was of the utmost importance to impress a firm sense of moral rectitude upon the young prince. To this end he wrote an instructive manual for Henry, called *Speculum principis* (*Mirror of a Prince*). Once assumed to be a lost work, a manuscript was purchased by the British Museum in 1865 which may well have been a presentation copy given to Henry upon his accession to the throne in 1509.[[49]](#footnote-49) This text was designed to provide Henry with examples and guidelines on how a prince ought to conduct himself and participated in the popular late medieval literary tradition of the princely guidebook. It is in this didactic vein that *Magnyfycence* was also composed: as the former “creauncer” (a tutor or guardian) made clear in his 1523 *The Garlande or Chaplett of Laurel*, Skelton was justifiably proud of his role as Henry’s childhood tutor and continued to see his relationship with the monarch in that light:

The Duke of Yorkis creauncer whan Skelton was,

Now Henry the viij, Kyng of Englonde,

A tratyse [Skelton] devysid and browght it to pas,

Callid *Speculum Principis*, to bere in his honde,

Therin to rede, and to understande

All the demenour of princely astate,

To be our kyng, of God preordinate.[[50]](#footnote-50)

*Magnyfycence* may well capitalize (or attempt to do so) on that former relationship with the king, particularly as for decades Skelton struggled to regain a role at court and enjoyed only limited success.[[51]](#footnote-51) Certainly Skelton’s presentation of a copy of *Speculum principis* to Henry VIII in 1509 indicates a desire on Skelton’s part to remind the new king of his old tutor’s usefulness as a source of sober counsel.

Due to the uncertainties regarding the composition date of *Magnyfycence* it is impossible either to confirm or dismiss Wolsey as the target of *Magnyfycence*, as we can hardly assign a motive to Skelton without being able to place *Magnyfycence* in its proper historical context. Though there has been debate about the date of composition, Peter Happé has argued most convincingly for 1515-1516, after the death of Louis XII of France. [[52]](#footnote-52) However, regardless of Skelton’s intentions at the time of composition, the publishing of the first print edition of *Magnyfycence* in the early 1530s may well indicate that there was enough satirical imagery in *Magnyfycence* applicable to Wolsey that the publishing of the play was seen as a viable business decision in the aftermath of Wolsey’s death in November 1530.[[53]](#footnote-53) The specific date of publication is unclear, however: while it is certain that it was published in London by Peter Traveris for John Rastell, scholars have been unable to come to a consensus on the exact year when this occurred. The two most commonly supported dates are 1530 (supported by the ESTC, John Scattergood, Robert Kinsman, and Jane Griffiths, among others) and 1533, which appears to be supported only by EEBO. Late 1530 seems most plausible based on the fact that Wolsey became increasingly unlikely to punish satirists as the year progressed; he was dismissed from court and arrested for treason and doubtlessly was concerned with his problems with the king. In addition, a satire applicable to Wolsey’s situation would have had a strong resonance during the Cardinal’s months-long fall from power and subsequent arrest, or in the immediate aftermath of his death in November. However, the second date given—1533—hardly eliminates Wolsey’s fall as the catalyst for publication; the dramatic fall of such a central figure in English secular and ecclesiastic government would not have been forgotten in three short years.

One of the difficulties present in associating *Magnyfycence* with Wolsey is the lack of clear references to contemporary political events., However, as Walker points out, Skelton was often imprecise about “allusions to continental events and personalities”. In addition, regardless of which dating argument we accept, by 1513 Skelton had not been even tangentially associated with the Court for several years and would certainly not have been in a position to comment on secret or sensitive policy decisions. Indeed, as a Court outsider it is difficult to ascertain exactly what information to which he would have had access. In this light, it is understandable that we are not given many clear signposts in this text. As a result, *Magnyfycence* ought to be read as a generalized and often abstracted didactic commentary on Court life written by a poet who was writing about people and events of which he had little (if any) first-hand knowledge. Without detailed information about Henry’s court in either 1515 or 1519, Skelton would have been forced to make potentially erroneous assumptions and resulting claims about any Court-related subject about which he felt moved to write. The spectacular rise of Thomas Wolsey in 1515 would certainly have been cause for comment, as would have been the removal of several of Henry’s Gentlemen of the Privy Chamber in 1519. These events were well known enough that Skelton would certainly have been aware of them and, given his repeated efforts to remind his former royal pupil of his usefulness, it would have been extremely surprising if he had not commented on either of these changes to the English political landscape. If we read *Magnyfycence* in this light, we get a cautionary morality play warning Henry of the dangers associated with allowing court-figures (like Wolsey) too much license. *Magnyfycence* is therefore not so much a satire based on what Wolsey has already done, but a cautionary tale against what the Cardinal—or someone like him—might do if allowed free rein, and how that individual courtier’s behavior might encourage further misrule by authority figures.

As a result of this abstraction, Wolsey ought not to be understood as a perfect analogue or composite of the Vices in *Magnyfycence*, but rather that the Vices reflect elements of the architypal evil counsellor (as Wolsey came to be perceived by some). In a political sense, Skelton was concerned with Wolsey’s rapid acquisition of power, and hoped that by demonstrating the consequences of a prince’s giving too much power to a counselor, the young Henry VIII might recall the wisdom of his former tutor. Thus, *Magnyfycence* is not necessarily about what Wolsey has already done, but what he might yet do if left unchecked.

One of these ways in which Skelton does this is through satiric imagery. Of the various images that we see in *Magnyfycence*, many are associated with animals or nature. One image that seemed to have a particular contemporary resonance with sixteenth-century audiences was that of a predator who was able to trap his enemies, like a spider. The connection between spiders’ webs and politicians’ negotiations is alluded to by Counterfeit Countenance early in *Magnyfycence*: “Fansy hath cachyd in a flye net / This noble man Magnyfycence”.[[54]](#footnote-54) Though a ‘fly-net’ is essentially a butterfly net, the basic function is similar enough to draw a parallel. As his anti-Wolsey satire became more pronounced, Skelton clearly felt that the spider’s web was an appropriate image to connect explicitly with Wolsey, as the spider’s web also appears in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, in a paronomasia on Wolsey’s name:

We shall have a *tot quot*

From the Pope of Rome

To weve all in one lome

A webbe of lylse wulse

*Opus male dulce!*[[55]](#footnote-55)

“Lylse wulse” was a linen-wool mixture of markedly inferior quality worn primarily by commoners of low status, and so the narrator of the poem has linked Wolsey both to a spider and to common birth.[[56]](#footnote-56) This image had clear currency throughout the early modern period, with Wolsey (and other figures): Shakespeare himself utilizes the spider’s web in association with Wolsey. In the opening scene of *Henry VIII*, the Duke of Norfolk describes how Wolsey has thrust himself into power “spider-like / Out of his self-drawing web”. (1.1.62-63) Both Skelton and Shakespeare doubtlessly were playing off the same social aversion to spiders; indeed, the *Oxford English Dictionary* lists numerous sixteenth-century definitions of ‘spider’ used as an insult when “Applied to persons as an opprobrious or vituperative term.”[[57]](#footnote-57)

Other animals are represented in Skelton’s texts: the jackdaw and lark both appear either as unflattering images of the courtly vices or in connection with a similarly unsavory image of the vices in *Magnyfycence*. Shortly after Crafty Conveyance tells Fancy to “Shyt thy purse, dawe”,[[58]](#footnote-58) Folly brags to Fancy and Crafty Conveyance that he finds it amusing to watch the ‘folly’ of commoners brought up into court:

I have another maner of sorte

That I laught at for my dysporte;

And those be they that come up of nought—

As some be not ferre and yf it were well sought—

Suche dawys, what soever they be,

That be set in auctorite.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Folly here links two thematic images by stating that those not of a noble background (“they that come up of nought”) are like jackdaws, an unflattering image, particularly as the jackdaw was “noted for its loquacity and thievish propensities.”[[60]](#footnote-60) By linking an unpopular bird reputed to be garrulous and thieving with commoners in “auctorite”, Folly highlights the ‘folly’ in trusting lowborn men (like the Cardinal) to perform appropriately a role properly suited to a nobleman: a concern shared by many of Skelton’s would-be readers.

The image of the peasant or commoner supplanting the lord and thus overturning the natural order is also strongly represented in *Magnyfycence*. In keeping with the falsity he represents, Counterfeit Countenance proclaims proudly that through him the entire social order will be upset (with the horrors that would result from such chaos: namely, execution at Tyburn):

A knave wyll counterfeit now a knyght,

A lurdayne lyke a lorde to syght,

A mynstrell lyke a man of myght,

A tappyster lyke a lady bryght:

Thus make I them wyth thryft to fyght.

Thus at the laste I brynge hym ryght

To Tyburne, where they hange on hyght.[[61]](#footnote-61)

Counterfeit Countenance’s boast that “lurdaynes” (a term implying lowly birth, worthlessness, or rascality) and “knaves” would be indistinguishable from the true nobility utilizes the trope of the world turned upside down, a common feature of Skelton’s courtly satires (particularly those written towards the end of the 1510s).[[62]](#footnote-62) Through Counterfeit Countenance, however, the lurdaynes and knaves will eventually be found out and be executed at Tyburn, containing the social upheaval they threaten. Courtly Abusion also mentions how, through the vice he embodies, men of ignoble birth can rise to power by abusing courtly manners and devices:

A carlys sonne[[63]](#footnote-63)

Brought up of nought

Wyth me wyll wonne

Whylyst he hath ought.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Courtly Abusion’s assertion that the son of a carl (a commoner or husbandman, with intimations of a churlish or contemptible nature) might rise from a low estate to a position of wealth and power through the abuse of courtly manners echoes Counterfeit Countenance’s earlier soliloquy. [[65]](#footnote-65) By allowing commoners like Wolsey to rise in the social hierarchy, the Henrician court was permitting a level of social mobility that Courtly Abusion claims as emblematic of his eponymous vice. Just as Counterfeit Countenance predicted—with glee—the hangings at Tyburn that would doubtlessly result from his temporary upsetting of the natural social order, so too does Courtly Abusion happily tell the audience the results of his vice:

Spende all that his hyre

That men hym gyve.

Wherfore I preve,

A Tyborne checke

Shall breke his necke.[[66]](#footnote-66)

The ominous specter of the Tyburn gallows looms at the end of each of the speeches by these two courtly vices. Both vice-avatars make perfectly clear that by reversing the usual social system, the result can only be upheaval ending in death.

Several of Skelton’s vice characters in *Magnyfycence* allude to obesity as representative of a counselor’s apparent ignoble birth and behavior. When Counterfeit Countenance hears that Fancy has disguised himself as a knight named Largesse, he puns on ‘large’ and “Largesse” (as well as Fancy’s self-promotion to the status of knight) by happily observing that Fancy’s actions are “A rebellyon agaynst nature— / So large a man, and so lytell of stature!”[[67]](#footnote-67) Though Fancy (as Wolsey allegedly was) is a large man, he is of small social value. Courtly Abusion also identifies himself with physical size, connecting bulk with greed and deceit, as well as with baseness of birth:

He wyll have wrought

His gowne so wyde

That he may hyde

His dame and syre

Within his slyve.[[68]](#footnote-68)

Courtly Abusion links physical bulk with deceit; here, the courtly vice brags that through him, a commoner can hide his low birth. Furthermore, he adds an insult by referring to the hypothetical commoner’s parents as ‘dam’ and ‘sire’, terms normally applied to animals.[[69]](#footnote-69) While in 1516 this link between physical bulk, common birth, and livestock might have been coincidental in its applicability to Wolsey, by 1530 these images would certainly have strongly evoked the Cardinal.

Courtly Abusion’s use of the “gown” and “slyve” images in connection with the fatness of the wearer provides a connection to clothing as a thematic basis for imagistic metaphors in Skelton’s satires. The historical Wolsey himself recognized the power of his clothing as a symbol: when he first was made Cardinal, he arranged for his cardinal’s hat to be given a remarkable reception. The martyrologist John Foxe describes the events organized to celebrate the arrival of the hat as being uncomfortably regal in scope:

Not much vnlike to this [a recent royal event], was the receiuing of the Cardinalles hatte, whiche when a ruffien had brought vnto hym to Westminster, vnder his cloke, he clothed the messenger in rych araye and sent him backe againe to douer, appointing the byshop of Caunterbury to mete hym, and then another companie of Lordes & Gentlemen, I wote not howe often, before it came to Westminster, wher eit was set vpon a cupbourde, and tapers rounde about it, so that the greatest Duke in the land must make cursye thereunto, and to his emptie seate he beyng awaye.[[70]](#footnote-70)

The symbolism of the hat was clear from the moment Wolsey received it. The power of such symbols is not to be underestimated; certainly Wolsey demonstrated this by compelling the highest-ranking men in England to recognize the newfound power that his hat represented—and, by extension, the absolute necessity in keeping that power. In *Magnyfycence*, Fancy provides a comic soliloquy on how he causes men to become “Frantyke”, making their “wyttys be weke”.[[71]](#footnote-71) He acts out one of the symptoms of ‘franticness’: “Where is my cappe? I have lost my hat!”[[72]](#footnote-72) The hat as a symbol of Wolsey was a powerful one which certainly would have been recognized by a contemporary audience. Indeed, as is made clear by other sixteenth-century authors (foremost among them being Foxe himself), many saw Wolsey’s treatment of his hat as a metonym for his corrupt pride as a whole.

### After *Magnyfycence*: Speaking Parrots, Everymen, and the *Alter Rex*

After the composition of *Magnyfycence*, Skelton spent the next few years writing less politically sensitive work: he focused mainly on a series of poetic flytings with various court poets, the comic poem *The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng*, and on refining the Skeltonic. The Skeltonic—which is characterized by irregular short lines of two or three stresses with long terminal rhyming chains—became Skelton’s main poetic gift to posterity. Though scholars like Jane Griffiths have drawn convincing connections between the Skeltonic and religious protest poetry from *c*.1534-1589, this type of stylistic analysis has not been applied when comparing Skelton’s earlier works against his later, openly anti-Wolsey satires. The importance of *Speke, Parott* has long been recognized: it is the first of Skelton’s poems generally recognized as satirizing Wolsey*.* Despite its importance in Skelton’s canon, its anti-Wolsey elements have not been compared against those found in texts like *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*. That is not to say these earlier poems are identical to *Speke, Parott*: rather, the innovations found in this poem represent a crucial evolutionary link between the didactic, but ambigiously targetted *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*, and the strident satire of *Collyn Clout* and *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte*?. Though it certainly is an opaque poem, *Speke, Parott* more clearly focuses on Wolsey as Skelton’s target, unequivocally singling out the Cardinal for the first time in the poet’s career.

*Speke, Parott* was likely composed in two stages, the first before August 1521 and the second before December of that same year.[[73]](#footnote-73) This poem marks a critical moment in the evolution of Skelton’s political poetry. In his earlier poems (*Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*), Skelton’s polemic was either too abstracted or vague to be definitively anti-Wolsey; in effect, Skelton could not be condemned for attacking the newly-minted Lord Chancellor. *Speke, Parott* does not radically depart from this approach—certainly not to the extent visible in *Collyn Clout* and *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*—but instead finds a middle ground. Skelton uses his protagonist, the mirror-to-life Parrot, to attack Wolsey by means of deeply obscure and erudite references, mainly Biblical in origin. These allusions allowed Skelton to increase the strength of his invective without exposing himself overtly to retribution from Wolsey. In addition, scholars have often interpreted *Speke, Parott* as a poetic demonstration of Skelton’s learning and skill. Greg Walker has addressed the issue of Skelton’s quest for patronage admirably and has made a convincing case for *Speke, Parott* being an advertisement for a poet desperately seeking a patron.[[74]](#footnote-74)

Though he stepped up his program of invective against the Cardinal, Skelton continued to use the same (or very similar) imagistic tropes in *Speke, Parott* as he had in *Against Venemous Tongues* and *Magnyfycence*. One of the more memorable themes which Skelton began to develop in *Magnyfycence* and specifically adapted to target Wolsey exclusively in *Speke, Parott* is the image of the lowly cur. Buried amidst deeply obscure insults and jibes against Wolsey and the humanists (Skelton’s more academic enemies, broadly unrelated to Wolsey), Parrot wittily makes reference to Wolsey’s ambitions and pretentions by casting the Cardinal as a dog:

Bo-ho doth bark well, Hough-ho he rulyth the ring,

From Scarpary to Tartary renoun therein doth spryng,

With, ‘He sayd,’ and ‘We said.’ Ich wot now what ich wot,

*Quod magnus est dominus Judas Scarioth*. (130-133)[[75]](#footnote-75)

“Bo-ho”—a nonsense name—is said to “bark well”, as an alpha dog might, and thus he displays his dominance over the English political arena (“he rulyth the ring”). Indeed, Parrot tells his audience that Wolsey’s posturing is communicated across Europe and Asia. In missives sent to locations as diverse as Tartary and Italy (Mt. Scarpario is in Tuscany) Wolsey implies that his and Henry’s wishes are coequal: instead of only issuing letters in Henry VIII’s name (“He sayd”), Wolsey makes it appear as though he were co-equal with his monarch (“we sayd”). This is a particularly remarkable satirical feature in that it highlights a concern with Wolsey’s alleged attempts to usurp Henry VIII’s power long before it became commonplace (or safe) to voice such concerns. Wolsey would eventually be arrested in part for allegedly writing phrases that implied a parity between himself and Henry VIII—as Shakespeare would later dramatize as “*ego et meus rex*” (3.2.315)—as the articles of Wolsey’s arrest in December of 1529 show:

[Article 4] For having in divers letters and instructions to foreign parts used the expression, “the King and I,” and “I would ye should do thus,” “the King and I give unto you our right hearty thanks,” using himself more like a fellow to your Highness than a subject.[[76]](#footnote-76)

This allegation against Wolsey had become widely known even before the Cardinal’s death; as Greg Walker points out, Sebastian Giustiniani observed that “the Cardinal, for authority, might in point of face be styled *ipse rex*.”[[77]](#footnote-77) Later in this same letter, dated September 18, 1518, Giustiniani (or Giustinian) wrote to Leonardo Loredan (or Loredano), Doge of Venice, that Wolsey’s power over Henry VIII was far-reaching and publicly acknowledged—at least, acknowledged at court—as this summary indicates:

After he [Giustiniani] took leave, contrived a conference with Thomas More, newly made counsellor. Endeavored to draw him into conversation: but he pretended to know nothing, “declaring that the Cardinal of York most solely, to use his own expression, transacted this matter [the Anglo-French peace treaty of 1518] with the French ambassadors; so that the King himself scarcely knows in what state matters are.”[[78]](#footnote-78)

Skelton’s Parrot, aware of the dangers of a monarch relinquishing so much power to a subordinate, also likens Wolsey to Judas in the final line of the stanza (‘…that Judas Iscariot is a great lord’). By presenting Wolsey’s usurpation of Henry’s power as similar to a hypothetical role reversal between Christ and Judas Iscariot, this comparison emphasizes how the reader should understand the previous Wolsey metaphors to be equally negative.

The base birth of Wolsey is a recurring theme in Skelton’s explicit anti-Wolsey satires. Though *Speke, Parott* is less obviously didactic than, say, *Magnyfycence*, Skelton uses his Parrot to concentrate his anti-commoner invective against Wolsey in a targeted manner that does not appear in his earlier works. In the following stanza from *Speke, Parott*, we can see Skelton’s continuing use of metaphors related to low birth (and, in this case, animals as well):

For Parot is no churlish chowgh, nor no flekyd pye,

Parrot is no pendugum, that men call a carlyng,

Parrot is no woodecocke, nor no butterfly,

Parrot is no stameryng stare, that men call a starlyng;

But Parot is my owne dere harte, and my dere derling.

Melpomene, that fayre mayde, she burneshed his beke:

I pray you, let Parrot have lyberte to speke. (204-210)[[79]](#footnote-79)

This stanza uses anaphora to emphasize that Parrot is not a “churlish chowgh” (an archaic name for a jackdaw, which Wolsey had adopted on his coat of arms), nor a thieving magpie, but is a “popegay ryall” and by virtue of his status as a bird of paradise he can be relied upon: he is not a “pendugum” (a garrulous person) that is popularly called a “carlyng” and so can be taken seriously. It is here we find the deeply-buried satirical swipe at Wolsey. “Carlyng” has several possible meanings; in addition, an onomatopoetic link between “carlyng” and ‘cardinal’ is suppositional but plausible.[[80]](#footnote-80) More tellingly, “carlyng” is a diminutive form of ‘carl’, meaning a villein or farmer, and is consistent with Skelton’s usage of that “class-conscious” word in *Magnyfycence*. ‘Carl’ is also used as a synonym for ‘churl’, having derived from the same Old Teutonic word, ‘*karlo-z*’, and bearing the same negative implications as ‘churl’ after the thirteenth century, which remained throughout the early modern period.[[81]](#footnote-81)

Parrot also makes mention of Wolsey’s size, often through obscure scholarly and Biblical allusions interspersed with insults based on Wolsey’s allegedly obese condition. A typical example of this is his reference to Wolsey as a ‘fat hog’:

O Esebon, Esebon, to the is cum agayne

Seon, the Regent *Amorreorum*,

And Og, that fat hog of Basan, doth retayne

The crafty *coistronus Cananeorum*,

And *assilum*, whilom *refugium miserorum*,

*Non phanum*, *sed prophanum*, standyth in lytyll sted:

*Ulula*, Esebon, for Jepte is starke ded![[82]](#footnote-82)

This stanza is rich with criticism of Wolsey derived primarily from the Old Testament (and Numbers 21 in particular). England is linked with Esebon (Heshebon), an Amorite kingdom which was ruled by Seon (Sion) and conquered by the Israelites, and Og was an Amorite giant who ruled Basan (Bashan) and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites after their victory over Seon. [[83]](#footnote-83) Like many of Skelton’s metaphors (particularly in *Speke, Parott*) these two metaphors are a little confusing and not entirely appropriate: Og is linked to Wolsey by virtue of his bulk and Wolsey is connected to Seon because of the Biblical ruler’s tyranny. Esebon is connected with England purely because Seon (in this metaphor, Wolsey) ruled Esebon and was overcome by the godly Israelites (in this metaphor, presumably meant to represent right-thinking Englishmen). To Skelton it must have seemed an appropriate metaphor, if a bit muddied (and perhaps was intentionally muddy, as a tactic to avoid prosecution): Wolsey had won tremendous secular and religious power for himself and seemed to be the instrument of a resurgence of Papal political control in England (a perception which would later result in Wolsey being cast in a writ of *praemunire*). Of course, Skelton was a fervent traditionalist and blasted the humanists with the same vehemence that he applied to Wolsey, so it is difficult to argue for a fully-articulated argument behind this stanza. Whatever the exact implications of Skelton’s opaque message might have been, the connection between the apparently obese Lord Chancellor and the Biblical giant is clear enough.

As the decade progressed and Wolsey’s power increased, so too did Skelton’s invective. *Collyn Clout*, primarily composed before October 1522 (excepting a portion possibly written in early 1523), is built on the same satirical principles as *Speke, Parott*. Unlike his earlier satires, where the poet assumed a thick layer of ambiguity to protect himself, *Collyn Clout* maintains only a thin veneer of displaced opinion. Skelton does this by creating an ‘everyman’ narrator: Colin Clout. The reader is not initially aware of this device; Clout only introduces himself after a lengthy tirade against Wolsey. The first fifty lines of the poem then are at first perceived to come from Skelton himself. In this excerpt, we can see how Skelton begins by asking rhetorical questions about the hypocrisy evident in Wolsey’s actions:

What can it avayle…

To wryte or to indyte

Other for delyte

Or elles for despyte?

Or bokes to compyle

Of dyvers maner style,

Vyce to revyle

And synne to exyle?

To teche or to preche

As reason wyll reche?

Sey this and sey that:

‘His heed is so fat

He wottyth never what

Ne whereof he speketh.’[[84]](#footnote-84)

The reader is thus presented with an argument about Wolsey’s hypocrisy being borne out of his lack of fitness to be given authority. Only after this blast of invective are we told that this is not Skelton, but Colin Clout, who gives himself license to speak because of his straightforward nature:

And yf ye stande in doute

Who brought this ryme aboute,

My name is Collyn Cloute.

I purpose to shake oute

All my connynge bagge,

Lyke a clerkly hagge.

For though my ryme be ragged,

…

It hath in it some pyth.[[85]](#footnote-85)

The “pyth” that Clout refers to is a strident condemnation of Wolsey and his alleged self-interest and by extension those in power who do not try to stop the Cardinal. Clout makes reference to the very few bishops who behave as bishops ought: they give sermons and attend to their congregations.[[86]](#footnote-86) As Clout himself states, “take no dysdayne / At my style rude and playne, / For I rebuke no man / That vertuous is.”[[87]](#footnote-87) As Paul McLane accurately summarizes, in condemning Wolsey’s impious practices Clout encourages those bishops he sees as exemplifying positive episcopal traits:

In our examination of Skelton's Colyn Clout, we must realize that Colin Clout, Skelton's spokesman in the poem, is usually attacking Wolsey, the embodiment of all episcopal faults…. [At] other times Colin is pointing to a few good bishops who are alert and conscientious keepers of their charges but lack courage and boldness in attacking evil and bringing about reform. These few, as well as others with sufficient talent, education, and character, are at times encouraged to exercise their neglected episcopal functions (namely, preaching and spiritual leadership) and withstand the one (obviously Wolsey) who is stripping from the prelates their ancient rights and privileges.[[88]](#footnote-88)

In this excerpt McLane identifies Clout as “Skelton’s spokesman”; it is certainly clear in hindsight that *Colyn Clout* represents the first of the obviously anti-Wolsey satires: previous texts displayed a clear authorial effort to provide muddy or oblique criticism, whereas by writing *Colyn Clout* Skelton publicly aligned himself in opposition to Wolsey, a position he clearly maintained throughout the late 1510s and early 1520s. Nevertheless, Colin Clout cannot be assumed to be equivalent with Skelton himself: as Greg Walker and others have observed, Skelton—while doubtlessly aggrieved about Wolsey’s alleged wrongs—was primarily concerned with patronage and therefore likely saw himself as voicing popular concerns though Clout.[[89]](#footnote-89) It is therefore potentially misleading to assume that Colin Clout is a mere mouthpiece for the poet and is giving firmly-held personal beliefs of Skelton’s. Instead, we should understand that Clout-as-Everyman is bemoaning Wolsey’s ascendancy over even the few good bishops, bishops who, despite their other positive qualities, do not (or dare not) stand up to Wolsey:

But they are lothe to mell,

And lothe to hange the bell

Aboute the cattes necke,

For drede to have a checke.

They are fayne to play deuz decke.[[90]](#footnote-90)

Clout here is making reference to Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, the late medieval narrative poem in which the commoner narrator (much like Colin Clout) raises concerns about unscrupulous nobility taking advantage of cowardly peers:

But when the bell had been bought, and hung on the chain,

There was never a rat in the rout—not for the realm of France

--That dared to bind the bell about the Cat’s neck,

Nor hang it over his head, for the while of England.

They confessed themselves fearful, and their plan feeble,

And allowed that their labour was lost, and all their long scheming.[[91]](#footnote-91)

By portraying Wolsey as a cat which ought to be controlled (in this metaphor, by means of a bell), Colin Clout both belittles Wolsey as, in essence, a relatively minor domestic predator and also provides moral contrast by comparing Wolsey with the good bishops. Of course, even the good bishops are too afraid of Wolsey to confront him for fear of punishment: “checke” here can mean a rebuke, but it can also mean a noose, as can be seen in *Magnyfycence*: “A Tyborne checke / Shall breke his necke” (907-11).

A recurring image that Skelton was helpless to resist was to form an imagistic pun on the surname of Wolsey’s longtime mistress, Joan Larke. Wolsey’s longtime relationship with Joan Larke, who bore Wolsey two children before being married to another man, was not a well-kept secret. Colin Clout mocks the relationship by addressing Wolsey directly:

I tell you as men say.

Amende whan ye may,

For, *usque ad montem Sare*,

Men say, ye can nat appare;

For some say ye hunte in parkes

And hauke on hobby larkes

And other wanton warkes

Whan the nyght darkes.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Skelton (via Colin Clout) states that he is merely reporting what is publicly discussed (“I tell you as men say”); indeed, he repeats this defense twice in the stanza. These deflections of accountability do two essential things: first, they allow Skelton to use Clout as an authorial shield, and second, they support the claim that Skelton is making. That claim appears in the second half of the excerpt by means of a hunting metaphor: that instead of attending to his ecclesiastical duties, Wolsey goes hunting “larkes” and “other wanton warkes”. Most tellingly, these alleged hunts take place at night: not the ideal time for hunting birds. Scattergood concurs, stating that “it seems the phrase meant ‘to indulge in illicit sexual affairs’. But here it is almost certainly also an allusion to Joan Larke, the mother of Wolsey’s two illegitimate children.”[[93]](#footnote-93)

As in the earlier satires, *Collyn Clout* is also rife with jibes about Wolsey’s size. Early in the poem, Skelton makes clear that the everyman Colin Clout (and by extension the godly people of England) makes a firm connection between the tendency of bishops to increase in size and worldliness as they rise within the Church:

But thus the people carke,

And surely thus they sey:

‘Bysshoppes, yf they may,

Small householdes woll kepe,

But slombre forth and slepe,

And assay to crepe

Within the noble walles

Of the kynges halles,

To fatte theyr bodyes full,

Theyr soules lame and dull;

And have full lytell care

Howe evyll theyr shepe fare.’[[94]](#footnote-94)

Clout laments the deceptive practices of bishops: though they might maintain small and humble households, they strive to live off the king’s largesse and gain access to his presence: the font of secular power. As a result of this self-serving and distinctly impious behavior, the bishops neglect their ecclesiastical duties: while their souls grow “lame and dull”, the bishops ignore the laypeople who depend upon them for spiritual guidance and rectitude. The physical symptom of this is obesity, as bishops “fatte theyr bodyes full”.

1522 proved to be something of a climactic year for Skelton and his anti-Wolsey satire, as the poet finished *Collyn Clout* in the summer and moved on to his most open anti-Wolsey invective in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, which was completed in October of 1522. Like *Collyn Clout*, *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* is primarily composed in the Skeltonic: Kinsman has counted 1248 lines of English Skeltonic, 27 lines of Latin Skeltonic, 10 leonine hexameters and 4 hexameters.[[95]](#footnote-95) The long, occasionally breathless Skeltonic chains give this poem a speed and urgency which is reflected in the vehemence of the polemic used. The poem opens with a warning: “All noble men of this take hede, / and beleve it as your crede.”[[96]](#footnote-96) The poet, no longer using a narrator-character to protect himself, revisits themes and images he used in his previous satires:

To hasty of sentence,

To ferce for none offence,

To scarce of your expence,

To large in neglygence,

To slacke in recompence,

To haute in excellents,

To lyght intellegence,

And to lyght in credence;

Where these kepe resydence,

Reson is banysshed thence,

And also dame Prudence,

With sober Sapyence.[[97]](#footnote-97)

As in *Magnyfycence*, Skelton here makes use of allegorical figures (such as Reson), but with a more explicit explanation of the consequences of bad governance by evil advisors (in this case, Wolsey). Greg Walker has argued that a London audience would likely have been reading Skelton’s poems, and this trope indicates Skelton’s engagement with that intended audience: a London readership—and an elite readership in particular, which fits with Skelton’s long-running search for patronage—would have been the majority of readers who might read Skelton’s texts by virtue of their wealth and political engagement.[[98]](#footnote-98) As with *Magnyfycence*, there is a didactic element to this text:

Than, without collusyon,

Marke well this conclusyon:

Through suche abusyon,

And by suche illusyon,

Unto great confusyon

A noble man may fall,

And his honour appall.

And yf ye thynke this shall

Not rubbe you on the gall,

Than the devyll take all![[99]](#footnote-99)

In this excerpt, we can see the didactic heritage of *Magnyfyence*; Skelton is warning the nobility that if left unchecked, Wolsey will ruin them; however, as John Scattergood points out, there is a strong element of ambiguity here.[[100]](#footnote-100) The “noble man” of line 22 may refer to Edward Stafford, the Duke of Buckingham, who was executed on May 17, 1521, and thus might be either a condemnation of Stafford or a defense of him. If we read this as a condemnation, then this passage can be a prediction: if Wolsey does not mend his ways, he too will soon fall. If we read this as a defense, then the warning is being given to the truly noble men of the realm, who may be dragged down by the ‘confusyon’ wrought by a man like Wolsey. In either case, the message is simple: these traits, when present in the leading figures of a government, cause turmoil.

The dangers of a kingdom ruled by vice-ridden men are expounded upon at great length; they vary from domestic misrule to disastrous foreign wars. Skelton rails against Wolsey’s poor policies: “For whyles he doth rule, / All is warse and warse”.[[101]](#footnote-101) In a patriotic appeal to his countrymen, Skelton devotes some eighteen lines to anti-Scottish and French insults, followed by a return to his didactic warnings:

But yet they [the French and Scottish] over-shote us

Wyth crownes and wyth scutus;

Wyth scuties and crownes of golde

I dred we are bought and solde.

It is a wonders warke.

They shote all at one marke:

At the Cardynals hat.

They shot at that![[102]](#footnote-102)

Skelton connects Wolsey’s cardinal’s *galero* with fears that foreign money had placed Wolsey (and thus, England) under obligations not in England’s best interests. Following a list of English triumphs (and a few flattering phrases in praise of Thomas Howard, Earl of Surrey at the time of composition, later the third Duke of Norfolk), the juxtaposition of victory and defeat functions as a symbolic rebranding of the Cardinal’s hat. Instead of representing holy power and virtue, it is a symbol of *praemunire*: the exercise of a foreign jurisdiction in Henry VIII’s England. For Skelton, the dangers associated with allowing Wolsey to place England under obligation to foreign powers (chiefly, France) are compounded by Wolsey’s attitude towards his foreign policy. Not only has Wolsey purchased his hat at a high price, but he then aggressively promoted the hat as a symbol of his own power. The hat—and Wolsey’s clothing in general—was a potent symbol frequently mentioned by Skelton. As William Nelson has observed, Skelton connected these images of juxtaposed wealth and holy symbols with Wolsey’s sinful pride:

When "some" of the bishops are denounced as luxurious, "they" are described riding on mules, bedecked in gorgeous garments (309-322)-a description that tallies perfectly with Cavendish's famous picture of Wolsey proceeding to court.[[103]](#footnote-103)

The contrast between the humble mule and the “gorgeous garments” worn by both mule and Cardinal were vivid, easily understandable, difficult to defend against, and, as we shall see throughout this thesis, ultimately became a lasting image of Wolsey.

As in the earlier satires, canine imagery features prominently among other animal images in this poem. In *Decastichon Virulentum*, a short Latin poem appended to *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, Wolsey is referred to as “*maris lupus*”, the ‘wolf of the sea’.[[104]](#footnote-104) The pun on Wolsey’s name that this image centers on is perhaps not entirely appropriate, since Wolsey was not particularly connected with the sea, nor would assuming Skelton is making some sort of piratical allusion be a solid supposition; instead it seems most plausible that Skelton simply appreciated the paronomasic qualities of ‘Wolsey’ and ‘wolf-sea’. This hypothesis is borne out by the onomatopoetic pun on Wolsey’s name in line 131 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* wherein the narrator refers to Wolsey’s “webbe of lylse wulse”, meaning a web of poor-quality wool. Regardless of whatever artistic merit readers may assign to the pun, Skelton is clearly making a pejorative link between Wolsey and the often-maligned wolf, a symbol of clerical rapaciousness.

Of course, it would be difficult to cite every example of anti-Wolsey imagery in this poem; Skelton devotes the majority of the text to blasting Wolsey in various ways. But one final image must be remarked upon, for it in many ways sums up Skelton’s legacy as far as Wolsey is concerned. In the following passage, Skelton impugns Wolsey by evoking the Cardinal’s heritage as the son of a butcher:

He [Wolsey] regardeth lordes

No more than potshordes.

He is in suche elacyon

Of his exaltacyon,

And the supportacyon

Of our soverayne lorde,

That, God to recorde,

He ruleth all at wyll

Without reason or skyll.

How be it the primordyall

Of his wretched originall,

And his base progeny,

And his gresy genealogy,

He came of the sank royall

That was cast out of a bochers stall![[105]](#footnote-105)

Though many authors commented on Wolsey’s low birth—certainly it was a remarkable feat for a common man to rise so high in government—few did so with the imagistic power that Skelton did. The ‘bochers stall’ (‘butcher’s stall’) is typical: throughout Skelton’s anti-Wolsey satires we find references to butchers, from which we are to understand a variation on the trope of the world turned upside down. This interpretation is underscored by the ‘potshords’ (‘potsherds’) reference: Wolsey looks down on the nobility as remnants of an old and broken system, and of little value to him.

### 1522: Reversals, Capitulations, and the Question of Wolsey’s Patronage

For Skelton scholars, the end of 1522 is the beginning of a frustrating period in the poet’s biography, largely due to Skelton’s apparent *volte face*. This frustration has led to this period being one of the most discussed in Skelton’s life, as all of the major Skelton studies in modern scholarship have devoted substantial space to attempts to satisfactorily explain the poet’s behavior. In November of 1522, Skelton was at his most stridently anti-Wolsey as he finished the final anti-Wolsey satire, *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?*. As far as the poet laureate was concerned (and it appeared that he was quite concerned indeed), Wolsey was fit to be hanged:

Suche a prelate, I trowe,

Were worthy to rowe

Thorow the streytes of Marock

To the gybbet of Baldock.[[106]](#footnote-106)

Though Skelton was clearly fond of the amplificatory figures and tropes, verses like these are so strident and consistent throughout the Wolsey satires and *Why Come Ye Nat?* in particular that it has often been supposed that Skelton himself truly believed in these sentiments. It has been rather difficult, then, for scholars who have taken Skelton’s anti-Wolsey satires as indicative of Skelton’s true political feelings to understand how in January of 1523 Skelton could have written the following dedicatory epilogue to his self-summative *Garlande of Laurell*, an epilogue which could not constitute a more sudden apparent reversal:

To his most serene majesty the King, also with the Lord Cardinal, most honored legate *a latere*, etc. Go, book, and bow down before the famous king, Henry VIII, and worship him, repeating the rewards of his praise. And in the same way, you should greet with reverence the Lord Cardinal legate *a latere*, and beg him to remember the prebend he promised to commit to me, and give me cause to hope for the pledge of his favor. Between hope and dread.[[107]](#footnote-107)

*A Replycacion* bears a similar dedication and has often summed up the nature of the problems created by the later pro-Wolsey poems for Skelton admirers. It is difficult for a reader familiar with the anti-Wolsey satires not to feel a degree of suspicion when considering Skelton’s obsequious dedication:

To the most honourable, most mighty, and by far the most reverend father in Christ and lord, Lord Thomas, in the title of St Cecilia priest of the holy Roman church, the most worthy cardinal, legate of the apostolic see, the most illustrious legate *a latere* *etc.* the laureate Skelton, royal orator, makes known his most humble obeisance with all the reverence due to such a magnificent and worthy prince among priests, and the most equitable dispenser of every justice, and, moreover, the most excellent patron of the present little work, *etc.* to whose most auspicious regard, under the memorable seal of glorious immortality, this little book is commended.[[108]](#footnote-108)

H.L.R. Edwards described the change as being borne out of Skelton’s fear of an enemy greater than Wolsey: the “rising menace of heresy”.[[109]](#footnote-109) The abjuration of Thomas Bilney and Thomas Arthur in December of 1528 was a victory for the traditionalists, but the danger posed by the increasing number and volume of reformers was omnipresent. What is particularly interesting about Skelton’s invective is that in writing against Arthur and Bilney he employs many of the same images he used against Wolsey, demonstrating that Skelton was looking to reclaim and reassign the insults he had only recently leveled at the Cardinal:

I saye, thou madde March hare,

I wondre howe ye dare

Open your janglyng jawes,

To preche in any clawes,

Lyke pratynge poppyng dawes.[[110]](#footnote-110)

As he did with Wolsey, Skelton dehumanizes Arthur and Bilney, comparing them to animals like the jackdaw. He favored this particular image, returning to it soon after:

Wolde God, for your owne ease,

That wyse Harpocrates

Had your mouthes stopped,

And your tonges cropped,

Whan ye logyke chopped,

And in the pulpete hopped,

And folysshly there fopped,

And porisshly forthe popped

Your systematicate sawes

Agaynst Goddes lawes,

And shewed your selfe dawes![[111]](#footnote-111)

That Skelton reused these images for an ostensibly unrelated target (the two reformers and not Wolsey) demonstrates three reasonable suppositions. First, that Skelton felt these images to have particular or popular resonance in a general satirical sense. Second, that he wanted to reclaim these images and demonstrate that they were not specific to Wolsey, his new patron (which would thus depower their appearances in his previous satires). Third, Skelton could also comfort himself against charges of hypocrisy by claiming that Wolsey and the reformers were all enemies of the true Church, albeit in different ways, and therefore the same images ought to be applied to them.

Skelton scholars have historically fallen into two camps in regards to the about-face: one that takes Skelton at his word and one that does not. Of those who do not believe Skelton to be speaking literally, we may use S. B. Kendle as an exemplar. He dismisses the anti-Wolsey satires as intentionally hyperbolic and therefore not meant to be taken literally. As Stanley Fish aptly summarizes, Kendle “would credit Skelton with the sophistication we have seen in other poems”:

He [Kendle] also recognizes the final absurdity of a critic who out-herods Herod, but insists that “the rhymes and meter almost forbid the reader to consider the content of…*Why Come Ye Nat to Courte* as literally true”; and he sees in the rhetorical excesses and the “mood of irritation for its own sake” a conscious qualification of a persona whose lack of control is the poem’s subject.[[112]](#footnote-112)

This argument is typical of scholars who feel that Skelton wrote his anti-Wolsey satires (and perhaps *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* in particular) with a sense of irony. This group would contend, perfectly logically, that the poet could not possibly have felt so strongly about Wolsey to have written these poems to be understood superficially and then so quickly turned to obsequious dedications a few short months later with the same honesty in purpose. The claim can also be made that Skelton was participating in the increasingly popular satiric trend which would later be epitomized by Pietro Aretino (1492-1556), the Aretine satirist whose for-hire attitude towards satire earned him notoriety, as well as the popular title ‘Scourge of Princes’. This theory has the virtue of fitting with the little that is known about Skelton’s particular personality: though it is of course speculative to draw conclusions about a long-dead poet’s attitudes, contemporary accounts and the consistent tone of outraged self-promotion indicates a man willing to write as the moment required. That he initially believed Wolsey to be detrimental to the realm seems more than feasible, and he could easily have felt that by pressuring Wolsey into patronage, that he had secured both a literary and a financial victory.

The second camp, to which Stanley Fish adheres, would instead state that Skelton did mean for his satires to be taken seriously and that these poems did represent the poet’s mind at a particular point in time. Fish succinctly undermines Kendle’s argument by highlighting the lack of poetic balance between the ranting poet-character in *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* who, according to Fish, ably defends himself and the art of poetic satire by stating that those who are shocked by his language ought to “Blame Juvinall, and blame nat me”.[[113]](#footnote-113) Fish’s argument has great force, as the only lines which are clearly attributable to the moderating narrator are systematically undercut by the railing poet. This tactic can be seen in exchanges like the following:

Now mayster doctor, howe say ye,

Whatsoever your name be?

What though ye be namelesse,

Ye shall nat escape blamelesse,

Nor yet shall scape shamlesse.

Mayster doctor, in your degre,

Yourselfe madly ye overse!

Blame Juvinall, and blame nat me…

As Juvinall dothe recorde,

A small defaute in a great lorde,

A lytell cryme in a great astate,

Is moche more inordinate,

And more horyble to beholde

Than any other a thousand folde.[[114]](#footnote-114)

Though the narrator attempts to best the poet by mocking the poet’s reliance on anonymity in the first seven lines, the poet is able to enlist Juvenal and yet more hyperbole and *amplificatio* to deflect both the negativity of his opponent and reaffirm the strength of his eminently reasonable argument against Wolsey (namely, that those in government must be held to a higher standard). Fish maintains that Skelton used the more moderate narrator character to act as a form of *concessio* in order to give Skelton a more convincing platform from which to criticize Wolsey. When confronted with Skelton’s abrupt change of stance, Fish argues that this represents a “graceful” change of perspective:

I believe that Skelton recoils from *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* (he does not include the poem in his versified bibliography), and that the accommodation with Wolsey which has so troubled his admirers can be interpreted as a graceful and courageous retreat from a recognized loss of perspective rather than a betrayal of his principles. Indeed, it may be argued that the experience of writing and then reading this exercise in abuse is a salutary one; for it seems to point out to Skelton the necessity of a moral and aesthetic stock-taking. Within a few months he retires to the pastoral sanctuary of Sheriff Hutton, where, in the graceful verse of a simpler age, he looks back on his career.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Fish’s argument would be more convincing if a substantial period had passed between *Why Come Ye Nat to Courte?* and the genuine change of heart that Fish attributes to Skelton; it seems implausible that Skelton would have shifted from such strident satire to open-handed flattery as part of a “graceful and courageous retreat”. Furthermore, more recent scholarship has convincingly argued that Skelton did not retire to Sheriff Hutton, there to write *The Garland of Laurell*. Instead, it is now generally believed that *The Garland of Laurell* was written mostly in the late 1490s and only finished in January 1523 and published on October 3 of the same year.[[116]](#footnote-116) Instead of retiring to Sheriff Hutton and reconsidering his anti-Wolsey rhetoric, it is more probable that Skelton spent his final years in Westminster, writing and revising various works, including *A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scolars Abjured of Late* (1528).

Alternatively, in a slight variation on Fish’s theory, some scholars also believe that Skelton may well have meant the anti-Wolsey satires literally and therefore did not necessarily mean for his dedications to Wolsey to be believed. William Nelson believes that Skelton developed cold feet, writing that “Undoubtedly the primary motive behind the sudden stilling of his critical outbursts was dread of most severe punishment.”[[117]](#footnote-117) Nelson also voices the argument that Skelton had been promised a prebendary in return for his change of side. These two points ought to be addressed separately. The first—that Skelton became afraid for his safety—Nelson supports by citing the theory that at the time Skelton was living in sanctuary in Westminster, fearful of Wolsey’s reaction. However, Skelton’s motivations for living in Westminster are unclear. There are no records indicating any sort of action taken or threatened against Skelton, by Wolsey or anyone else. Whether or not Skelton had any basis for believing himself to be in danger has not been made sufficiently clear by available evidence; instead, we only have the word of John Bale in whose *Catalogus* we are told that Skelton lived in sanctuary. However, no definitive proof has yet been uncovered that demonstrates any connection between these two men, personal or literary, which makes Bale’s statement impossible to confirm. That Skelton was promised a prebendary and was pushing the Cardinal to recall his promise seems more concrete. Skelton himself mentions an “ammas gray” in the envoy to Wolsey attached to *The Doughty Duke of Albany* (November 1523):

Go, lytell quayre, apace,

In moost humble wyse,

Before his noble grace

That caused you to devise

This lytel enterprise;

And hym moost lowly pray

In his mynde to comprise,

Those wordes his grace dyd saye

Of an ammas gray.[[118]](#footnote-118)

An “ammas gray” is “a hood of grey fur worn by canons and holders of prebends”; Skelton therefore seems to be reminding Wolsey of his apparent promise to give the poet a church office.[[119]](#footnote-119) No other sources attest to this promise, but Skelton’s mentioning it in connection with a work supported by Wolsey seems to provide at least a reasonable level of legitimacy on this matter.

Though it is tempting to imbue Skelton with heroic fortitude and cast-iron morals, passages like these seem to affirm the opinion that the poet who wrote this envoy was old, tired, and looking for money. Nelson interprets this as meaning Skelton did not really mean his obsequious flattery of Wolsey, and while this is certainly possible, there is a more plausible option that has the virtue of simplicity. Skelton seems to have been looking for a patron or a position within the church or court, and would say whatever he felt was needed to achieve that goal. This is not a terribly romantic interpretation, but until further evidence is uncovered, it remains the most reasonable explanation for Skelton’s apparent change of heart.

For our purposes, Skelton’s legacy can thus be summarized in two distinct points. First, and most significantly from the perspective of this study, Skelton crafted satiric images of Wolsey which evolved over the course of the poet’s career, and would continue to color characterizations of the Cardinal for a century and more. This process began almost immediately, as we will see in the following section. Second, due to its use in the anti-clerical *Colyn Clout*, the Skeltonic became inextricably linked with religious protest poetry, which allowed these images to cross sectarian boundaries and influence Protestant polemicists like John Foxe. These two features indicate Skelton’s impact not only on early Tudor poetry and satiric characterizations of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, but on early modern English literature more broadly.

### *Godly Queene Hester*: The Codification of Early Tudor Anti-Wolsey Satire

We have seen how John Skelton used both farce and more serious mechanisms in a range of genres to create images and characterizations of Thomas Wolsey. *Godly Queene Hester*—an anonymous interlude likely written in 1529 and printed in 1561 by William Pickering and Thomas Hacker—presents us with an opportunity to consider how Skelton’s techniques were adopted and modified to transmit a strongly negative characterization of Cardinal Wolsey.[[120]](#footnote-120) *Godly Queene Hester* owes much to Skelton’s satires of the years 1515-1522, but remains distinct from its Skeltonic predecessors: it did not adopt the Skeltonic verse form in any strict sense, and while it assumes the same morality play narrative arc of *Magnyfycence*, it adapts itin several ways, most notably by the use of a Biblical structure. Nevertheless, there are passages which clearly are influenced by Skelton’s metrical patterns and characters—in particular, the Vices—which have led some scholars to investigate the possibility that Skelton himself may have written the play. Greg Walker argues persuasively that this is unlikely: he instead posits that the author of *Godly Queene Hester* was simply an admirer of Skelton’s.[[121]](#footnote-121) In assembling several Skeltonic anti-Wolsey images and adding new material, *Godly Queene Hester* formed part of the growing corpus of anti-Wolsey literature in the early part of the sixteenth century.[[122]](#footnote-122)

*Hester*’s relevance is not limited to mere participation, however. The adoption and adaptation of key recurring tropes by the *Hester* author signals a crystallization of particular, previously non-specific negative images. Before *Godly Queene Hester*, a pun on a ‘bull’ and a ‘Papal bull’ might be a satiric joke about Wolsey, but equally it might be a joke about the Papacy itself, or any other churchman. Though it may not have been a trend caused exclusively by the appearance of a text like *Hester*, by the 1530s these jibes had a much more direct assumptive relevance to Cardinal Wolsey. Furthermore, the generic connections between *Hester* and Skelton’s *Magnyfycence* create a clear opportunity to consider how Skelton’s earliest satiric images were adapted and reapplied to Wolsey in the midst of his tumultuous fall from power. One of the most obvious similarities between these texts is the secular morality play structure and, in particular, the inclusion of satiric Vice characters. By systematically analyzing these textual features and by considering the differences between *Hester* and its Skeltonic precedents, we can better understand how this text appropriated, adapted, and reinforced already-circulating images of Wolsey.

To provide a platform from which we can begin to discuss how Wolsey was satirized, let us first briefly look at the narrative of *Hester* as well as its chief source, before providing specific textual analysis and placing *Hester* in a wider literary context. The play centers on the Persian king Assuerus, his chief minister Aman (who represents Wolsey), and the selection of the king’s new wife, Hester. Assuerus promotes Aman from obscurity to be his minister, and requests that Aman’s first task to be to find the king a wife. Hester, the daughter of the Jew Mardocheus, catches Assuerus’ eye and the two are quickly wed. After the wedding, the plot shifts to a more direct morality play structure, wherein the audience is given didactic speeches from the Vices (Pride, Adulation, and Ambition). The three Vices bemoan how Aman has overshadowed them, usurping their positions as the embodiments of their respective vices. Aman then enters and requests that he be allowed to resign his position due to the unwarranted enmity that his promotion has fostered. Assuerus declines, instead promoting Aman further and making the counselor lieutenant of Israel.

Having watched Aman skillfully manipulate Assuerus, the king’s fool Hardydardy engages Aman in a highly satiric exchange, making reference to Aman’s low birth, boundless power, and penchant for grand clothing. Aman dismisses Hardydardy’s banter and informs the king that the nation’s Jews have secreted away vast wealth and violate Assuerus’ laws. The king agrees to suppress the Jews, appropriating their wealth for his own treasury, and Aman urges the execution of Mardocheus in particular. The Jews lament their fate, which is only averted by the moving speech made by Hester to Assuerus, begging him to spare her father and her people. The king relents, realizing he has been manipulated by Aman, and orders the execution of his minister upon the same gallows that Aman had constructed for Mardocheus’ execution.

The didactic nature of the play is made particularly clear when it is set against its source text, the Book of Esther. The plot is largely the same as *Godly Queene Hester*, which only deviates in a few details: Mordechai is Esther’s cousin, rather than her father, and is persecuted for offending Haman. Though the source text is followed relatively closely, the play features a particular difference that indicates a clear exegetical awareness. As Mike Pincombe has observed, the Biblical story has a markedly different ending—used to explain the origins of Purim—where the persecuted Jews are given the opportunity to revenge themselves for one day on diverse enemies, not just the evil advisor Haman:

Summaque epistulae fuit ut in omnibus terris ac populis qui regist Asueri imperio subiacebant notum fieret paratos esse Iudaeos ad capiendam vindictam de hostibus suis[[123]](#footnote-123) [And this was the content of the letter, that it should be known in all lands and peoples under the rule of the empire of King Assuerus that the Jews were ready to revenge themselves on their enemies.]

The effect this alteration has on *Godly Queene Hester* is significant: in Esther, the focus is very much on the moral example of Esther and the deliverance of the Jews against their enemies (of whom Haman is merely the leader, which is what necessitates the tribe’s destruction). In *Hester*, the morally instructive fall of Aman is the central organizing element, so there is no massacre of Aman’s tribe or family; this is perhaps because the author wished to avoid conflating Wolsey and the Roman Church more broadly. The implications for an anti-Wolsey satire are clear; the source text was consciously adjusted to highlight the moral and satiric lesson at the expense of Wolsey.

*Godly Queene Hester* thus provides us with an excellent opportunity to gauge the rapid diffusion of Skelton’s anti-Wolsey rhetoric, to highlight innovative features pertaining to representations of Wolsey, and to chart how these two elements influenced later texts. *Godly Queen Hester* is an ideal text for this study for several reasons. First, it is a clear and open work of satire. It engages closely with topical events and popular concerns: not well-worn issues from years prior to composition, but with the sweeping changes made in the year before Wolsey’s death. The author was also largely unconcerned with protecting himself through vague or obscure satire, as was Skelton in his earlier satires: as an anonymous writer, the author could speak his mind much more freely, though he was naturally limited in receiving recognition or patronage for his poetic efforts. Second, it displays clear Skeltonic influences and similarities: it is a morality play, like *Magnyfycence* (c.1516), and it picks up on anti-Wolsey images found in several of Skelton’s works (including *Speke, Parott*). In addition, there are clear (if scattered) imitations of Skelton’s distinctive metrical pattern, though it is not clear if these are poor imitations or an intentional departure from the Skeltonic. The characterizations and images of Wolsey found in the text served to reinforce public conceptions of the Cardinal, which in turn encouraged later writers to adopt similar images of Wolsey. Third, the anonymous author of *Godly Queene Hester* proved innovative: he combined the narrative arc and Vice characters from the morality play with the Biblical story of Esther. He adapted the Biblical story so as to make the issues, characters, and locations more directly applicable to the contemporary English political landscape. In doing so he created a Biblically supported parable with very clear political messages to Wolsey and Henry VIII.

Finally, perhaps the best reason to study *Godly Queene Hester* is because it is almost certainly directed specifically at Wolsey. While there has been debate in the past as to whether the author meant to target Wolsey or Thomas Cromwell (in part due to the uncertain dating of the text as well as the focus on the suppression of monasteries, for which both Wolsey and Cromwell were responsible), the references within the text to pluralities, clothing, and (papal) bulls preclude the possibility that Cromwell might have been the intended target. Furthermore, if this text were about Cromwell, it is unclear why it would not reference events that occurred after Wolsey’s death: Anne Boleyn’s death, or the Anne of Cleves controversy, for example. These features are not present in the text; furthermore, the clear Skeltonic influence places this text within the emerging corpus of anti-Wolsey satire. The Vice characters are essential to the author’s construction of Wolsey: individually they represent elements of Aman/Wolsey’s character, and collectively they demonstrate flaws and dangers associated with archetypal evil counsellors. This patchwork representation evokes the same construction in *Magnyfycence*; as we have seen, Skelton used similar Vice-avatars to represent courtly evils which, at least in part, represented elements of Wolsey’s character.

Any Wolsey-centered analysis of *Godly Queene Hester* must perforce focus on the main vehicle for characterizations and images of Wolsey: the evil advisor Aman. Promoted from obscurity early in the play, Aman (and the audience) is warned that if the monarch’s minister should abuse his position and fail in his duty to remain morally upright, the prince must exercise circumspection or risk being overwhelmed by his too-powerful underling:

And, over this, if that his lieutenant

Shall happen to square from trueth and justice,

Albeit his faire wordes and good semblaunt,

The prince must nedes be circumspect and wise,

That no ambicion not covetise,

Through great welth and riches inordinat,

Doe erect his corage, for to play checkmate.

For, though it be as well as it may neede,

It shall be thought nay, I assure you, in dede.[[124]](#footnote-124)

This foreshadowing, which sets up the *de casibus* structure necessary for the didactic warning running throughouyt the play, is meant to be clear to an audience assumedly familiar with Wolsey’s remarkable rise and then-ongoing fall from power. Aman, plucked from the anonymous rank and file, is made chancellor and entrusted with the king’s most personal matters. Wolsey too was promoted very quickly to the highest secular and religious offices in England; after a brief period of courtly unemployment following Henry VIII’s accession to the throne, Wolsey accrued a startling number of benefices and appointments. Within six years of Henry VIII’s coronation, Wolsey had gone from former royal chaplain to Cardinal of York and Chancellor of England. Aman’s elevation to his high office is sudden, but is designed to reflect (if in an exaggerated fashion) Wolsey’s real-world achievements.

The audience is prepared for such a promotion; the previous 79 lines have shown Assuerus asking three advisors for assistance in selecting a new chancellor. The advice they give is morally didactic (as well as clearly foreshadowing the fall of Aman), instructing both monarch and audience that while a lieutenant must reflect all the virtues of a good king, the king may find the lieutenant over-reaches himself, spurred on by greed and pride and damaging the entire realm as a result:

Besyde justice there muste bee diligence,

In hys owne personne that same to put in ure;

Or els some tyme suche coloured sentence

Under cloke of justice, ye maye be sure

Craftely shall procede from them that have the cure;

Which in processe, may brynge to downfall

The kygne, hys realme, and hys subjectes all.[[125]](#footnote-125)

The key phrase in this excerpt is “under cloke of justice”. It can be seen as a trope for the entire construction of Aman/Wolsey in the play, and even for the anti-Wolsey literature of the sixteenth century as a whole. It presents us with our first (albeit slightly obscure) reference to Wolsey and is composed of two parts. The first part is concerned with ‘justice’. One of Wolsey’s most controversial policies while Chancellor was to reform legal processes with an eye towards the speeding-up of lengthy court cases. In particular, Wolsey spent a considerable amount of time personally presiding over the courts of Chancery and Star Chamber: partially because that role fell within his purview as Chancellor, but partially out of what appears to have been a genuine interest in the law, despite his lack of formal training.[[126]](#footnote-126) In addition, Peter Gwyn points out that Wolsey made efforts to promote publicly the use of these courts (Star Chamber in particular) as a venue for the speedy and just redress of wrongs regardless of estate or birth.[[127]](#footnote-127) Wolsey used these public venues as platforms from which he prosecuted some of the most powerful men in the kingdom (Henry Percy, 5th Earl of Northumberland among them, as well as Wolsey’s former pupil Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset), which earned him admirers among the commonality and enemies among the nobility.[[128]](#footnote-128) Some seventy years later, Holinshed wrote that Wolsey initially cultivated a reputation for fairness to all social strata, but was later seen to have abused his position:

And such was the administration of the cardinall vnder a colour of iustice at the first: but bicause the same seemed at length to be but a verie shadow or colour in deed, it quicklie vanished awaie, he taking vpon him the whole rule himselfe, for that he saw the king made small account of anie other but onelie of him.[[129]](#footnote-129)

The satirical criticism of Wolsey’s legal policies is picked up explicitly by the Vices. For example, Adulation complains that because of Aman, he must “chaunge his occupation”:[[130]](#footnote-130)

ADULATION:

For al law, est and west, and adulation in his chest

Aman hathe locked faste;

And, by his crafti pattering, hath turned law into flattering;

So that, fyrst and laste,

The client must pay or the lawyer assaye

The lawe for to clatter.

And when ye wene he saide right, I assure you, by this light,

He doth not els but flatter.

PRYDE:

Why so?

ADULATION:

For, yf Aman wynkes, the lawyers shrynckes,

And not dare saye yea nor naye.

And, yf he speake the lawe, the other calles hym daw,

No more then dare he say.

So that was law yisterday, is no lawe thys daye.

But flatterynge lasteth always, ye may me beleve.[[131]](#footnote-131)

The specifics of the allegation being made here are certainly debatable and broadly irrelevant: that the author of *Godly Queene Hester* included this humorous exchange is proof enough that there was a commonly-held public conception that Wolsey twisted both the law and the courts to suit his own devices, and that he could be manipulated by flattery.

The second element of the “cloke of justice” image is the ‘cloak’ itself. An image which participates in one of the most vivid and enduring Wolsey-tropes—that of Wolsey’s clothing and outward wealth as inversely indicative of his moral failings—the ‘cloak’ provides a small but crucial link to this particular theme across the literary sweep of the sixteenth century. Wolsey’s critics rarely failed to connect the Cardinal’s penchant for spectacle and costume with pride. Skelton alleges throughout his anti-Wolsey satires that Wolsey used ostentatious displays of wealth to compensate for his lack of noble blood.[[132]](#footnote-132) Foxe used Wolsey’s sumptuous clothing as a metaphor for the pride and deception of the Cardinal.[[133]](#footnote-133) In *Henry VIII*, Shakespeare and Fletcher had Wolsey’s enemies all make references to his clothing.[[134]](#footnote-134) Cavendish, Wolsey’s gentleman-usher, displays his heritage as the son of a mercer by listing the enormous quantities of expensive cloth in the Cardinal’s household.[[135]](#footnote-135) The public image of Wolsey, bedecked in scarlet silks and velvets, always attended by his two cross-bearers (carrying the silver crosses symbolizing his cardinalate and archbishopric) and mounted on a mule covered in yet more red silks was a powerful one, and consciously used as such. It was utilized not only by the Cardinal to impress, but also by his enemies as an example of his proud nature (Foxe in particular made much of Wolsey’s displays of personal wealth). This image was used so heavily by Wolsey’s critics that the very color of his clothing—generally scarlet, as befitting his rank of cardinal—became linked with treason. One of the brief but vivid clothing-related images in *Godly Queene Hester* comes late in the play, after Assuerus has ordered that Aman be hanged on the gallows originally built for Mardocheus:

ASSUERUS:

Hanginge doe serve, when they that deserve,

Are false feytoures.

HARDYDARDY:

And it commes to lottes of heringes and sprottes,

Which be no tratours,

To hange in the smoke, til they chaunge their cloke

From white to redde.[[136]](#footnote-136)

As Hardydardy points out, however, the ‘red cloaks’ of the herrings are not so colored because they are traitors (as Assuerus’ logic would dictate): as such, Wolsey is not a traitor simply because he wore ostentatious cardinal’s robes. Instead, Hardydardy’s point is at once both more nuanced and simplistic: Aman deserved to be hanged because he had attempted to have an innocent man hanged, not because of some abstract notion of treason. Hardydardy underscores this Hammurabic justice in his final lines of the play: “Therefore, God sende all those that will steal mens clothes, / That once they may goe naked.”[[137]](#footnote-137) Wolsey’s crime is one of hypocrisy and dishonesty, with demonstrable effects on the people of England; less tangible concerns about juristiction are less relevant to Hardydardy.

The image of the cloak was adapted by the author of *Godly Queene Hester* from critical writers like Skelton, who also used the cloak as a metaphor for obscuration and manipulation:

He wyll have wrought

His gowne so wyde

That he may hyde

His dame and syre

Within his slyve;[[138]](#footnote-138)

Though here Skelton was writing about wealth cloaking base heritage, the trope of outwardly-grand displays masking internal corruption was commonly deployed against Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century. It is here in *Godly Queene Hester* that we can see how Skelton’s initially general satirical swipe has begun to crystallize around Wolsey in 1529 as *Godly Queene Hester* was—probably—being written.

If the audience did not pick up on the clothing-based foreshadowing of lines 57-63, they would have been hard-pressed to ignore the author’s vigorous reinforcing of the Wolsey clothing trope shortly following this excerpt. Pryde—the embodied Vice and staple of the medieval morality play—complains that he been overthrown and is now but “poorly arrayed”:[[139]](#footnote-139)

Syrs, my name is Pryde, but I have layde asyde

All my goodly araye:

Ye wynne I lye? There is a cause why

That I goe not gaye.

I tell you at a worde, Aman that newe lorde,

Hath bought up all good clothe,

And hath as many gownes as would serve ten townes

Be ye never so lothe:

And any manne in the towne doe by him a good gowne,

He is verye wrothe;

And wyll hym strayte tell, the statute of apparell,

Shall teache hym good.

Wherefore by thys daye, I dare not goe gaye;

Threde bare is my hoode.[[140]](#footnote-140)

The jibe here is that Aman’s greed for fine clothing is so great that he has caused a shortage of cloth. Moreover, any man who manages to get his hands on a “good gowne” will suffer the wrath of the chancellor by means of the Statutes of Apparel: laws governing what particular types of clothing or jewellery could be worn by particular social classes. In the 1587 edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, the editors included an anecdote taken from Hall’s *Chronicle* regarding Wolsey’s prosecution of a country gentleman under these statutes:

He was no sooner [Chancellor], but he directed foorth commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his dooings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him. And he himselfe on a daie called a gentleman named Simon Fitz Richard, and tooke from him an old iacket of crimsin veluet and diuerse brooches, which extreame dooing caused him greatlie to be hated: and by his example manie cruell officers for malice euill intreated diuerse of the kings subiects, in so much that one Shinning, maior of Rochester, set a yoong man on the pillorie for wearing of a riuen or gathered shirt.[[141]](#footnote-141)

While it may be fruitful to determine the veracity of this report—or to ascertain whether or not prosecutions for apparel violations increased under Wolsey’s administration—for our purposes, the issue is moot. The public appeared to believe that Wolsey was excessively rigid in pursuing prosecutions, particularly when his own love of clothing was so well-known. The manner in which these stanzas are written further reinforce this farcical narrative, with the internal rhymes lending the anecdote a humorous air. In reality, however, the pillory was a brutal punishment, in which the defendant was exposed to the elements and to potential abuse (occasionally leading to maiming or death) from the public. Indeed, Richard Andrews groups the pillory together with “public whippings, maimings, and...capital executions” as serious corporal punishments with a strong element of public participation.[[142]](#footnote-142) It is unclear if Wolsey actually had anything to do with the Rochester man’s being placed in the pillory, or whether Wolsey was viewed as responsible for cultivating an environment wherein minor offenses were prosecuted with brutal exactitude. The existence of texts like *Godly Queene Hester* prove at least a significant baseline of public opinion against Wolsey based on something as everyday as clothing: the utility of the image of hypocrisy that these writers created in turn influenced the Protestant chroniclers of Mary and Elizabeth’s reigns, who in turn cemented for posterity the image of a crimson silk-swathed Wolsey condemning a man for an old velvet shirt.

Wolsey’s love of fine clothing is far from the only aspect of the Cardinal’s character that comes under fire. After Assuerus appoints Aman as chancellor and charges him with finding a suitable queen, Aman collects a bevy of women for the king’s perusal. First of these is the eponymous Hester, who is immediately married by Assuerus. Aman is commanded to look after the new queen, and the two depart with Hester’s new ladies-in-waiting. Curiously, no mention is made of Assuerus leaving the stage, implying that the following scene is for his benefit (and perhaps even with his silent participation).[[143]](#footnote-143) In this scene, we also are first introduced to the Vices, who provide both comic relief and moral instruction couched in satire. First Pryde takes the stage, explaining to the audience (and Assuerus) that some men (namely, Aman) are dissembling and deceptive:

To men that be hevy, and wolde faine be mery,

Though they feele smarte:

Oft chance such rekning that with their mouth thei sing,

Though thei wepe in their hart.

...

Who so will accord with this double world

Muste use suche artes:

Outwardly kinde, in his heart a fende,

A knave in two parts.

Outward honestie, inward infidelitie,

Both rydes on a mule:

In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde,

That soonest wyll recoyle.

...

He that is double loves alwaye trouble,

And at no tyme wyll cease:

And yet he wyll not fight, by daye or yet by nyghte,

In warre nor in peace.

But such men by battail may get corne and cattell,

Bullyon and plate:

And yf they once get it, let us no moore crave it,

By God, we comme to late,

Eyther to begge or borowe, except shame or sorowe,

Dyspleasure and hate.[[144]](#footnote-144)

This excerpt does three things. First, it explains that two-faced people are morally bankrupt, but can profit through their deception. Furthermore, anyone who engages with this type of person is complicit in their deception: perhaps a dangerous sentiment to express when Aman is meant to represent Wolsey and Assuerus is linked to Henry VIII. Ostensibly the author felt that by keeping Assuerus on stage, this passage was meant to be taken as advice preceding a mistake, which would blunt the edge of the satire. In either case, the second element of this passage is a warning that if someone is allowed to accrue wealth—any wealth—through this deception, he will become so greedy and possessive that he will not only seek to increase his own wealth, he will do so to the active detriment of others (“let us no moore crave it, / By God, we comme to late”).[[145]](#footnote-145)

Pryde’s warning leads us to the third and (for our purposes) most significant element of this excerpt: the specific anti-Wolsey satire. The most significant stanza is lines 350-353:

Outward honestie, inward infidelitie,

Both rydes on a mule:

In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde,

That soonest wyll recoyle.[[146]](#footnote-146)

The mule was Wolsey’s preferred mount, as it was for most churchmen. It is a particular potent satiric symbol because it perfectly illustrates Wolsey’s alleged dissimulative nature: a Christ-like symbol of humility swathed in rich red silks, ridden by a man ostensibly dedicated to the Church, but instead devoted to worldly displays of wealth. This paradox was an ideal image for critics of Wolsey, and its appearance in *Godly Queene Hester* is noteworthy because it represents an early usage of an image that, as we shall see, resurfaced repeatedly in anti-Wolsey literature throughout the sixteenth century. Foxe was evidently so taken with it that he appears to have invented a farcical incident involving mules and the spilling of garbage disguised as riches.[[147]](#footnote-147) Of course, it must be briefly noted that this line of argument does not require the author of *Godly Queene Hester* to have been a Protestant; indeed, the persecuted innocents of the play (Hester’s father Marchodeus and the Jews more broadly) stand in for the monastic communities Wolsey had been investigating and suppressing in part to fund his new colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. While we might perhaps shrink from conclusively stating that the author of *Godly Queene Hester* was a conservative, Walker has convincingly argued for an interpretation of *Godly Queene Hester* as “a carefully thought out apology for monasticism based upon the social utility of the monastic houses”.[[148]](#footnote-148) Whatever labels we might wish to attach to the author, it is more relevant for this study simply to observe that it is extremely unlikely that the author shared the same foundational beliefs as Foxe (or any other early English Protestant polemicist).

The rest of the excerpt is chiefly concerned with criticizing Wolsey’s perceived attempts to manipulate foreign affairs. It is undeniable to Wolsey’s supporters or detractors—modern or contemporary—that the Cardinal put a great deal of effort into a vigorous foreign policy. The author references these often protracted and knotty machinations and accuses Wolsey of being deceptive and cowardly (“In peace he is bolde, but in war he is colde”, l. 352). This excerpt demonstrates clearly a sentiment shared with John Skelton’s Wolsey satires and which was magnified by numerous authors later in the century. Bevington points out that this “extortion” was hardly unique to Wolsey, “but the financial crisis of the 1520s, brought on by years of extravagant posturing, was more acute than anything known under Henry VII. The dramatist’s longing for fiscal moderation and a cessation of imperialist aims is close to that of both Skelton and the More circle.”[[149]](#footnote-149) Furthermore, the diplomatic scurrying at which the *Hester* author sneers demonstrates Wolsey’s apparent ineptitude. To make Wolsey ridiculous is essentially the purpose of the Vice-characters, and by portraying Aman as a cowardly diplomat hypocritically pressing for Persian dominance while urging peace, the author highlights Wolsey’s allegedly similar traits.

One of the perennial favorite *topoi* of anti-Wolsey satirists and critics was to figure the Cardinal as an animal, or to make an animal-based allusion to Wolsey. As with the example above, the purpose of this figuring was to reduce Wolsey’s status through ridiculous portrayals. We have already seen how the *Hester* author uses an animal image as an insult in line 413: “And, yf he speake the lawe, the other calles hym daw” (though in this case it is Aman who is calling someone else a ‘daw’). The word is here used to liken the subject to a jackdaw, “noted for its loquacity and thievish propensities”, and was a common insult for someone perceived as foolish.[[150]](#footnote-150) Ambytion argues that Aman’s use of ‘daw’ later in the play is unwittingly ironic:

Yes, for God, ye same,

I was wonte to be a great clarke,

Byt, syn Aman bare rewle, neyther horse nor mule

But ys as wyse as I.

...

For all rewlers and lawes were made by fooles and dawes,

He sayth, verely.[[151]](#footnote-151)

That Aman/Wolsey would claim that all laws were made by ‘dawes’ is amusing to Ambytion (and ostensibly the audience), since he himself was the primary lawmaker: ‘verely’ Aman is correct, though clearly he did not intend for himself to be considered as one of the ‘dawes’.

Figuratively, *paronomasia* in particular played a significant part in the construction of a largely negative public image of Wolsey: puns on his name, his cardinalate (or his connections to the Pope), and his base parentage were all increasingly common throughout the sixteenth century. Wool (and sheep), wolves, bulls, calves (and the butchering thereof), birds (particularly jackdaws) and dogs all figure prominently in these texts. As we have seen, Skelton heavily utilized animal imagery throughout his poetry from 1515-1522, setting a precedent which the author of *Godly Queene Hester* followed closely. In the following excerpt, Adulation describes how priests have stopped fighting immorality because they were too often rebuked, and now—having taken their example from Wolsey—do nothing but seek wealth:

When they preached, and the truthe teached,

Sume of them caughte a knocke,

And they that should assisted, I wore not how were brysted,

But they dyd nothynge but mocke.

And that sawe they, and gate them awaye,

As faste as myghte be.

They solde theyr woll, and purchased a bull,

Wyth a pluralyte.[[152]](#footnote-152)

The ‘wool’ here is both an allusion to Wolsey’s name and a play on the Biblical metaphor of the congregation being a ‘flock’: that is to say, the ‘shepherd’ (the priest) taking the ‘wool’ (the wealth) of the congregation. As Walker drily notes, Aman has been accused of “fleecing the flock”.[[153]](#footnote-153) This pun is reinforced later in the play, when Ambytion complains how Aman has taken so many offices that Ambytion himself has given over all ambition to Aman:

And I , Ambytion, had a comission,

By force of a bull,

To gett what I could, but not as I wolde,

Neyther of lambe nor woll,

The bull nor the calfe, coulde please the one halfe

Of my fervente desire.

But ever I thought, by God, there was I woulde have had

When I was never the nere.

Therefore, all my ambition, to gether in a comission,

Under my seale,

I geve it to Aman, to the intent that Sathan

Maye love hym well[[154]](#footnote-154)

The ‘bull’ in both these excerpts is a Papal bull: a legal edict which allows the Pope to make proclamations or alter canon law. In this particular case, the author is lamenting how Wolsey was able to use his great wealth (accrued through his religious and temporal offices) to purchase Papal bulls allowing him to hold multiple benefices concurrently: a practice common in the late medieval period, but one which Wolsey seems to have perfected. As we have seen, at the end of his career, Wolsey was simultaneously *legate a latere*, Cardinal of York, Abbot of St Albans, and Bishop of Winchester, having previously been Bishop of Lincoln, Durham, Bath and Wells, and Tournai.[[155]](#footnote-155) Whether his pluralities were immoral or unjustly earned, it is difficult to say: it is certain, however, that to many—both Catholic and Protestant—he seemed to be motivated almost exclusively by greed and ambition.

The bull image is not restricted to allusions to Papal bulls. Wolsey’s base birth, as the son of an Ipswich tradesman or merchant also was the butt of many puns. The ‘bull’ is also a reference to his father—Robert Wolsey of Ipswich—and his supposed trade as a butcher. While his gentleman-usher George Cavendish described Wolsey rather vaguely as an “honest poore mans Sonne” and there is still a degree of ambiguity about the senior Wolsey’s occupation, the taunt about being the son of a butcher was generally accepted in the sixteenth century. William Roy and Jerome Barlow called Wolsey “the vyle butchers sonne” in the introduction to their 1528 doggerel poem *Rede me and be nott wroth*.

In addition, the author of *Godly Queene Hester* also connected the bull with Perillus, who was described in Pindar’s *Pythian Odes* as having been commissioned by Phalaris (a tyrant of unusual cruelty) to build a sculpture of a bronze bull inside which the tyrant could roast his enemies alive. Once the bull was completed, Phalaris caused Perillus to be roasted in his own device.[[156]](#footnote-156) In *Godly Queene Hester*, Hardydardy tells Assuerus that Aman was—like Perillus—the author of his own destruction:

HARDYDARDY:

Phalaris coulde not get with in the bull to shett

(Lo, here beginnes the game!)

Wherefore, in dede, he toke for nede

Perillus, maker of the same.

In he did him turne, and made the fier to burne

And greatly to increace.

He cast him in such heate, and eke in such sweate,

He fried him in his greace.

ASSUERUS:

What meane you by this?

HARDYDARDY:

I wyll tell you, by gis, my hole intencion.

I meane, my master is the fyrste taster

Of his owne invencion.

The gallhouse he made, both hye and brode,

For Mardocheus he them mente;

And now he is faine him selfe, for certaine,

To play the fyrste pagente.[[157]](#footnote-157)

Hardydardy’s coarse gallows humor is plain, but Assuerus asks for explicit clarification: the audience not only is provided with an explanation of the relevance of the Phalaris story, but is also given some scatological and sexual humor.[[158]](#footnote-158) The purpose of Hardydardy’s bawdy jokes (he begins this routine with a joke about how Aman has “made a rodde / For his owne ars”) is not merely to provide comic relief. Hardydardy’s role is both that of a traditional Vice (he portrays ‘foolishness’) as well as that of the truth-speaking fool. The audience is meant to understand that while Hardydardy is making sexual innuendos, he is also clarifying the moral lesson being imparted.

One of the final animal tropes to be applied to Aman/Wolsey is only mentioned once, but it is no less significant for its brevity. Upon his entrance to the play, Hardydardy recites a proverb to Aman and the audience: “A proverbe, as men say: a dogge hath a day”.[[159]](#footnote-159) A few lines later, he reiterates the proverb again, with a little exposition:

But, as I say, a dogge hath a day,

For now I truste to get.

My tyme is come for to get some,

If I be not lett.[[160]](#footnote-160)

The ‘dogge’ image is a very common one in anti-Wolsey literature of the sixteenth century: it appears in virtually every text in this study, often multiple times. Of course, calling someone a dog is hardly novel and certainly not unique to anti-Wolsey authors. However, as a term of opprobrium applied to a commoner who had risen high and made many enemies in doing so, ‘dog’ evidently filled a particular niche. In this particular case, Hardydardy utilizes ‘dog’ both to insult Aman and himself. Aman has just been promoted by Assuerus (thus, that particular ‘dog’ will have his day), but Hardydardy also casts himself in the same position. As Hardydardy (like all the Vices) represents a particular aspect of Wolsey, the author is simply compounding the insult.

The conclusion of the play reiterates the moral message of *Godly Queen Hester*: namely, that Aman’s greed, ambition, and low birth assured his own destruction. Aman is hanged on the gallows he had constructed to hang Mardocheus on, having failed in his attempt to convince Assuerus to kill all the Jews in order that he might repossess their allegedly hoarded wealth. Hardydardy, in his role as the wise fool, had warned Aman that he would be executed if he did not restrain the negative traits the Vices had bequeathed to him:

HARDYDARDY:

Men say, in dede, ye shall lose your head,

And that woulde make you stumble.

AMAN:

Why so?

HARDYDARDY:

Thei say it is convenient should be fulfulled ye testament

Of Ambition, Adulation, and Pride.

They gave you all their pryde and flatterynge,

And after that, Saint Thomas Watring, there to rest a tide.[[161]](#footnote-161)

St. Thomas-a-Watering (also called St. Thomas Waterings) was an execution site near Southwark, on the old Roman Watling Street. Hardydardy prophesies that because Aman has absorbed the functions of the other Vices, he will be executed: a reiteration of a general warning that Adulation makes in line 543 earlier in the play. The purpose of this repetition is to make the moral lesson absolutely clear: Wolsey, as Aman, over-reached himself through pride and ambition, and therefore deserves—the author believes—to lose his head. Though Wolsey was not executed, that outcome was far from unlikely, given his arrest for treason and the ascendancy of his noble enemies.

### *Hester* in Context: Heritage and Effect

Mike Pincombe notes that there are a number of sources the author of *Hester* could have had access to: he observes that the author “might have found a model for Aman in Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, [though] it could only have been a model for his character and not for his speech”.[[162]](#footnote-162) However, the most important influence on *Godly Queene Hester*, as was briefly mentioned above, was John Skelton’s poetry. There are numerous imagistic connections to various texts by Skelton (Greg Walker mentions the similarity between the ‘bull’ references to Wolsey in *Speke, Parott* and *Hester*, for example).[[163]](#footnote-163) There are also substantial portions of *Godly Queene Hester* which feature a poetic structure which appears to be loosely based on the Skeltonic. Large portions of Hardydardy’s lines feature short, irregularly stressed lines similar to Skelton’s, though they tend not to demonstrate the distinctive long linked rhyming chains of the Skeltonic.

While the poetic forms found in *Hester* are varied, the play demonstrates a clear heritage derived from the medieval morality play. It features the rise and fall of a commoner, from which the audience could be expected to draw a moral lesson. The Biblical framework of the message is far from uncommon, though it is applied to a specifically secular concern (namely, the immorality and deserved destruction of a secular lieutenant to the monarch). Another key facet of analyzing *Godly Queene Hester*’s structure is that it helps to reinforce our understanding of Skelton’s *Magnyfycence* and, more broadly, mid-Tudor anti-Wolsey satire. The connections between these two texts have occasionally been noted, but rarely explored: Janette Dillon mentions the two plays as combining “religious with topical or political messages”, but only as an example of the varieties of Tudor interlude.[[164]](#footnote-164) Bevington notes that the trope of the “worldly lowborn churchman” is used in both *Magnyfyncence* and *Hester*, but his consideration is focused primarily on Hester herself and the supression of the monasteries, as is Greg Walker’s essential essay on *Hester*.[[165]](#footnote-165) In an essay on John Heywood, Tom Betteridge mentions the two plays together as “sophisticated works of political theory that deploy the possibilities of the theatrical form in order to articulate a political critique as radical as any advanced by later dramatists”, but unfortunately does not delve into further detail.[[166]](#footnote-166) It is difficult to state with certainty that Wolsey specifically was the target of *Magnyfyence*; textual analysis and the existence of a first print edition can only provide circumstantial evidence that in that in the final years of Wolsey’s career and after the Cardinal’s death, *Magnyfycence* was read retroactively as an attack on Wolsey.[[167]](#footnote-167) The Vices in this sense are understood to collectively form elements of Wolsey (as architypal evil counsellor) as a whole, with each Vice acting as a hyperbolic avatar of a particular aspect of the Cardinal’s apparent personality. The fact that Skelton moved on to write increasingly targeted and vitriolic anti-Wolsey satire—which were also among his most popular works during his lifetime—served to reinforce this interpretation. *Godly Queene Hester* demonstrates this retrospective reading of *Magnyfycence*. As mentioned previously, scholars have generally agreed that the *Hester* author is closely linked to Skelton: indeed, some have argued that the author is in fact Skelton himself. In either case, it does not seem like much of a stretch to assert that the *Hester* author adapted techniques, images, and characterizations found in *Magnyfycence* to write his own more open anti-Wolsey satire. While *Hester* features a more traditional Biblical framework, the similarities between the Vices of both plays as well as the exclusively secular reflections of both *Magnyfycence* and *Godly Queene Hester* make three things clear: there was a market for anti-Wolsey satire throughout the 1520s; the moral interlude/morality play structure could be (and was) adapted to participate in this market; and that *Magnyfycence* was being read as Wolsey satire widely enough that at least a decade after its composition it was being imitated by a more obvious Wolsey satirist.

*Godly Queene Hester* repeatedly demonstrates the crystallizing process through which particular anti-Wolsey tropes were being shaped in the early part of the sixteenth century. These features—Wolsey’s clothing, his base birth, his ecclesiastic pluralities—all feature in insults not initially specific to Wolsey, but through repetition came to represent the Cardinal. It is difficult to determine what lasting literary impact *Godly Queene Hester* might have had: the lack of manuscript evidence might suggest a lack of interest, but equally manuscript circulation might have been limited by the still-powerful Wolsey or others. The existence of only one print edition is equally problematic: there might not have been a public demand for the text, or it might have been thought too impolitic to print at a time when the young Elizabeth I relied on powerful counselors and favorites. In addition, the textual parallels between Hester and Katherine of Aragon may well have dissuaded printers from producing new editions during Elizabeth’s lifetime. Nevertheless, the mere existence of such a play, coupled with the increasing identification of these particular tropes with Thomas Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century, indicates a clear process of crystallization of these characterizations around the Cardinal.

## Chapter II

## “A vysage of trwthe”: George Cavendish’s Characterizations of Wolsey

After the death of Henry VIII in 1547, England entered a period of political and religious turmoil. As the English Reformation gathered pace during the reign of Edward VI and suffered setbacks during the Roman revivals of Mary I, writers on both sides of the religious divide saw the propagandist and polemical value in exploiting the burgeoning negative imagery of Wolsey as typified by writers like John Skelton and the anonymous author of *Godly Queene Hester*. In particular, the appearance of the first Protestant English historiographies—which almost exclusively condemned Wolsey for his perceived self-service—prompted, in part, a renewal of interest in the Cardinal as a vehicle for anti-Roman sentiment. It was in this literary environment that George Cavendish (1494-1562?) began writing his own characterizations of Wolsey.

The works of George Cavendish represent a unique opportunity for scholars to compare poetry and prose characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey authored by someone who had close personal ties to and professional experience with the Cardinal. Cavendish served as gentleman-usher to the Cardinal from some point before 1522 (Mike Pincombe gives the date as “around 1520”) until the death of Wolsey in November 1530.[[168]](#footnote-168) As gentleman-usher, Cavendish was required to keep close company with his master; as Richard S. Sylvester notes in his Introduction to the Early English Text Society’s edition of *The* *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, Cavendish performed many roles:

He was primarily a messenger, as he shows himself to have been on the French embassy, one who prepared the way for the arrival of the cardinal himself. The servants of the household looked to him for instructions and, in 1527, it was to him that the preparations for the great banquet at Hampton Court were entrusted.[[169]](#footnote-169)

Despite Sylvester’s assertion, it is perhaps misleading to think of Cavendish as a messenger; we can better describe Cavendish as a lead gentleman-servant, entrusted to act on Wolsey’s behalf on personal matters (even when the Cardinal was on state business). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the role as “An officer at court, in a dignitary’s household, etc., whose duty it is on occasion to walk or go before a person of high rank; also, a chamberlain.” The ‘gentleman’ prefix indicates Cavendish’s own social rank: he was born into a moderately wealthy Suffolk family of civil servants and courtiers and his younger brother William’s son would be named earl of Devonshire in 1618 (with a descendant being elevated to a dukedom following the Glorious Revolution). In acting as gentleman-usher to the Cardinal, Cavendish had ample access to Wolsey; the two apparently enjoyed a close and friendly relationship until Wolsey’s death in 1530. After the Cardinal’s death, Cavendish withdrew from public service, turning down an offer of an appointment from Henry VIII and instead choosing to retire to his family’s holdings in Surrey.[[170]](#footnote-170)

Despite his intention to retire from public life, Cavendish was sufficiently motivated to write his defensive *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* (written between 1554 and 1558) in part due to the increasing amount of anti-Wolsey literature published in the second half of the sixteenth century. Indeed, he felt moved enough to write the *Life* that he broke off from writing a collection of *de casibus* poems set in the voices of a variety of Henrician, Edwardian, and Marian political figures, later collectively called the *Metrical Visions* (c. 1552-1558). These two texts provide a counterpoint to the mid-sixteenth century chronicles, of which those by Polydore Vergil and Edward Hall were the most prominent. Vergil and Hall were largely critical of Wolsey and his policies. Hall’s *The Vnion of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre & York*, first published by Richard Grafton in 1548, in particular was very likely to have spurred Cavendish to defend Wolsey. Vergil’s comments on Wolsey did not appear until the third edition of his *Anglica Historia* in 1555 and may have reinforced Cavendish’s resolve to continue writing his *Life*. Indeed, Cavendish explicitly states that his *Life* was to contradict the “historygraffers of Cronycles of prynces” who “with there blaphemous trompe” had “spred abrode innvmerable lyes”.[[171]](#footnote-171) Cavendish, a moderate Catholic writing during the comparatively brief Roman resurgence in the reign of Mary, felt compelled to combat what he saw as the propagandist efforts of the Protestants to manipulate the life of Wolsey so as to represent “a vysage of trwthe, as thowghe it weare a perfet veritie”.[[172]](#footnote-172) In many ways, the revelation of truth is the guiding principle of both the *Life* and the *Metrical Visions*. In the *Metrical Visions* Cavendish was writing poetic attempts at creating a didactic framework for revealing the ephemeral nature of wealth and power and the fickleness of Fortune; the *Life*, by contrast, was conceived of as a text which might provide a more literal truth regarding Wolsey’s life. The *Life* is not merely a defense of Wolsey, but is also a defense of documentary representations history against poetic or mimetic versions. In addition, Cavendish’s texts provide an ideal opportunity to see how a mid-century author reacted to the dominant contemporary characterizations of Wolsey (as provided by authors like Hall), and how he himself adopted and adapted those characterizations in his own works to better represent the history he had experienced first-hand. These texts act as valuable mid-century touchpoints which allow us to analyze representations both of Wolsey as an individual and as a subject of discourse; in addition, we can also see how Cavendish discussed history itself—in two very different genres—in reaction to Vergil’s and Hall’s ‘untruths’.

To better understand Cavendish’s characterizations of Wolsey and their significance, we will first consider the *Metrical Visions*, beginning with the Wolsey poem *Le Historye / Cardinalis Eboracensis* and then setting that text against the other poems in the collection. This section will also look at Cavendish’s poetic heritage with a particular focus on the debt he owed to John Skelton. The discussion will center on how Cavendish used Tudor *de casibus* commonplaces to provide both a moral lesson for readers and a more personal ruminative lament for the Cardinal and the political figures who once so dominated the former gentleman-usher’s life. Following the *Metrical Visions*, we will discuss the *Life* and the images it contains in chronological order. This structure will help to demonstrate Cavendish’s technique of chronological ‘telescoping’, whereby Cavendish compressed the length of time between key moments in Wolsey’s career as well as alleging that Wolsey completed particular diplomatic feats more quickly (perhaps) than he actually did. It will also allow us to consider the textual effect of Cavendish’s interrupting his work on the *Metrical Visions* in order to write the *Life*.

### The *Metrical Visions*: Rota Fortuna and Wolsey’s Lamentations

Though the *Life* is an extraordinarily valuable text, it often eclipses Cavendish’s poetic works. During roughly the same period as he was writing the *Life* Cavendish also composed a series of poems now referred to as the *Metrical Visions* (the title given to the collection by Samuel W. Singer in his 1825 edition). To understand more fully Cavendish’s images of Wolsey, it is crucial that we do not make the same mistake and allow the *Metrical Visions* to be eclipsed by the *Life*. The *Metrical Visions* are unique: they are first-person *de casibus* poems written by a court insider who almost certainly was personally acquainted with most (if not all) of his subjects. They reveal early Tudor poetical practice and invention, provide firsthand (if poeticized) accounts of a range of Tudor court figures, and reflect a moderate Catholic’s personal politics and religious beliefs. Perhaps understandably, Tudor literature—particularly that literature which deals with the great men and women of the period—has typically presented very strong authorial opinions, both evangelical and conservative. The *Metrical Visions* in particular demonstrate that Cavendish was a moderate Catholic who, while resistant to the Edwardian Reformation, deplored the cycle of religious violence which had most recently manifested in 1549. The *Metrical Visions* also provide an essential mid-century point of contact proving that Cavendish (and by extension other early and mid-Tudor writers) was participating in a continuous and developing literary tradition firmly connected to medieval *de casibus* poetry and which foreshadowed Elizabethan pastoral poetry.

Exact dating of the *Metrical Visions* is difficult, but A. S. G. Edwards makes a compelling case for the bulk of the poems to have been written between 1552 and 1554, with the final poem written in 1558 and the entire collection copied fair at the same time.[[173]](#footnote-173) He points out that the *terminus ad quem* is June 24, 1558: a date specified by Cavendish as the day he finished the holograph collection found in the Egerton Manuscript.[[174]](#footnote-174) For his starting date of 1552, Edwards argues that the final references to Mary as the “mayden queen” would make most sense if the Mary poem was written prior to her wedding in 1554, and that the Mary poem is one of the final poems written in the pre-1554 section, necessitating a relatively long period set aside before 1554 to allow for the composition of the preceding poems.[[175]](#footnote-175) While Edwards’ assessment necessitates a degree of speculation about the individual dates of composition of the poems, it is extraordinarily difficult to date these poems based on the paucity of evidence. Based on Edwards’ argument regarding the 1552 *terminus a quo*, it seems reasonable to assume that the first poem in the series—the Wolsey poem—was written prior to the composition of the *Life*.

The poems in the *Metrical Visions* provide first-person poetic narratives from the perspective of Cavendish, Wolsey, Henry VIII, and Mary I, as well as other leading figures of the age (including the Lord Protector Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and Sir Thomas Arundel). These poems, framed as though they were reported speech, represent a characterization at a remove and are cast in the morally didactic *de casibus* style. In style and form they are similar to the poems found in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and Edwards has speculated about the possible debt the *Mirror* might owe to the *Visions*. Despite the value of these poems (and valuable they certainly are, written by a pro-Catholic civil servant with first-hand knowledge of the main characters), they have been studied only sporadically. Though they are generally acknowledged not to reflect the same skill with poetry that Cavendish displayed with prose, the *Metrical Visions* do provide a useful contrast with the *Life* as well as demonstrating a poetic adaptation of Tudor *de casibus* tragedy.The *Life* was written to combat what Cavendish saw as the slurs against Wolsey and ‘truth’ by Protestant propagandists, but the *Metrical Visions* were written as a moral tragedy (though certainly the poems had their own propagandist purpose in supporting Queen Mary). They therefore have a decidedly didactic tone, the reason for which Cavendish explained to his readers in the *Prologus*:

Thoughe I onwoerthe / this tragedy do begyne

Of pardon I pray / the reders in meke wyse

And to correct / where they se fault therin.

Reputyng it for lake / of connyng exercyse.

The cause that moved me / to this enterprice.

Specyally was / that all estates myght se

What it is to trust to ffortunes mutabylite[[176]](#footnote-176)

What provoked these musings was, in true medieval fashion, a pastoral daydream ruminating on Fortune’s fickleness. Cavendish was strongly influenced by the medieval *de casibus* tragedy tradition and helped adapt it for the mid-Tudor audience. Mike Pincombe has underscored the inestimable debt that the *Metrical Visions* owed to John Lydgate’s *The Fall of Princes* (printed in 1527), itself a loose translation of Giovanni Boccaccio’s mid-fourteenth century *De casibus virorum illustrium*. This approach was a popular one in the sixteenth century; as Derek Pearsall has demonstrated, the influence of Lydgate on the sixteenth-century fashion for ‘fall’ literature (in the manner of *The Fall of Princes* and the *Mirror for Magistrates*) was very strong.[[177]](#footnote-177) The vision-poetry and *de casibus* traditions are essential elements of the *Metrical Visions*; in addition, Cavendish frames his poems using *eidolopoeia*, wherein the dead speak for themselves. The poetic structure and heritage provide a means for didacticism, lamentation, and authorial distancing from popular or unpopular sentiments about glorified or vilified figures from the recent past.

Cavendish begins the *Metrical Visions* by describing how he came to wonder at the turning of Fortune’s wheel:

In the monyth of Iune / I lyeng sole alon

Vnder the vmber of an Oke / with bowes pendaunt

Whan Phebus in Gemynye / had his course ouergoon

An entred Cancer / a sygne retrogradaunt

In a mean measure / his beames Radyaunt

Approchyng Lion / than mused I in mynd

Of ffikkellnes of ffortune / and of the Course of kynd

How some are by ffortune / exalted to Riches

And often suche / as most vnworthy be

And some oppressed / in langor and syknes /

Some waylyng lakkyng welthe / by wretched pouertie

Some in bayle and bondage / and some at libertie

With other moo gyftes / of ffortune Varyable.

Some pleasaunt / Somme mean / and some onprofitable..[[178]](#footnote-178)

The *Metrical Visions* thus begins on a pessimistic note. Fortune may be open-handed with her gifts, but despite the ostensibly random nature of her bounty, Cavendish feels that “often” those exalted by Fortune “most vnworthy be”. Cavendish explains that his is a tale of Fortune’s changeable nature; as Wolsey’s story shows, Fortune can raise a commoner to the heights of government and the Church, but just as quickly can reduce that same man to poverty, infamy, and death.

In these Lydgatian tales of the vagarity of Fortune, Cavendish argues, we ought to take moral instruction. He himself was forced by the moral imperative of the lessons in the narrative to compose these poems:

I well considered / myn obscure blyndnes

So that non excuse could I se or fynd

But that my tyme / I spend in idelnes...

But to eschewe all Ociosite

Of ffortunes fykellnes / hereafter shall I wright

How greatest estates / she overthrowyth by myght.[[179]](#footnote-179)

Cavendish’s *Prologus* clearly set out the parameters and purpose for his poems: he is writing an account of the truths to be learned from these *de casibus* tragedies, even if the poems themselves have little to do with historic truth. This sentiment is not specific to Wolsey, of course; he is only the first subject to be considered. In total, we hear from twenty-two individuals directly in addition to several laments, epitaphs, and envoys from the author. The characters mentioned range in importance from relatively minor figures like Mark Smeaton—a court musician executed for allegedly being Anne Boleyn’s lover—to Henry VIII himself. Cavendish felt himself obligated to explain the doings of Wolsey (and these other figures) out of a sense of moral necessity: the voyeuristic pleasure afforded by these glimpses into the Tudor court is balanced by the author’s attempts to demonstrate the fundamental hollowness of wealth and power. The *Metrical Visions* clearly were written with a focused sense of the author’s purpose, the tenor of which fills the poems, from *Le Historye / Cardinalis Eboracensis* to the final work in the collection, an envoy from the author to his book.

The *Metrical Visions* differs—perhaps surprisingly so—from the *Life* in tone. While the *Life* is an explicit defense of Wolsey, the *Metrical Visions* presents a far less flattering view of the Cardinal. However, it is difficult to ascertain exactly why Cavendish was inconsistent in his representation of Wolsey. Of course, there is no indication that Cavendish was not devoted to Wolsey, but he was not so defensive of his former employer that he could not see a number of the Cardinal’s negative qualities. However, though Wolsey was long dead when the *Metrical Visions* were written, the other poems in the collection were about subjects who were more recently in power (Queen Mary in particular). P.L. Wiley hypothesizes that politicial considerations may explain Cavendish’s reluctance to commit himself fully to criticising former monarchs, stating that “Cavendish was a Catholic with strong opinions on Henry VIII's divorce and Anne Boleyn’s part in it; and possession of a work dealing with such delicate subjects might cost an Elizabethan his head.”[[180]](#footnote-180) While it is certainly true that Cavendish blamed Anne for providing the spark that set off Henry VIII’s divorce and England’s break from Rome, it is overly speculative to draw a connection between Cavendish’s anti-Boleyn attitude and Elizabethans (or earlier readers) losing their heads. There is no indication (thus far, at least) that Elizabethans were persecuted for possessing either the *Life* or *Metrical Visions*. Indeed, Wiley himself acknowledges that the *Life* circulated “widely” in manuscript and in excerpted form, and was utilized extensively by both John Stow and Raphael Holinshed throughout the early Elizabethan period.[[181]](#footnote-181) It therefore seems unlikely that the moderate Cavendish’s texts were subjected to sustained or focused censorship, nonetheless, the author chose to employ standard authorial distancing techniques. The final poem, *Thauctor to / hys boke*, confirms Cavendish’s concerns about writing on such potentially dangerous subjects. The poem acts as an *apologia* for any offense (poetical or political) the author may have committed:

Thus not presumyng / of learnyng ne eloquence /

Hope made me shove / the boote frome the shoore /

Desiryng nothyng / for my farre or expence /

But oonly good wyll / I aske no moore.[[182]](#footnote-182)

Certainly this sort of hyperbolic apology was not uncommon for Tudor writers, and while the imagery is pleasing, it cannot be said to be ground-breaking. The self-deprecation of Cavendish’s admitting that he would not presume to extol his “learnyng ne eloquence” is standard fare. However, Cavendish does make a few comments which delineate his purpose in writing, particularly in the later verses of the *Thauctor to / hys boke*:

And pryncypally / this my worke for to assist

I humbly beseche that lord that is eternall

To defend my penne / that wrot this with my / fyst

To be my . savegard / my stafe and my wall

And consequently . for feare / least I shold fall

In the daynger of the learned / and honorable sort

I pray theme all / my lamenes to support /

...

Whan thou my boke / commest in to the prease.

Bothe of the wyse / and learned multitude /

To Excuse thyn auctor / thou canst do no lesse

Wantyng learnyng / and of vtteraunce rude

Whiche dyd neuer / thys enterprise entrude

Trustyng other of wytt or learnyng. /

But for an . excersice / and non other thyng //[[183]](#footnote-183)

He reiterates his intent that the *Metrical Visions* portray his subjects as models for instruction, either by imitation of their virtues or through rejection of their vices. Cavendish also demonstrates a keen awareness of the potential for his poems to cause offense; he begs his readers to forgive the “daynger of the learned”, who in this turbulent period of socio-political upheaval were often caught on the wrong side of a new monarch’s philosophical ideals. Furthermore, Cavendish was also in danger of trespassing on the precinct of the literally learned; he certainly would have been aware of the poetical, pedogogical, and theological arguments waged in the press (in both senses of the word) and, not being highly educated, ventured to distance himself from those disagreements.

Though Cavendish attempts to mitigate any offending passages by claiming the *Metrical Visions* to be an “excersice / and non other thyng”, the poems are often explicitly critical of their narrators. In addition, he begs his book to carry his apology “in to the prease”, presumably interpreting ‘press’ as ‘crowd’.[[184]](#footnote-184) In addition, Cavendish may have also meant the printing press; this seems less likely, given the structure of the stanza and the lack of evidence suggesting any attempt was made to print the *Metrical Visions*. Given that there is only one extant manuscript copy of the *Metrical Visions*, it does not appear that Cavendish’s poems made it very far into the “prease” in any format.

Despite Cavendish’s genuine affection for and loyalty to Wolsey—as evidenced by the *Life*—the Wolsey-poem (*Le Historye / Cardinalis Eboracensis*, hereafter referred to as *Le Historye*) highlights some of the Cardinal’s flaws in its opening lines:

O ffortune / quod he / shold I on the complayn

Or of my necligence that I susteyn this smart

Thy doble visage hathe led me to this trayn

Ffor at my begynnyng / thou dydest ay take my part

Vntill ambysion had puffed vppe my hart

With vaynglory . honor . and vsurped dignyte.

Fforgettyng cleane my naturall mendycitie //[[185]](#footnote-185)

In this passage—the first stanza from *Le Historye*— Cavendish has Wolsey bemoan how Fortune’s gifts seduced him into “ambysion” and “vsurped dignyte”. Though he blames Fortune squarely for his disastrous fall from power, Cavendish’s Wolsey does recognize that he allowed ambition to overwhelm his natural humility (“mendycitie”). Lamenting his pride in hindsight, he apologizes to Henry VIII for usurping his king’s power:

Alas my souerayn lord / thou didest me avaunce

And settest me vppe in thys great pompe and pryde

And gavest to me thy realme in gouernaunce

Thy pryncely will / why did I sett a side

And folowed myn owen / consideryng not the tyde

Howe after a floode / an Ebbe commythe on a pace

That to consider / in my tryhumphe / I lakked grace /[[186]](#footnote-186)

Cavendish highlights Wolsey’s lack of circumspection; instead of considering the natural ebb and flow of power and preferment and planning accordingly, he over-reached himself and was struck down all the harder for it.

Like the rest of the *Metrical Visions*, *Le Historye* has a strong performative element. Wolsey addresses the reader directly, speaking from a posthumous stage and exhorting his listeners to learn from his mistakes. This plaintive poem projects a strong sense of regret and didacticism with lines like, “Who workyth fraude/ often is disceyved / As in a myrror/ ye may behold in /. me.[[187]](#footnote-187) This remark is particularly interesting coming from Cavendish; sadly, he does not specify the “fraude” to which Wolsey is admitting. Wolsey’s ghost continues in a similar vein, recounting how he used his “high preemynence” to secure benefices for himself:

My legantyn prerogatyve / was myche to myn avayle

By vertue wherof. / I had thys highe preemynence /

All vacant benefices. / I dyd them strayt retaylle

Presentyng than my Clarke / asson as I had intellygence

I preventid the patron / the vaylled no resistence.

All bysshoppes and prelattes / durst not oons denay.

They doughtyd / so my power /they myght not dysobey. /[[188]](#footnote-188)

Despite his willingness in life to abuse his authority for personal benefit, Wolsey in death is filled with regret. Of the twenty-five stanzas in *Le Historye*, eight are dedicated to rehearsals of the lofty heights of his power and wealth. Despite the wistful tone in which Wolsey delivers these stanzas, the remaining seventeen comprehensively undercut the vanities with which the Cardinal surrounded himself. Despite Wolsey’s admission in *Le Historye* that his fall was precipitated by his indulgence of his pride, the deceased Cardinal is still largely a sympathetic figure. Though Wolsey was guilty of “wordly vanytes”, he earns the sympathy of the reader by a show of humility—as we have seen—and by reminding the reader of the true villains of his story:

Yet notwithstandyng / my corage was so hault

Dispight of myn ennemyes. / Rubbed me on the gall

Who conspired together. / to take me with a fault.

They travelled without triall / to geve me a fall /

I therfore entendyd / to trie my frends all

to fforrayn potentates wrott my letters playn

Desireng ther ayd / to restore me to fauor agayn

Myn ennemyes perceyvyng / caught therof dysdayn

Doughtyng the daynger / dreamed on the dought

In Councell consultyng. / my sewte to restrayn

Accused me of treason /and brought it so abought

That travellyng to my triall / or I could trie it owte

Deathe with his dart / strake me for the nons

In Leycester full lowe / where nowe lyethe my boons[[189]](#footnote-189)

Following on from Wolsey’s own admission of guilt, this excerpt shows a glimmer of the Cardinal’s former pride. Though willing to assume responsibility for his personal faults, Cavendish’s Wolsey cannot resist pointing out that while his fall may have been caused in a general way by his flaws, the fall was engineered by Wolsey’s enemies and the shifting attentions of Fortune. Speaking with the unimpeachable authority of the dead, Wolsey condemns his enemies even as he lavishly declares his humility and culpability.

In many ways, the image of Wolsey’s elaborate copper sarcophagus reinforces exactly this conceit. It is a metonym for the poem as a whole as well as acting as a *memento mori*. It is used as a potent metaphor for the man: grandiose and ambitious, but ultimately empty of (moral) substance, as Wolsey was buried in Leicester Abbey.[[190]](#footnote-190) As a reflection upon death, the description of the coffin comes complete with exhortations to the reader to profit by the unfortunate Cardinal’s tale:

Loo nowe may you se / what it is to trust

In worldly vanytes / that voydyth with the wynd

Ffor deathe in a moment / consumyth all to dust

No honor . no glory. / that euer man cowld fynd

But tyme with hys tyme / puttythe all owt of mynd

Ffor tyme in breafe tyme / duskyth the hystory

Of them that long tyme / lyved in glory

Where is my Tombe / that I made for the nons.

Wrought of ffynne Cooper. / that cost many a pound

To couche in my Carion / and my Rotten boons.

All is but vaynglory / nowe haue I found

And small to the purpose / whan I ame in the ground

What dothe it avaylle me / all that I haue /

Seying I ame deade / and layed in my grave /[[191]](#footnote-191)

The ornate tomb is a symbol of Wolsey’s hubris; Cavendish contrasts the beauty of the ‘fine copper’ with the ‘carrion’ and ‘rotten bones’ of the dead Cardinal. P. G. Lindley provides a comprehensive discussion of the tomb in an essay on Wolsey’s impact on Italian sculpture of the early Tudor period. The tomb was commissioned by Wolsey sometime before June 1524 from the Florentine sculptor Benedetto da Rovezzano, who was allegedly instructed to ensure that Wolsey’s tomb was “twice as sumptuous, beautiful and skilful as that of Henry VII”, whose own tomb was used as the basis for pricing Wolsey’s as it was the closest comparable work available.[[192]](#footnote-192) The sarcophagus acts as a potent metaphor, but is awkward coming from the Cardinal’s main mid-century defender. It is therefore necessary to adjust our understanding of Cavendish’s image of Cardinal Wolsey, as it would be overly simplistic to state that Cavendish was only trying to defend his former master through portraying Wolsey in a positive light. To understand Cavendish’s Wolsey, we must accept that both the charismatic, industrious Wolsey of the *Life* and the regret-filled, deflated Wolsey of the *Metrical Visions* are, to an extent, the same character. Cavendish was not quite able to square the negative implications of the *memento mori* of Wolsey’s sarcophagus with his clear desire to portray his former master well, but this conflicting image (or pair of images) points to a genuine rehabilitative attempt to present a more layered and realistic—perhaps truthful, and ultimately positive—image of the Cardinal.

### *Le Historye* in Context

*Le Historye* certainly can be read in isolation and, if read in this manner, provides a nuanced and emotional poetic lamentation for the dead Cardinal. However, to more fully understand Cavendish’s characterization of his former master, it is well worth placing *Le Historye* in a wider context. The other poems found in the *Metrical Visions* all deal with the same theme: the rise and fall of great men and women in the Tudor court, and the moral lessons that the reader might draw from them. It ought to be understood, then, that all these poems are organized around this central principle and thus have much in common: to discuss all the poems in this particular context would necessitate a degree of repetition. However, there are a few poems in the collection which, when placed alongside *Le Historye*, highlight features worth discussing.

The first poem to follow *Le Historye* (and the second in the collection) is *Vycount / Rocheford*, which discusses the rise and fall of George Boleyn (c.1504–1536), Viscount Rocheford and brother of Anne Boleyn. This poem aptly demonstrates the wide range of figures depicted in the *Metrical Visions*. Unlike Wolsey, George was born into the highest reaches of the English aristocracy (his father was Thomas Boleyn (1476/7–1539) and his mother was Elizabeth Howard (d. 1538), daughter of Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk), and in addition, as his character proudly laments in *Vycount / Rocheford*, “God gave me graces / dame . nature did hir part / Endewed me with gyftes / of naturall qualities”.[[193]](#footnote-193) The juxtaposition between the butcher’s son who came “ffrome pouertie to plentie” and the scion of a wealthy and powerful family is stark and is consciously positioned in the second stanzas of these two poems respectively. Despite the obvious contrasts between the two men, Cavendish emphasizes their similarities. Wolsey’s common birth is largely glossed over, with the Cardinal focusing instead on his many offices and honors and the rapidity with which they were gained. Similarly, in *Vycount* George Boleyn does not mention his high birth, but instead speaks about his unusual and praiseworthy gifts which led him to high preferment:

God gave me graces / dame . nature did hir part

Endewed me with gyftes / of naturall qualities

Dame Eloquence also / taught me the arte

In meter and prose / to make plesaunt dities

And ffortune preferred me / to highe dignytes

In suche aboundance / that combred was my wytt

To render God thankes / that gave me eche wytt

Yt hath not byn knowyn / nor seldeme seen

That any of my yeres / byfore thys day

In to the prevy councell / preferred hath byn

My souerayn lord / in his chamber did me assay

Or yeres thryes nye / my lyfe had past a way

A rare thyng swer / seldome or neuer hard

So yong a man / so highely to be preferred[[194]](#footnote-194)

George’s natural abilities are what gain him admission to the Privy Council at a young age, and these qualities are shared by Wolsey. In both cases, these two men rose quickly thanks to the gifts Fortune and God had given them: in both cases, they fell because they had “clean forgott” God and their duties.[[195]](#footnote-195)

Though Wolsey and George Boleyn share the same general fault, they differ substantially in their acceptance of responsibility for their respective fates. It is crucial to Cavendish’s characterization of Wolsey that the Cardinal does not entirely blame Fortune for his fall from power: instead, he constantly questions whether it was Fate, his errors, or a lack of ability which toppled him. Indeed, the first lines of *Le History* indicate this conflict: “O ffortune / quod he / shold I on the complayn / Or of my necligence that I susteyn this smart?”[[196]](#footnote-196) By contrast, George Boleyn blames not negligence, but Fate and sinfulness on a level far greater than Wolsey’s. This is perhaps understandable, since George was executed for incestuous adultery with the then-queen, his sister Anne. The difference in outcome between these two men is small: they both have gone from extraordinary wealth and power to the impoverished condition of those whose reputations have been ruined. The differing attitudes of Boleyn and Wolsey, however, have a substantial impact on representing their characters: George Boleyn takes little personal responsibility, whereas Wolsey wonders throughout *Le Historye* if it was simply Fortune’s fickleness or his own ‘negligence’ which caused his fall. The juxtaposition of Wolsey’s more mature lamentations and George Boleyn’s more youthful statements sets the Cardinal apart as a intrinsically honorable man who overreached himself and (posthumously) realizes his mistake, rather than a more fundamentally flawed sinner like Boleyn.

Another poem which deals with the contrasts and similarities between Wolsey’s flaws and those of other Henrician courtiers is *Marke alias / Smeton*. This poem in particular deserves attention because unlike *Vycount*, when placed alongside *Le Historye* it presents a more nuanced consideration of Wolsey’s own sinful desires. Mark Smeaton (*c*.1512- 1536) was a court musician executed for his alleged adultery with Anne Boleyn. Despite the obvious differences between the two men, there is a clear connection between Wolsey and Smeaton. Both Wolsey and Smeaton came from humble backgrounds and both men were taken by the king “de stercore” (as Smeaton describes it).[[197]](#footnote-197) Henry elevated both men beyond all expectations, and both were undone by their unbridled desires: in Wolsey’s case, greed (for wealth and power); for Smeaton, lust. While Smeaton’s sin was sexual and the Cardinal’s was not, the moral lesson the minstrel learns is the same as Wolsey’s; a lack of discretion and circumspection on the part of a courtier is a fatal flaw, and overindulgence in the vices of the court leads to disaster:

Loo what it is / fraylle youthe to avaunce

And to sett hyme vppe / in welthy estate.

Or sad discression / had taken hym in gouernaunce

To bridell his lust whiche nowe comes to late.

And thoughe by greate fauor / I lease but my pate.

Yet desrued haue I / cruelly to be martred/

As I ame iuged / to be hanged drawn and quartered.[[198]](#footnote-198)

Cavendish treads lightly around Smeaton’s crimes, as the poem itself only mentions the reasons for Smeaton’s downfall in a vague injunction against lustfulness. Instead, Cavendish has Smeaton focus almost exclusively on the dangers of advancing commoners to the highest reaches of the court.

The final comparative that is essential to consider is between *Le Historye* and *Cromwell / Erle of Essex*. A comparison between Wolsey and his onetime secretary Thomas Cromwell is almost inevitable, particularly as Cavendish would not only have known Cromwell personally, but would have worked with him for several years when Cromwell was Wolsey’s lawyer and, later, secretary: both these men were plucked from obscurity and common birth by Henry to become the first ministers of the realm. Both men possessed an extraordinary talent for identifying the king’s desires and folding the accomplishment of those desires into the mechanisms of bureaucracy. The obvious differences between Cromwell and Wolsey (one a Reformist layman and the other a Roman prelate) are, by this view, rendered moot: the two men’s similarity in handling the capricious Henry was rewarded in an identical manner. Cavendish draws out these common features in the recitation of Cromwell’s advancements early in the poem. As in *Le Historye*, in *Cromwell* Cavendish emphasizes the rapidity of the subject’s promotions and explains to the reader how these offices contributed to Cromwell’s bureaucratic centrality:

I Rayned and Ruled / in highe estymacion

Ffrome office to office / assendyng the degrees

Ffirst in the prevye councell was my foundacion

And cheafe secretory / with all vauntages and ffees

...

The title of vicegerent / I had in my stile.

Gouernor of the prelacye / and of the lawes devyne.

Also master of the Rolles / I was in short while

Thus began my glory / to floryshe and to shyne /

As thoughe ffortune wold / hyr whele to me resigne

Vnto thestate of Baron / she did me than auaunce

And next to an Earle / thus was ffortunes chaunce[[199]](#footnote-199)

The rapid recitation of Cromwell’s promotions mirrors the early structure of *Le Historye* and sets up clear parallels to that poem (and indeed, the *de casibus* organizing principle of all the poems in the collection). However, it is two stanzas later that Cromwell makes a surprising comparison:

To Aman the Agagite / I may be compared

That invented lawes / Goddes people to confound

And for Mardocheus / a Galhowsse he prepared

To hang hyme theron / if he might be found

Whiche he erected fyvetye Cubyttes frome the ground

Wheron Mardocheus to hang / was all his trust

Yet was hyme self hanged on theme furst /[[200]](#footnote-200)

As we have seen in Chapter One, the Book of Esther was previously appropriated by the author of *Godly Queene Hester* as a framework for his anti-Wolsey satire. That Cavendish chose this particular Biblical text is particularly interesting precisely because of this earlier usage. It is speculative to assign motivations to Cavendish, particularly with little evidence to suggest that Cavendish had read or was aware of *Godly Queene Hester*. Nevertheless, it remains a distinct possibility that Cavendish had at least some awareness of *Hester* and wrote this stanza as a redemptive reassigning on behalf of his former master. Regardless of Cavendish’s knowledge of *Hester* this stanza functions as a clear window into the common features of the public conceptions of both Wolsey and Cromwell. Critics of both men drew connections to the same base text over the course of nearly three decades, despite massive social, political, and religious changes.

### Placing the *Visions*

Considering the possibility of Cavendish’s contact with *Godly Queene Hester* raises valuable questions about Cavendish’s source material and place in the sixteenth-century Wolsey canon. Beyond its value as a poetic representation of Wolsey—crucial as it is—the *Metrical Visions* may also provide further proof of the thematic links connecting authors concerned with Wolsey across the sixteenth century. Beyond the connection to *Hester* identified, there may be Skeltonic associations worth exploring. A.S.G. Edwards hypothesizes that “the opening lines of the [*Metrical Visions*] may owe something to the beginning of Skelton’s *Garland of Laurel*.” He identifies a list of similarities which raise the feasibility of a direct connection between Skelton and Cavendish:

There are at least sufficient coincidences between the beginnings of the two works to suggest the possibility [of a direct connection]: both open with an astronomical allusion involving a “retrogradaunt” sign, a solitary narrator musing on fortune’s mutability near an oak tree (or in the case of *Garland*, its stump). In addition, there are occasional Skeltonic echoes in the *Metrical Visions* [Edwards here indicates ll. 379-380, 510-511. 1434-1473], which, together with Cavendish’s known tendency to plagiarize, reinforce such a hypothesis.[[201]](#footnote-201)

Edwards does not consider the Skelton-Cavendish connection further, nor does he mention *Godly Queene Hester*. However, as discussed earlier in Chapter I, Wolsey certainly was aware of Skelton’s poetry as early as 1522: the same year in which Cavendish appears to have joined the Cardinal’s service. As Wolsey’s gentleman-usher, it is eminently feasible that Cavendish would have read Skelton’s texts or perhaps even have met the man himself. It is surprising, however, that a defender of the Cardinal would consciously imitate one of Wolsey’s best-known early detractors. None of the excerpts in which Edwards sees Skelton’s influence appear in *Le Historye*; after the similarities in the *Prologus*, Edwards identifies a short section of the *Norres* poem (about Henry Norris, c.1500-1536, courtier and friend to Henry VIII) in which he sees echoes of *The Doughty Duke of Albany*.[[202]](#footnote-202) The next section comes from *Mark alias / Smeton*. In the final lines of the poem (“Yet deserued haue I / cruelly to be martred. As I ame iuged / to be hanged drawn and quartered.”[[203]](#footnote-203)), Edwards sees a connection with lines 739-741 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*:[[204]](#footnote-204)

Wherefore he suffred payn,

Was headyd, drawen, and quarterd,

And dyed stynkingly marterd.[[205]](#footnote-205)

While there is an obvious similarity in language and subject, a more specific connection here is untenable. Describing the fate of traitors in such language is hardly unique. In addition, Skelton is making reference to the fate of Jean Cardinal Balue (1421-1491), though as John Scattergood observes, Skelton was mistaken: Cardinal Balue was not executed and in fact died a natural death after a long legatine career.[[206]](#footnote-206) It is extremely unlikely that Cavendish would intentionally connect Wolsey to a foreign figure (with all the xenophobic concerns that might raise), particularly a contentious one like Balue. It is much more likely that Cavendish simply used a hyperbolic rewriting of Smeaton’s reported last words (hardly unique in tenor), according to Constantyne: “Masters I pray you all praye for me, for I haue deserued the death”.[[207]](#footnote-207)

Based on the limited textual similarities evident in the *Metrical Visions*,it seems most plausible that Cavendish had access at some point to at least a few of Skelton’s works and, intentionally or not, elements of Skelton’s poems are found scattered throughout the *Metrical Visions*. [[208]](#footnote-208) Furthermore, the use of the Esther narrative in *Cromwell* indicates that while we may not yet be able to point to particular editions or copies of specific texts, it is certain that Cavendish was exposed to anti-Wolsey satirical material from the 1520s. That the Skelton poems that Edwards finds evidenced in the *Metrical Visions* and *Godly Queene Hester* all post-date 1522 (when Cavendish likely entered Wolsey’s service) argues for at least limited contact between the gentleman-usher and these specific texts.

Moving back further in Cavendish’s textual heritage, Edwards has convincingly demonstrated the substantial debt Cavendish owes to Lydgate, and has also pointed out Cavendish’s marked use of *imitatio* in the opening lines of the *Prologus.* As Pincombe explains, the beginning of the pastoral vision “would have been instantly recognizable to any educated reader as an imitation of one of the most famous lines of Western literature: the opening line of the first of the ten eclogues which make up Virgil’s *Bucolics*.”[[209]](#footnote-209) Cavendish’s use of Virgil is not surprising—the *Bucolics* have long been associated with English pastoral poetry—but as Pincombe points out, Cavendish’s engagement with Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* is more interesting. Whereas Lydgate’s Bochas (Boccacio, the fourteenth-century author of *De casibus virorum illustrium*, of which Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* was a translation) only reports the stories of the majority of his subjects, all of Cavendish’s speak directly to the author (and thus, to the reader as well).[[210]](#footnote-210) This innovation was also utilized by William Baldwin in the *Mirror for Magistrates*, and thus became a core feature of Tudor *de casibus* tragedy.[[211]](#footnote-211)

Despite Cavendish’s innovative change in perspective, the *Metrical Visions* otherwise represent something of a *cul de sac*: there is little evidence to suggest they were circulated in manuscript in anything other than an extremely limited fashion, and no evidence has yet been uncovered which suggests there was any attempt to publish these poems in print. Yet this lack of subsequent influence is itself significant. Cavendish’s stated purpose in producing the *Life* was, as we shall see, to defend Wolsey publicly and correct errors and polemical hyperbole. Cavendish was at least open to the possibility of publishing his poems as well (as is referenced in his envoy in the *Metrical Visions*, “Whan thou my boke / commest in to the prease” f.149r, l. 2405): though he had made a conscious decision to remove himself from court life, he was not a recluse and he clearly imagined a public readership for his poetry. However, the *Metrical Visions* contain poems on subjects more politically sensitive than the *Life*’s defense of Wolsey, including strong condemnation of Henry’s marriage to Anne Boleyn (and subsequent marriages as well). With only one extant manuscript copy of the *Metrical Visions*, it seems that Cavendish shelved plans to publish his poetry. In any case, Cavendish would have been releasing these poems into an environment hostile to Wolsey, and may well have felt that the *Life* had a more clearly defined purpose than the *Visions*; furthermore, a hostile (or lackluster) reception to these verses may have limited whatever impact they might have had otherwise. In any case, the *Visions* represent an attempt to alter Wolsey’s image that, for a variety of possible reasons, did not succeed. In contrast, the *Life* was partially successful, enjoying reasonably widespread circulation in manuscript: however, the pro-Wolsey material limited its appeal, and the emergence of more strident anti-Wolsey historiographies in the later sixteenth century demonstrate the public’s embracing of a solidly negative image of the Cardinal.

### *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*

Having finished most of his *Metrical Visions*, Cavendish took a hiatus from the collection to write the *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*. Superficially the two texts are quite distinct: one purports to be an accurate history and the other is a poetic exercise. However, Cavendish explicitly prefaced both with an advertisement to the reader that he was writing to expose truths. He claims in the *Life* that his purpose in writing is to expose the untruths the chroniclers have published; the strength of his text and its chief selling point is that for the final years of Wolsey’s life he was in a unique position to provide eyewitness testimony. In contrast, the available material on Wolsey’s life failed to impress the former gentleman-usher:

Me Semes it Were no Wisdom to creadit every light tale, blazed by the blasphemous mowthes of rude commonalty, for we dayly here how with there blasphemous trompe they spred abrode innvmerable lyes, without ether shame or honestye (which prima facie) sheweth forth a vysage of trwthe, as thowghe it weare a perfet veritie, and matter in deed.[[212]](#footnote-212)

The *Visions*, however, aim at a more abstract truth than the more straightforward correction of historical untruths: they consider how “some are by ffortune / exalted to Riches” and, led by “dame Reason”, Cavendish states that “oonly God above.. [/] Rewlithe thos thynges” (ll. 8, 19, 16). The *Life* and *Visions* both seek to ascertain and disseminate the truth about Wolsey, but approach truth from a historical and a poetic/moral position respectively.

We have discussed how the *Metrical Visions* often are overlooked in favor of the more well-known *Life*, but it is essential to recall that this is a relative comparison: neither text has been subjected to much sustained analysis. Despite Samuel Singer’s initial 1825 edition of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* as taken from the Egerton Manuscript, interest in either text has been sporadic. In the twentieth century, Richard Sylvester and A.S.G. Edwards respectively produced definitive editions and some analysis of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions*. More recently Colin Burrow utilized the *Life* heavily in an essay on early Tudor households which admirably demonstrates both the historical utility and more nebulous literary value of this early biography.[[213]](#footnote-213) As we have seen, Mike Pincombe has discussed the *Metrical Visions* in the framework of mid-Tudor *de casibus* tragedy, providing a strong argument for the necessity of studying Cavendish’s often-overlooked poetry. A recent consideration of the *Life* as a valuable work of literature came from an unlooked-for quarter: the novelist Hilary Mantel wrote an article for *The Guardian* in 2009 in which she stated that Cavendish “leaned out of the text and touched my arm, keen to impart the story of the man whose astonishing career he saw at first-hand”:

What makes it startlingly modern is that events are conveyed through anecdote and dialogue, with turning points and dramatic highlights clicked into place; its language is direct and inventive; and the story it has to tell is fascinating, poignant and full of unexpected twists and turns. While attending on a political genius, the devoted attendant was nourishing a small writing genius within himself.[[214]](#footnote-214)

Though Mantel’s summary might be somewhat anachronistic, the sentiment she expresses is perfectly valid. It is surprising that literature scholars by and large have not recognized the skill and determined effort which produced *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* and the *Metrical Visions*. Sylvester observes that in addition to Cavendish’s adaptation of the ‘fall of princes’ tradition, the gentleman-usher also utilized a powerful chronological ‘telescoping’ to condense the entirety of Wolsey’s life prior to his final year into the first half of the biography.[[215]](#footnote-215) The second half is concerned entirely with the Cardinal’s dramatic fall from power. The resulting distorted arc of Wolsey’s life focuses heavily on the final year, causing the reader to experience vividly a remarkably fast rise to power and a shocking and sudden arrest and death. That this ‘telescoping’ on occasion took liberties in terms of factual information was deemed appropriate by Cavendish, who seemed instead to have felt that in altering a few facts he hyperbolized Wolsey’s energy and abilities, allowing the truth to be known through exaggeration: a position seemingly at odds with Cavendish’s stated aim of providing a documentary representation of Wolsey’s career. That Cavendish deviates from his own acknowledged approach to history is particularly useful for demonstrating the complex relationship between documentary, poetic, and mimetic representations of history during the Tudor period.

The *Life* is eminently valuable to both historians and literary scholars, as it provides a rare window into both early Tudor court life and evolving literary mechanisms. It acts as both historical source and literary achievement, though it rarely has been acknowledged as such. Richard Sylvester’s 1960 article was one of the first to address the lack of scholarly interest in the literary merits of the *Life*, “in the hope that it will stimulate interest in a work that has been, on the whole, either sadly neglected or patronizingly under-estimated by the critics of literary history.”[[216]](#footnote-216) Despite Sylvester’s excellent article and reliable EETS edition of the *Life*, his hopes have gone broadly unfulfilled. The *Life* continues to make sporadic appearances in modern scholarship, though these are generally confined to historians’ considerations of the period or of historiographies like those of Holinshed and Stowe. Stephen Greenblatt unconsciously provides us with an example of the general attitude towards the *Life* when he discussed the construction of the Cardinal’s hat-as-symbol: “*The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, written by Wolsey's gentleman usher, George Cavendish, is a remarkably circumstantial contemporary account of that construction”.[[217]](#footnote-217) While Greenblatt raises the issue of imagistic representations of the Cardinal, he does not address the resulting characterizations of Wolsey. The importance of the *Life* as a historical document cannot be easily overstated: it provides an extremely detailed first-hand account of the day-to-day workings of Henry’s court, as well as eyewitness details and contemporary analysis of some of the most significant English political events from 1522 to 1530. However, it is essential that we do not overlook the fact that Cavendish felt that the story told by the *Life* was so important that he broke off from composing the *Metrical Visions* to write it.

In considering the *Life*, there are a number of stylistic features that impact significantly on Wolsey’s character. One of the most obvious and effective authorial tools used to construct a positive characterization of Wolsey is the truncating of the genuine historical timeline. By making Wolsey appear even more hard-working and efficient than he really was, Cavendish employs a touch of hyperbole: by overstating Wolsey’s skills, Cavendish emphasizes those same abilities. A clear example of this can be found early in the *Life* when Wolsey was serving as royal chaplain to Henry VII. The young chaplain, having impressed the king with his diligence, was sent to conduct some diplomatic business with the Emperor Maximilian I. The following excerpt describes in meticulous detail how Wolsey completed the embassy so quickly that the king thought that Wolsey had not left yet:

And havyng his depeche toke his leave of the kyng at Richemond abought none and so came to london with spede where than the Barge of Graveshend was redy to launche for the bothe with a prosperous tyde and wynd/ without any further abode he entred the barge and so passed forthe/ his happye spede was suche that he arryved at Gravesend within littill more than four howers/ where he taried no lenger than his post horssis ware providyd And travellyng so spedely with post horssys that he came to Dover the next mornyng erely where as the passengers ware redy vnder sayle displayed to sayle to Calice/ In to whiche passenger without any ferther aboode he entred and sayeled for the with them that he arryved at Calice within four howers and havyng there post horsis in a redynes departyd Incontynent makyng such hasty spede that he was that nyght with the Emprour/ who hauyng vnderstandyng of the Commyng of the kynges of Englondes Ambassitor wold in no wyse deferre the tyme but sent incontynent for hyme (his affeccion vnto kyng herry the seventh was suche that he reioysed whan he had an occasion to showe hyme pleasure) The ambassitor hauying opportunyte disclosed the Somme of his ambassett vnto the Emprour/ of whome he desired spedy expedycion/ the whiche was grauntyd So that the next day he was clearely dispeched with all the kynges requestes fully accomplesshed/ at whiche tyme he made no further taryaunce but with post horsis rood incontynent that nyght toward Calice agayn/ conducted thether with suche nomber of horsmen as themprour had appoynted and at the opynyng of the Gattes there where the passengers ware as redy to retourne into Englond as they ware byfore in his avauncyng in so myche that he arryved at Dover by fore ten of cloke before none/ And hauyng post horsis in a redynes came to the Court at Richemond that nyght where he takyng his rest for that tyme vntill the mornyng/ at whiche tyme after he was redy repayred to the kyng at his first commyng owt of his graces bedchamber toward his closett to here masse/[[218]](#footnote-218)

The extraordinary speed with which Wolsey managed to complete his embassy is rendered even more extraordinary by Cavendish’s rather liberal application of chronology and geography. As Sylvester has pointed out, we have no contemporary evidence to support this anecdote. The circumstantial evidence that is available seems to indicate that the embassy probably did take place, but the date is unknown. It is also not clear exactly where Cavendish believed Wolsey to have gone: Busch believes Cavendish is actually referring to an August 1508 envoy to the Bishop of Gurk, though in August 1508 Henry VII was not at Richmond and Maximilian I was in Dordrecht, which was not within a day’s travel of Calais.[[219]](#footnote-219) Despite the likely factual inaccuracies, this anecdote’s presentation was designed to firmly impress upon the reader that Wolsey’s rise to power was due to his extremely hard-working nature and commitment to his royal masters. The language of this excerpt is heavily focused on words dealing with speed and time: “redy” appears four times, as does “tyme”; “redynes” appears twice; “arryved” three times, as does “spede”. These are among the most frequent words used in this anecdote, which denotes a clear stylistic effort to indicate—or enhance—the rapidity with which Wolsey completed his task.

Cavendish chose to reinforce the positive light in which Wolsey’s achievement ought to be seen by his readers by continuing the anecdote to explain Henry VII’s reaction:

Whome whan he sawe chekked hyme for that he was not past on hys Iourney/ Sir quod he if it may stand with your highnes pleasure I haue all redy byn with themprour And dispeched your affayers (I trust) to your graces contentacione/ And with that delyuered vnto the king themprours letters of credence/ The kyng beyng in a great confuse and wonder of his hasty spede/ with redy furnyture of all hys procedynges/ Dissymbled all his Imagynacion and wonder in that matter And demaundyd of hyme whether he encountered with his purseuaunt the whiche he sent vnto hyme (supposyng hyme not to be skantly owt of london) with letters concernyng a very necessary cause neclected in his commyssion and Instruccions/ the whiche the kyng Coueted myche to be sped/ yes forsothe sir/ quod he/ I encornterd hyme yester day by the way/ And hauyng vnderstandyng by your graces letters of your pleasure therin/ haue notwithstandyng byn so bold vppon myn owen discression (perceyveyng that matter to be very necessarye in that behalf) to dispeche the same/ And for as myche as I haue excedyd your graces commyssion I most humbly requyer your gracious remyssion and pardon/ The kyng Reioysyng inwardly not a littill sayd agayn/ we do not oonly pardon you therof by also geve you our pryncely thankes bothe for the procedyng therin and also for your good spedy exployt/[[220]](#footnote-220)

This anecdote can be understood as a trope for Cavendish’s construction of Wolsey as a whole. Cavendish’s Wolsey had only one heroic flaw: he was unable to stop himself from over-reaching, albeit in the service of his master. As this embassy to Maximilian I demonstrated, Wolsey was exceptionally efficient and determined to prove his quality to Henry VII and, in time, to Henry VIII. He did so with “hasty spede”, as Cavendish describes his embassy to the Emperor (being promoted from royal chaplain at the end of Henry VII’s reign to Chancellor and Cardinal less than six years later), though this rapid ascension through the temporal and spiritual ranks was made even more spectacular by Cavendish’s ‘telescoping’ of chronology. By f. 12v (p. 17 in Sylvester’s EETS edition), Wolsey has been born, educated, worked for various aristocrats, joined the royal household of Henry VII (and subsequently Henry VIII), and progressively made royal chaplain, dean of Lincoln, royal almoner, Bishop-elect of Tournai, Bishop of Lincoln, Archbishop of York, Cardinal, and Chancellor. Cavendish is quick to point out that Wolsey’s first three bishoprics (Tournai, Lincoln, and York) were granted so “that he had three bysshoprykes in oon yere gevyn hyme”.[[221]](#footnote-221) Cavendish thus compresses the first (approximately) forty-two years of Wolsey’s life into twelve pages. The chronological manipulation does not end there, however. Anne Boleyn’s entrance into the *Life* comes soon after her arrival at court in 1522, which is rather close to the end of Wolsey’s career. Yet of the 238 pages in the *Life*, Anne first features on 58, leaving 177 to cover approximately the final eight years of Wolsey’s life. Wolsey’s ascent to power was surprising—even unprecedented—but Cavendish’s superficial recitation of the overwhelming majority of Wolsey’s life and the early part of his career forces a sense of speed and urgency upon the reader.

The truncation of the majority of Wolsey’s life and career would proportionately necessitate a similar abridgement of the remainder of the Cardinal’s life, particularly as many of Wolsey’s main diplomatic accomplishments took place in this ‘telescoped’ section. Yet Cavendish reversed his previous policy and instead expanded enormously on the final years of Wolsey’s life. The gentleman-usher provides a staggering amount of detail about Wolsey’s day-to-day life both at court and away. The result of this detail is that the reader is given highly personal access to the falling Cardinal. While ostensibly Cavendish hoped to foster sympathy with that access, this focus is likely for two practical reasons. First, Wolsey’s fall was dramatic because of its completeness and rapidity. As quickly as he accrued power, that process took years: by contrast, in the space of a year Wolsey lost the Chancellorship, was cast in a writ of *praemunire*, and was being taken to the Tower for treason when he died. Cavendish’s first-hand account of the Cardinal’s spectacular fall is the main selling point of the *Life*. The second reason is practical, rather than stylistic. Cavendish’s personal experiences in the Cardinal’s service begin only in 1522, so naturally Cavendish was reliant on other sources for earlier information (chiefly Hall). It is logical that Cavendish would possess the most detail about the later period of Wolsey’s career and, in particular, that he would emphasize the details that no one had published previously.

One of the key features of this heightened intimacy is the detailed descriptions of the public displays of Wolsey’s wealth: expensive clothing, elaborate processions, and expansive building projects. In particular, Cavendish seemed to have enjoyed displaying his mercer heritage by detailing Wolsey’s enormous collection of costly fabrics. One of the earliest examples of Cavendish’s attention to fabrics is brief, but central to the evolving sixteenth-century construction of Wolsey. When Wolsey was appointed cardinal, Pope Leo X sent him the traditional cardinal’s *galero* along with written confirmations of Wolsey’s new status and authority:

Yet by the way of Commyncycacion/ ye shall vnderstand that the Pope sent this hatt as a worthy Ioyell of his honor, dygnytie, and auctorytie the whiche was conveyed hether in a verlettes bugett[[222]](#footnote-222)/ who semyd to all men to be but a person of small estymacion/ Wherof yorke [Wolsey] beyng aduertised of the bassnes of the messanger and of the peoples oppynyon and rumor/ thought it for his honour/ mete/ that so highe a Ioyell shold not be conveyed by so symple a messenger/ Wherfore he caused hyme to be stayed by the way Immedyatly after his arryvall in Englond/ where he was newely furnysshed in all maner of apparell with all kynd of costly sylkes whiche semyd decent for suche a highe ambassitor/ And that don he was encountred vppon blakhethe And there receyved with a great assemble of prelattes and lusty gallaunt gentilmen/ And from thence conducted and conveyed thoroughe london with great tryhumphe/ Than was great and spedy provision and preparacion made in Westminster Abbey for the confirmacion of his highe dignytie/ the whiche was executed by all the bisshopes and Abbottes nyghe or abought london in riche myters And Coopes and other costly ornamentes/ whiche was don in so solompne a wyse as I haue note seen the lyke oonless it had byn at the coronacion of a myghti prynce or kyng///[[223]](#footnote-223)

This anecdote serves to illustrate Cavendish’s attention to detail, particularly in regards to displays of wealth. In addition, it is worth noting how Cavendish ended this particular excerpt: “whiche was don in so solompne a wyse as I haue note seen the lyke oonless it had byn at the coronacion of a myghti prynce or kyng///”.[[224]](#footnote-224) Of course, Cavendish was not yet in Wolsey’s service, so it is not entirely clear how he had observed this event. Little is known about Cavendish’s early life and career, but it is far from certain that he actually attended this event. Nevertheless, he wrote this anecdote as if he had seen it himself; in doing so, he allowed this personal interpretation to lend a veneer of authenticity and authority to the narrative. Perhaps inadvertently he also inspired later writers to adapt this same anecdote to great effect. This story notably appears in both Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicle* (both 1577 and 1587 editions) and John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (1570, 1576, 1583 editions only),[[225]](#footnote-225) but was adapted by both authors to suit their purposes as will be demonstrated later in this dissertation. Foxe provided a version rich with circumstantial and suppositional detail, designed for an anti-Roman polemical purpose:

Not much vnlyke to this, was the receiuyng of the Cardinalles hatte, which when a ruffian had brought vnto him to Westminster, vnder his cloke, he clothed the messenger in riche araye, and sent him backe agayne to Douer, appointyng the Bishop of Canterbury to mete him, and then an other company of Lordes and gentlemen, I wote not howe often, before it came to Westminster, where it was set vppon a cupbourde, and tapers round about it, so that the greatest Duke in the land must make curtesie therunto, and to his emptie seate, he being away.[[226]](#footnote-226)

Holinshed’s version is also critical of Wolsey, but instead keeps the details few and the anecdote brief, underscoring the author’s intended moral lesson (namely, that hubris was Wolsey’s downfall and ought to be avoided):

In the end of Nouember, the Cardinals hat was sent into Englande, which the Gentlemen of Kent receyued, and brought to London, wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king. And on a Sunday in Saint Peters Church at Westminster he receyued the habite, Hat, piller, and other such tokens of a Cardinal. And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides.[[227]](#footnote-227)

By contrast, Cavendish’s version was clearly written from a perspective more favorable to the Cardinal. Cavendish did not attempt to hide Wolsey’s efforts to improve his own image, but instead billed Wolsey’s efforts as in keeping with the expected dignity of his offices.

Cavendish’s focus on Wolsey’s material riches is such that any reader (and thus any subsequent author using the *Life* as a source) would necessarily come away from the text with an overwhelming picture of wealth. As Wolsey’s gentleman-usher, Cavendish would have had an awareness of Wolsey’s estate which was likely unrivalled; by doing so, Cavendish both aggrandized his former master and showed his own lofty place in the Henrician court (or, perhaps more appropriately, in Wolsey’s court). Despite declaring that it “passithe my Capasitie” to describe Wolsey’s possessions, Cavendish made a game attempt: he devotes 97 lines to describing the significant members of Wolsey’s household, the total number of which Cavendish gave as “abought the Somme of fyve hundred parsons”.[[228]](#footnote-228) Having covered Wolsey’s servants, Cavendish goes on to describe in similar depth the displays of wealth to be found on his person and in his house, as well as Wolsey’s diplomatic achievements. He also described a typical day for Wolsey during term time, even detailing the different fabrics he wore and the nosegay he carried:

And after masse he wold retourne in his privye chameber agayn and beyng aduertised of the furnyture of his chambers without with noble men and gentilmen/ with other persons wold issue owt in to theme apparelled all in red in the habytt of a Cardynall whiche was other of fynne skarlett or elles of crymmosyn Satten/ Taffeta Dammaske/ or Caffa/ the best that he could gett for mony/ and vppon hys hed a round pyllion with a nekke of blake velvett set to the same in the Inner side/ he had also a tippett of fynne Sables a bought his nekke/ holdyng in his hand a very fayer Orrynge wherof the mete or substaunce with in was taken owt and fylled vppe agayn with the part of a Sponge wherin was vyneger and other confeccions agaynst the pestylente Ayers to the whiche he most commenly smelt vnto/ passyng among the prease or elles whan he was pesterd with many Sewters/[[229]](#footnote-229)

The purpose of these lengthy descriptions is three-fold. First, by including a wealth of detail which only someone who was extremely close with the Cardinal would know, Cavendish provides a strong impression of intimacy with Wolsey; Cavendish wished to convey the message that clearly he had in fact worked closely with Wolsey, or else he would not have been able to provide such rich details. This point would presumably have made the *Life* more appealing to a courtly audience, which could recognize the veracity of Cavendish’s detail. Second, and by contrast, the display of wealth would have allowed even a comparatively low-born audience to experience vicariously the lifestyle of the most powerful man in the Henrician court after Henry himself: the extreme detail allows the reader a truly distinct picture of Wolsey’s term-time progressions, even down to the color and type of fabric on the inside of Wolsey’s hat. Finally, it permits Cavendish to make his key argument: Wolsey was not over-proud; he was simply a cardinal like any other. Cavendish made so much of Wolsey’s wealth not to demonstrate the Cardinal’s greed, but to show that the wealth and power that Wolsey displayed was essential for diplomatic purposes and was fitting for a cardinal. This attitude is made plain in anecdotes like the following, wherein Wolsey was sent to discuss diplomatic matters with the new Emperor, Charles V:

And for dyuers vrgent causys touchyng the kynges majestie yt was thought good that in so waytie a matter/ And to so noble a prince [Charles V] that the Cardynall was most meate to be sent on so worthy and Ambassett/ wherfore he beyng redy to take vppon hyme the charge therof/ was ffurnysshed in all degrees and purposys most lykest A great prynce whiche was myche to the highe honour of the kynges majestie and of this realme/ ffor first in his procedyng *he was furnysshed lyke a Cardynall of highe estimacion havyng all thyng therto correspondent and agreable*/ his gentilmen beyng in nomber very many clothed in lyuere Coottes of Crymmosyn velvett of the most purest Colour that myght be Invented/ with chaynnes of gold abought ther nekkes/ And all his yomen And other mean officers ware in Cottes of ffyne Skarlett garded with blake velvett an hand brode/.[[230]](#footnote-230) (italics mine)

Cavendish continues on to state that partially as a result of Wolsey’s princely demeanor (and the power demonstrated through the elaborate matching livery of his entourage), the duly impressed new Emperor footed the bill for Wolsey’s entire embassy. Wolsey’s displays of power were therefore understood—by Cavendish, at least—to demonstrate Henry VIII’s own wealth and princely supremacy, since all that Wolsey had derived directly from his monarch. Furthermore, as the italicized portion highlights, Wolsey was only conducting himself in a manner “correspondent and agreeable” with his rank. Foxe provides an alleged example of how Wolsey manipulated his own image and that of his fellow cardinals to create an impressive public spectacle:

The Cardinall of Yorke, sent to the Legate at Callis, read clothe to clothe his seruauntes withall, whiche at their commyng to Callis, were but meanly appareled. When al thinges were ready, Campeius passed the seas and landed at Douer, and so kept forth his iourney towarde London, at euery good towne as they passed, he was receaued with procession, accompanied with all the Lordes and Gentlemen of Kent. And when he came to blacke heath, there met hym the Duke of Norfolke, with a great nomber of Prelates, Knightes & Gentlemen, all rychely appareled, and in the waye he was brought into a rich tent of cloth of golde, where he shifted hym selfe into a Cardinalles robe furred with ermines and so toke his mule riding toward London. Now marke the worthy example of ambition in a Cardinall. This Campeius had viii. mules of his owne, laden with diuers farthelles and other preparation. The Cardinall of Yorke, thynkyng them not sufficient for his estate, the nyght before he came to London, sent hym xii. mules more with empty cofers couered with red, to furnishe his cariage with all. The next daye, these. xx. mules were lead through the citie, as though they had bene laden with treasures, apparaile and other necessaries, to the great admiration of al men, that they shoulde receiue a Legate as it were a God, with such and so great treasure and ryches.[[231]](#footnote-231)

Though modern readers must bear in mind that Foxe and Cavendish were writing from very different positions, it is clear from the accounts written by both authors that Wolsey believed that a proper cardinal must look the part in order to maintain the dignity of the Church, not simply the individual. The resulting (and enduring) image of Wolsey was, then, of a man deeply concerned with image, for good or ill.

As in the example above, there are numerous instances in the *Life* where Cavendish presents a different consideration of an anecdote recited in Foxe or Holinshed. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of this is Wolsey’s death scene. In Foxe Wolsey’s death is laden memorably with ominous portents that are meant to guide the reader to a negative understanding of Wolsey. By contrast, in the *Life* Wolsey’s death is a peaceful affair, with the Cardinal’s lengthy deathbed speech providing an extended commentary on public events for the king’s benefit. Cavendish’s Wolsey makes a ‘good death’ appropriate to a Tudor grandee: he appears largely repentant of his secular lifestyle, as indicated by one of the most enduring Wolsey quotes: “But if I had serued god as dyligently as I haue don the kyng he wold not haue gevyn me ouer in my gray heares/”.[[232]](#footnote-232) The Tudor distinction between religious clergy (normally monastics) and more secular clergy (generally bishops and other administrative figures) is one unfamiliar to modern Chrisitians, but was not unusual in Henrician England. Nevertheless, we are given other indications of Wolsey’s religious feeling; despite his obvious and serious illness, he refused food when he realized it was a fast day:

After he had eaten of a Colas made of a chykken a sponefull or too/ At the last quod he/ wherof was this Colas made/ forsothe sir/ quod I/ of a Chikkyn/ wye/ quod he/ it is fasting day and saynt Androwes Eve/ what thoughe sir quod Doctor Palmes/ ye be excused by reason of your syknes/ yea/ quod he/ what thoughe I wyll eate no more/[[233]](#footnote-233)

This comparatively ascetic action stands in stark contrast to the painstakingly detailed accounts of the rich food and symbols of enormous wealth in which Wolsey normally indulged. Wolsey’s refusal seems uncharacteristic, but Cavendish also writes that after his death, it was discovered that the Cardinal had been secretly wearing a hair shirt:

The body was taken owt of the bed where he lay deade/ who had vppon hyme next his body a shirt of heare besydes his other shirt whiche was of very fynne lynnyn holond clothe/ this shirt of heare was onknowen to all hys seruauntes beyong contynually attendyng vppon hyme in his bedd chamber except to his chapleyn whiche was his gostly father/[[234]](#footnote-234)

Wolsey’s apparent secret asceticism undercuts the substantial previous descriptions of worldly wealth and provides a poignant counterpoint to his reputation for ostentatious wealth. The implication seems clear that Wolsey’s efforts to cultivate a grand self-image were not a result of personal pride, as his detractors alleged. Instead, Cavendish attempts to demonstrate that Wolsey’s grand image was meant to maintain the glory of the king and Church he represented. Wolsey himself suffered under his finery for his own soul’s benefit: that the Cardinal kept this a secret during his lifetime made the revelation of his asceticism far more powerful than if he had advertised his use of a hair shirt.

The cumulative effect of the *Life* is far from obsequiously complimentary, though Cavendish himself specified that he intended the *Life* to act as a defense of his former master. As we have seen, Cavendish’s Wolsey is focused on processions and displays of his tremendous wealth. In this respect, this characterization confirms many details of more generally negative representations of the Cardinal, and even Foxe does not specify Wolsey’s immense wealth to the degree that Cavendish does. The conclusion Cavendish draws from this is difficult to argue against:

Here is thend and ffall of pryde and Arrogauncye of such men exalted by ffortune to honour and highe dygnytes/ ffor I assure you in hys tyme of auctoryte and glory/ he was the haultest man in all his procedynges that than lyved/ hauyng more respect to the worldly honor of hys person/ than he had to his sperytuall profession/ wherein shold be all mekenes, hymylitie, and charitie/ the processe wherof I leave to theme that be learned and seen in the dyvyn lawes///[[235]](#footnote-235)

The general assumption about Cavendish’s motivations has been that he was writing to defend his former master. To an extent, this is true: Cavendish says so himself in the beginning of the *Life*. It may have been that Wolsey, ever the canny public relations-minded prelate, recognized the need for a campaign to promote a positive self-image (even a posthumous one) and helped provide Cavendish with anecdotes about his early life: indeed, it seems likely that Wolsey did so, as the details about his life in Oxford cannot be confirmed by any extant material. As the early Protestant chroniclers utilized particular images of the Cardinal to enhance their anti-Catholic propaganda, so too did Wolsey work with Cavendish to propagandize himself (though Cavendish did not in fact write the *Life* until several decades later). The majority of the *Life* is concerned with Wolsey’s final years, when Cavendish had personal insight into the events being recounted. The second half of the *Life* focuses entirely on the events of 1529-1530. Of course, Cavendish only joined Wolsey’s service in 1520-1522: by that point, Wolsey had already been Lord Chancellor and *legate a latere* for years. By virtue of necessity Cavendish could not rely exclusively on his own experiences; he needed to find sources for information on the majority of Wolsey’s life. In order to fill in the earlier years of Wolsey’s career, Cavendish relied on the Cardinal himself.[[236]](#footnote-236) As many scholars have noted, the earlier portions of the *Life* contain a significant number of historical errors likely to have come from Wolsey himself.[[237]](#footnote-237) It is understandable that Wolsey would not recall events decades past with perfect accuracy (nor was Cavendish likely to remember without omission or distortion the events that Wolsey had told him about twenty years before he wrote the *Life*); however, it is equally probable that Wolsey took this opportunity to promote a particularly favorable self-image. In either case, it is important to contextualize Cavendish’s source material, particularly that which came from the Cardinal during the final months of his life as he fought desperately to regain his lost royal favor.

Mike Pincombe has recently put forward the argument that Cavendish was not motivated purely (or even primarily) by defending his old employer: an argument which would cast Wolsey not as maligned man, but as a prophetic divine. Pincombe argues that Cavendish was writing in response to the conservative rebellions that flared in the spring and summer of 1549 in the West Country, East Anglia, and across the south. These rebellions sprang up in response to the Act of Uniformity passed by Parliament in 1549, which compelled the Anglican church to adopt the authorized Reformed prayer book. As Pincombe writes:

the *Metrical Visions* probably has its origins in Cavendish’s own experience of the period [the 1549 rebellions], which he considered retrospectively as a confirmation of Wolsey’s prophecy that toleration of ‘Lutherans’ would lead to popular insurrection. The next step, according to Wolsey, would be the ‘utter destruction and desolation of this noble realm’.[[238]](#footnote-238)

Citing Cavendish’s proximity to one of the epicenters of the rebellions—Lavenham—Pincombe believes that Cavendish perceived this civil unrest as indicative that the Protectorate’s encouragement of evangelism was both unpopular and immoral. Perhaps in response to this encouragement, Cavendish included Wolsey’s prophecy of ‘destruction’. The prophecy is related in the final pages of the *Life*, where Wolsey is speaking to Sir William Kingston, the Constable of the Tower and the Cardinal’s escort to London:

And sey furthermore that I requyer his grace (in goddes name) that he haue a vigilent eye/ to depresse this newe peruers sekte of the lutarnaunce that it do not encrease within his domynyons thoroughe hys necligence/ in suche a sort as that he shalbe fayne at lengthe to put harnoys vppon hys bake to subdewe them[.][[239]](#footnote-239)

This prophecy is particularly interesting because it demonstrates a clear attempt by Wolsey to manage a legacy. By this point (November 1530), Wolsey was desperately ill at Leicester Abbey and convinced he would die there. He therefore requested that Kingston report his final words back to Henry VIII (“wherfor I pray you with all my hart to haue me most humbly commendyd vnto his Royall majestie”) and gave a lengthy speech—his final words—in which he urged the king to repress the Lutherans and other rebellious factions.[[240]](#footnote-240) With his last words, Wolsey urges Henry VIII to control more strictly “onlawfull Assembles of the comen pepolle”,[[241]](#footnote-241) a policy which Richard Sylvester observes that the historical Wolsey himself was not particularly keen on promoting during his career. It is not obvious why Wolsey would use his final moments of life to urge a crackdown on religious dissent when he could easily have done so during his lengthy ecclesiastic career. The answer appears to be two-fold. Wolsey knew he was dying and may well have indulged in his love for spectacle with a few platitudes while genuinely repenting for his far-from-uncommon secularism. Second, we have to bear in mind that Cavendish was writing these words a quarter of a century after they were allegedly uttered; the likelihood that in 1530 Wolsey said exactly what Cavendish published in 1554 is small. It seems more likely that while Wolsey may have said something similar in tone, Cavendish used this opportunity to inject some pro-Catholic sentiment in the wake of the 1549 rebellions in southern England and the West Country, which peaked with Kett’s Rebellion in Norfolk.[[242]](#footnote-242) Mike Pincombe’s theory that Cavendish was shaken out of his rural seclusion by his shock at the apparent realization of Wolsey’s prophecy therefore seems reasonable, provided we understand that Cavendish almost certainly reworked Wolsey’s half-remembered words so as to have them be more explicitly prophetic about the then-current political situation.

In addition to Wolsey’s warning about the Lutherans, there is another prophecy in the *Life* which is significant for understanding Cavendish’s approach to interpreting source material to make it prophetic in relation to contemporary events. This prophecy is related midway through the *Life*, where Wolsey notices Cavendish admiring an entailed cow on a garden wall:

I sawe there a Dwn Cowe/ wheron I mused most by cause it semed me to be the most lyvelyest creature entaylled among all the rest/ My lord beyng (as I sayd) walkyng on the other side/ of the Garden/ perseyved me/ came sodenly apon me at my bake onwares sayd what haue ye espied here that ye so attentyfely looke vppo/ fforsothe if it please your grace/ quod I/ here I do behold these entaylled Images… among them all I haue most considered the Dwn Cowe/ the which as it semyth me/ the worke man hathe most apertly shewed hys Connyng/ yea marye sir/ quod my lord/ vppon thys dwn Cowe dependyth a certyn prophesy…that whan this Cowe ridyth the bull/ than prest beware thy skull/[[243]](#footnote-243)

Cavendish goes on to explain that the symbols in the prophecy suggest that the dun cow represents Henry VIII, as the dun cow was his heraldic symbol pertaining to his Earldom of Richmond, and the bull represents Anne Boleyn (the bull being part of her father’s heraldic device). He states that the prophecy was popularly known and believed to have been fulfilled when Henry and Anne married, as “Than was thys prophecy thought of all men to be ffulfilled//ffor what a nomber of prestes bothe religious and seculer lost ther heddes for offendyng of suche lawes as was than made to bryng this prophecye to effect”.[[244]](#footnote-244) Cavendish is somewhat oversimplifying the realization of the prophecy, since Wolsey was the only significant churchman to fall into significant disfavor during the early and middle parts of Henry’s reign. Nor did Wolsey lose his head, though execution for treason was a significant possibility had he not died first. Instead, Cavendish hints at a conspiracy within the government—or, at least, an effort made by members of the government—to fulfill this prophecy by enacting laws to persecute churchmen. Based on Cavendish’s well-attested Catholic beliefs, it is clear he is writing about the persecution of conservative churchmen during Edward VI’s reign, not the Marian persecutions contemporaneous with the composition of the *Life*.

These two prophecies support Mike Pincombe’s assertion that Cavendish’s purpose in writing was not limited to defending Wolsey against the mid-century chroniclers. The prophecies both share features that indicate Cavendish relied on them to prove his point: they both predict religious strife resulting from secular misrule, and they both have to be explained by Cavendish, as they do not explicitly describe the contemporary situation. Instead, Cavendish has to tweak his interpretation of these prophecies in order to make them fit. The Dun Cow prophecy is only realized decades after Henry and Anne’s marriage (though clearly the Reformation in England owed much to this union), and does not particularly fit Wolsey, who did not lose his head at all. Wolsey’s prophetic final words describe the horrors Henry will face from the Lutherans and other heretical groups, but Cavendish was writing during the reign of a staunchly Catholic monarch, several years after widespread conservative—not evangelical—rebellions. The appropriateness of Cavendish’s interpretations may not be wholly convincing, but they do reveal that the author was himself convinced.

In addition to considering Cavendish’s motivations in writing his texts, we also must consider his sources. Cavendish himself states that much of the material came from Wolsey, particularly in sections pertaining to Wolsey’s early life. A clear example of this can be found early in the *Life*, where Cavendish is describing Wolsey’s childhood and education:

And beyng but a child was very Apte to learnyng/ by means wherof his parentes or his good ffrendes and maysters conveyed hyme to the vnyuersitie of Oxford/ where he prospered so in learnyng that (As he told me his owen person) he was called the (boye) bacheler for as myche as he was made bacheler of art at fifteen yeres of age/ which was a rare thyng And seldome seen/[[245]](#footnote-245)

Further evidence is easily spotted throughout the *Life* simply by realizing that many of the anecdotes that Cavendish relates could only have been told to him by Wolsey. One of the first examples is when Cavendish describes how Wolsey took revenge on a country knight who had placed the future Cardinal in the stocks. Having been given his first benefice by the Marquess of Dorset, Wolsey apparently managed to offend Sir Amias Paulet (Elizabethan writers suggested by fornication or drunkenness) to such an extent that Paulet ordered Wolsey to be placed in the Limington stocks: [[246]](#footnote-246)

Oon sir Amys Pawlett knyght dwelling in that Contrie there Abought toke an occasion of displeasure Ayenst hyme/ Vppon what ground I knowe not/ But sir by your leave he was so bold to sett the Scole Master [Wolsey] by the feete duryng hys pleasure/ The which was afterward neither forgotten ne forgevyn ffor whan the Scole Master mountyd the dignytie to be Chauncelour of Englond he was not oblivyous of the old displeasure mynystred vnto hyme by Master Pawlett/ but sent for hyme And after many sharpe and heynous wordes enioyned hyme to attend vppon the Councell vntill he ware by them dismyssed/ And not to departe without licence vppon an vrgent payn and forfiture/ So that he contynued within the Middell temple the space of five or six yeres or more/ whos logyng there was in the Gathowsse next the strett/ the whiche he reedefied very sumptiously garnysshyng the same on the owtsyde therof with Cardynalles hattes and Armez bagges And Cognysaunces of the Cardynalles with dyuers other devisis in so gloryous a sort that he thought therby to appese his old onkynd displeasure/[[247]](#footnote-247) (text in brackets mine)

Cavendish’s portrayal of Wolsey is hardly obsequious or rose-tinted. This anecdote establishes an early depiction of Wolsey that most sixteenth-century authors would have admitted was reasonably accurate: it is a picture of a man with a sensitivity to perceived insults, prone to indulgence in vices of the flesh, and liable to bear grudges. As Thomas Campion would later write in Raphael Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, even his supporters recognized his proud nature:

I thinke (sayth [Campion]) some Princes basterd no Butchers sonne, exceeding wise, faire spoken, high minded, full of reuenge, vicious of his body, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so bigge, to those that accepted and sought his friendship wonderfull courteous[.][[248]](#footnote-248)

What makes this anecdote about Sir Amias Paulet so particularly interesting is that we only know about this incident because of Cavendish. At the moment, there are no other known accounts of Wolsey being put in the stocks (for any reason). If the event had actually taken place, it seems strange that Wolsey’s mid- and late-sixteenth-century detractors would not have used it as an example of Wolsey’s pride. Certainly Foxe never missed an opportunity to use Wolsey’s bad behavior (real or imagined) as ammunition against the Papacy.[[249]](#footnote-249) But Foxe, Holinshed, and Hall all fail to mention this story. Bearing in mind that Cavendish used Wolsey as his main source for information on the Cardinal’s early life, the only possible source for this anecdote must have to have been Wolsey himself. By including this anecdote, Cavendish (and by extension, Wolsey) revealed that he was trying to construct a two-part image of the Cardinal. To hide or deny Wolsey’s pride would have been counterproductive and futile, as Wolsey’s investment in his own image (through his person, offices, and real estate) would have nullified any claims in that direction. Instead, Cavendish portrayed a Wolsey who was generous, hard-working, and extremely proud of the role he played in English government, but equally would not suffer any insult to himself or his offices.

In keeping with his self-professed purpose in writing the *Life* (and the *Metrical Visions*), Cavendish also had a didactic purpose in including this anecdote about Wolsey’s vengeance on Sir Amias Paulet:

Nowe may thys be a good example And precedent to men in Auctoritie/ (whiche woll sometyme worke ther wyll without wytt) to remember in ther Auctoritie/ how Auctortye may dekaye/ And whome they punysshe of wyll more than of Iustice may after be Advaunced in the publyke wele to highe dignytes And gouernance/ And they based as lowe/ who wyll than seke the means to be revenged of old wronges susteyned wrongfully byfore… Therfore I wold wysshe All men in Auctorytie and dignytie to knowe and feare god in all ther doynges that Auctorytes be not permanent but may slide And vanyssh as prynces pleasures do Alter and chaynge/[[250]](#footnote-250)

Of course, Wolsey himself would have done well to take this advice while he was in authority. Doubtlessly Cavendish would have argued that the difference between Paulet and Wolsey lay in the exercise of ‘wit’; to Cavendish, Paulet had punished Wolsey out of wilfulness, not a sense of justice. By contrast (according to Cavendish), Wolsey punished men for what he considered to be offences against his offices or against England. This anecdote provides an opportunity for us to see how Cavendish twisted what was a negative story about Wolsey—one entirely in keeping with Wolsey’s reputation for nursing grudges—and attempted to use it to portray Wolsey as unrelenting in his pursuit of justice.

After considering Cavendish’s *Life* and *Metrical Visions*, it seems clear that there is a strong argument to be made for Cavendish’s texts to be given greater attention by early modern historians and literary scholars. Cavendish provides modern scholars with the opportunity to understand better not only the day-to-day realities of life within Wolsey’s household, but also how mid-Tudor biographical practices were evolving; how a non-radicalized Catholic reacted to Marian and Edwardian religious and political reforms; and how an amateur poet constructed multi-layered images and characterizations of Wolsey and other key Tudor political figures. Furthermore, Cavendish’s texts provide a convincing mid-century stepping stone for connecting particular images and themes associated with Wolsey (extravagant clothing, personal attention to image, proud and determined nature) from the early part of the sixteenth century through to the end.

Yet we ought to be careful when attempting to ascertain what impact Cavendish’s *Life* and *Metrical Visions* had on either the public image of Wolsey or on the Wolsey-related literature of the period. Stella Fletcher argues that by the 1550s “a consistent body of anti-Wolsey literature had built up, a corpus which Cavendish countered to such great effect that he single-handedly confounded the image of Wolsey as a convenient all-purpose villain.”[[251]](#footnote-251) Certainly Fletcher is correct in ascertaining Cavendish’s intentions for the *Life*, but she overestimates the impact of this text. The only known autograph manuscript edition is in the Egerton Manuscript held in the British Library (BL 2402), which also contains the only autograph manuscript edition of the *Metrical Visions*. The *Life* appears to have circulated reasonably widely throughout the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth, though most extant copies in the British Library date from the seventeenth century.[[252]](#footnote-252) Though it is clear from these extant manuscript copies that the *Life* circulated in manuscript form, it is overly speculative to claim that Cavendish succeeded in ‘confounding’ the villainous image of the Cardinal; certainly Wolsey’s presence of the *Acts and Monuments* and Holinshed’s *Chronicles* attest to this lack of success. The *Life* did not appear in print until 1641, thus negating any wider impact the *Life* might have had in the Tudor period. The *Metrical Visions* have left a smaller manuscript record, with two manuscript editions surviving in addition to the autograph Egerton manuscript: BL Dugdale 28 and BL Additional 14410. The *Visions* were not printed in the early modern period and so their influence was clearly limited in this respect. A. S. G. Edwards speculates that there is a possibility that the *Mirror for Magistrates* owes something of its style to the *Metrical Visions*; due to the paucity of surviving evidence, it is difficult to make a claim for a direct connection with any degree of certainty.[[253]](#footnote-253) This issue is considerably muddied when we consider that it is not at all clear when many of the poems contained in the extant 1559 edition of the *Mirror* were composed (or the 1587 edition, for that matter). While it is perhaps tempting to speculate that Cavendish and the *Mirror* poets were all writing in a style currently *en vogue* (and perhaps circulating manuscripts between themselves), that hypothesis seems highly unlikely given Cavendish’s purposeful isolation in Suffolk in addition to the religious and political differences between these various poets.

Nevertheless, we can confirm Edwards’ conclusion that the *Visions* (and indeed, the *Life* as well) are highly significant. These two texts testify to the strong presence—even dominance—of anti-Wolsey images in mid-Tudor literature, and provide a counterpoint to those images from an authoritative, first-hand perspective. Furthermore, these texts demonstrate how mid-Tudor writers (and, one assumes, readers) took the *de casibus* narrative structure and used that same topos in a variety of genres with direct application to contemporary (or nearly contemporary) events. These mid-century texts attest to the overwhelmingly negative imagery of the Cardinal dominant throughout the early and mid-Tudor periods, and show how Cavendish attempted to counteract these negative images with an appeal to ‘truth’. Born out of dissatisfaction with the ‘lyes’ of chroniclers like Hall and poets like Skelton, these texts are nevertheless inextricably intertwined with their oppositional precedents; Cavendish drew on them as *aides-mémoires* as well as absorbing poetic influences.[[254]](#footnote-254) Cavendish’s variety of characterizations of the Cardinal (as lamenting sinner, proud prince of Rome, as prophetic anti-Reformist, as bureaucrat *par excellence*) demonstrate a wide range of authorial practices and polemical approaches to recovering the lost reputation of his former master, as well as speaking the ‘truth’ about the Cardinal’s final days, however subjective that truth might have subsequently appeared. Though it is difficult to ascertain exactly what the impact of the *Life* and *Metrical Visions* might have been during the Tudor period, the mere existence and survival of such texts (through Cavendish’s authorial efforts as well as the anonymous transmission of manuscripts) indicate that Wolsey was not wholly conceived of as the mid-Tudor villain posterity has assumed him to be.

## Chapter III

## “The history of a certaine ridiculous spectacle”: Literary Representations of Cardinal Wolsey in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*

The first four English editions of John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* provide an array of anecdotes about and images of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey. Interlaced with authorial condemnation, these episodes were designed to create a particular negative impression (or series of impressions) of the Cardinal. Even the most cursory reading reveals Foxe’s intentions; indeed, not only does Foxe editorialize in the body of the text itself, but he often provides marginalia that make his opinions perfectly clear. While the *Acts and Monuments* is an excellent historical source offering rich and personal detail about the Reformation, it also has a strong mimetic element: a highly significant feature of the *Acts and Monuments* which is occasionally overlooked. It seems a necessary step in any historical consideration of Cardinal Wolsey to examine how Foxe’s Wolsey-character changed over the first four editions of the *Acts and Monuments*: as Thomas Freeman points out (here speaking about Anne Boleyn, though the sentiment is equally applicable to Wolsey), “an accurate appraisal of the veracity of Foxe’s final account… can scarcely be made without understanding the way in which it was constructed.”[[255]](#footnote-255) While we have so far seen a number of representations of Wolsey designed to cast the Cardinal in a particular light (both positive and negative), these characterizations were all based on the man himself: they were designed to either demolish or recover his reputation as a historical figure. Foxe, by contrast, marks the first author in this thesis who was not contemporary with Wolsey: born about 1516/17 and dying in 1587, Foxe was not particularly interested in ruining or rescuing the posthumous reputation of a man from a previous age. Instead, Foxe found in Wolsey an opportunity to advance his Reformist polemical writings, using the Cardinal as a vehicle to transmit negative imagery of the Roman Church. Foxe explicitly states that he uses Wolsey and his alleged sins as a metonym for the Roman Church as a whole:

I thought compendiouslye to expresse the ridiculous and pompous qualities, and demaner of thys foresayd Thomas Wolsey, Cardinall and Legate of Rome, in whom alone, the image and life of all other such like followers and professors of the same church, may be seene and obserued.[[256]](#footnote-256)

Foxe presents an image of Wolsey as a over-proud and clownish hypocrite, far more concerned with increasing his (and the Roman Church’s) temporal wealth and power than appropriately reforming the Church. In weighting his Wolsey anecdotes with such obviously moralistic judgments, Foxe transforms Wolsey from a historical figure—capable of both good and evil—into a vehicle for transmitting anti-Roman sentiment. While Foxe does take other figures as either positive or negative exemplars of the Reformist or Roman Church, Wolsey is unique in that Foxe juxtaposes him through constant repetition and explicit explanatory statements (both in-text and marginal) with the reformers who were just beginning to agitate for any number of religious reforms, whether based on Luther’s teachings or on any of the subsequent luminaries of the Protestant Reformation.

The first four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, published in 1563, 1570, 1576, and 1583, were produced by Foxe himself in conjunction with his printer, John Day.[[257]](#footnote-257) What makes these four editions particularly valuable is that not only do they differ considerably in content, but that Foxe was responsible for those editorial decisions. In these four editions, then, modern scholars are given an opportunity to see how a leading Protestant martyrologist and propagandist manipulated his text in response to social and political changes. Though the evolution of these anti-Wolsey anecdotes shows a concerted effort by Foxe to select stories and images that present opinions geared against Wolsey and his policies (and, more broadly, the Roman Catholic Church), the editing of these anecdotes demonstrates Foxe’s keen awareness of the social climate into which his text was being released. Patrick Collinson agrees that the *Acts and Monuments* was, as he puts it, “a moving target”:

The British Academy Foxe Project […] has taught us what a very unstable entity *Acts and Monuments* was, the 1583 edition conveying a deceptive stability, for just as Cranmer would, according to Diarmaid MacCulloch, have continued to perfect the Prayer Book if Edward VI had lived to a ripe old age, it is perhaps unlikely that the *Book of Martyrs* would have remained the same if Foxe had been given another 20 years to work on it.[[258]](#footnote-258)

The resulting characterizations of Wolsey from this textual manipulation were a key element of Foxe’s propagandist purpose. Of course, editorial manipulation skews any representation of a historical figure; however, Foxe’s clear intention to use his Wolsey-character as anti-Catholic propaganda provides a valuable case-study for examining early English Protestant rhetoric and characterization techniques. This study will therefore consider selected characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey in the *Acts and Monuments* and how they metamorphosed over the first four English editions. To assist in this analysis, Appendix One provides a database of every Wolsey-related anecdote in all four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, to facilitate inter-edition comparisons. It demonstrates in which edition particular anecdotes first appear, and how in subsequent additions Foxe either expanded, contracted, or moved those anecdotes. The Appendix also includes information about number and type of marginal notation (editorial, citation, or descriptive).

When exploring the *Acts and Monuments*, even the most casual readers will note that there is a great deal of repetition. Freeman observes that “[Foxe’s] general editorial principle seems to have been that there were never enough edifying anecdotes”.[[259]](#footnote-259) The anecdotes about Wolsey are no exception in this respect; Foxe often reiterates certain points or arguments, often without any reference to the previous mentions of that same anecdote. As a result of this repetition as well as the sheer volume of material, this study has had to be fairly exclusive in terms of selecting textual examples. The selected episodes present a characterization of Cardinal Wolsey and do not merely mention his name or record a neutral action. There are numerous mentions of Wolsey in passing that do not contribute to either a specific or overall image of the Cardinal; while doubtlessly valuable in many respects, these instances have been set aside in the interests of relevancy. This study will focus exclusively on episodes or anecdotes that contain explicit characterizations or images of Wolsey. These episodes have been selected because they exemplify a range of editorial mechanisms that Foxe employed to form a cohesive public image of the Cardinal: they show how Foxe incorporated material from other authors; how he connected classical and Biblical fables to Wolsey; how he used marginal comments to clarify and emphasize particular points or conclusions for the reader; how he employed direct speech, written accounts, rumor, and popular stories to craft an image of the Cardinal. In addition, the episodes appearing in this study have been selected to show how Foxe manipulated or preserved particular textual elements throughout the four editions as part of an ongoing editorial process to increase the impact of his Wolsey-images. In many cases, Foxe’s anecdotes were taken whole or in part from previous authors (most notably from Hall); examples have also been selected to demonstrate how Foxe consciously changed or wholly absorbed previous materials to craft his images of Wolsey.

### The First Four English Editions: A Brief Overview

The first four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments* feature distinct differences in several significant aspects of their content and layout, influenced by and intended to influence the religious and political concerns of the age. The 1563 edition—the first vernacular edition of the *Acts and Monuments*—was born out of Commentarii rerum in ecclesia gestarum (1554) and Rerum in ecclesia gestarum (1559), which were Latin martyrologies largely concerned with post-Wycliffe English Protestants.[[260]](#footnote-260) Drawing on a substantially expanded number of sources and including a history of the Church since 1000, the 1563 Acts and Monuments represented a much more ambitious undertaking than either Commentarii or Rerum. Thomas Freeman notes that while much of the expansion was due to Foxe’s increased incorporation of elements from works by other authors (like Bale and Flacius), Foxe also began to use archival records and first-hand accounts. In particular, Foxe began to exploit the London episocopal records, beginning with the Marian persecutions and working backwards in time.[[261]](#footnote-261) However, Foxe was pressured by Day to publish the Acts and Monuments as quickly as possible; as a result, Foxe was unable to include as much material on the early reign of Henry VIII (in particular, material from before 1530).

Day’s rush to publish the 1563 *Acts and Monuments* explains, in part, why there are comparatively few anecdotes about Wolsey in the 1563 edition as compared to the later editions: in the 1563 edition there are 21 anecdotes or episodes featuring Wolsey, whereas the 1570 edition has 43, the 1576 edition has 39, and the 1583 has 47.[[262]](#footnote-262) However, Freeman’s assertion that the 1563 edition contains fewer pre-1530 accounts is not strictly reflected in the tabulation of the Wolsey episodes: of the 21 episodes in the 1563 edition, 16 occur after 1525 (leaving only 4 dating before 1525 and a single non-chronological editorial passage).[[263]](#footnote-263) The 1570 edition maintains a similar proportion (indeed, there is an even higher proportion of post-1525 episodes): 34 out of 44 total episodes occur after 1525, leaving 6 pre-1525 episodes and 4 editorial commentaries. The 1576 and 1583 editions follow the same pattern as the 1570 edition, albeit with minor variations and repetitions.

This apparent disproportion does not necessarily contradict Freeman’s findings, however; what these numbers do indicate is that Foxe apparently did not use the London episcopal registers (which would have provided a wealth of material on Wolsey before his fall from power) or conduct his own interviews for his material on Wolsey. Of course, this is an understandable approach in part; certainly there was a limited group of people alive who would have been in a position to observe Wolsey in life and still have been able to be interviewed by Foxe (and Foxe himself was about thirteen or fourteen when Wolsey died and was still living in Lincolnshire in any event). Instead, it seems much more likely that Foxe relied almost completely on accounts previously compiled by writers like Bale and Hall; an examination of Foxe’s marginal citations appears to reflect this editorial approach: nearly all of the citations related to Wolsey throughout the editions (3 in 1563, 10 in 1570, 6 in 1576, and 9 in 1583) reference Hall’s *Chronicle*. Indeed, several of the most powerful anecdotes about Wolsey were taken directly from Hall and either paraphrased or reproduced almost verbatim, with the stories about the 1517 arrival of Campeius in England, Wolsey’s residence in Richmond Manor, and Katherine’s insults against Wolsey chief among them. Regardless, it seems clear that Foxe simply did not have a chance to include all the Wolsey anecdotes in the 1563 edition and so made an effort to reorganize and expand in the subsequent editions. In addition, this approach makes clear that Foxe was almost exclusively focused on the later part of Wolsey’s career, as it provided more relevant grist to Foxe’s polemical mill. Despite Foxe’s apparently hurried approach to the 1563 edition, it is clear that the first edition of the *Acts and Monuments* was produced by an author and editor who was deeply concerned about reader reception beyond mere commercial success or failure, and quickly identified perceived shortcomings with that edition for subsequent editing.

The 1563 edition—which Foxe began working on immediately after publishing *Rerum in ecclesia gestarum* (1559) and subsequently returning to England—was released into a nation far from uniform in its social, political, and religious identity.[[264]](#footnote-264) Elizabeth had only recently gained the throne after the death of her Catholic sister Mary I and it was far from clear which side (if any) England would take in the Reformation. Elizabeth herself, though ostensibly a Protestant, attended Mass in the Chapel Royal and did not immediately clarify her position on the royal supremacy.[[265]](#footnote-265) John Guy has characterized Elizabeth as “a moderate, if secular-minded, reformer who rejected ‘popery’ but kept the crucifix and candles on the altar of the Chapel Royal.”[[266]](#footnote-266) David J. B. Trim has argued that Elizabeth was more firmly Protestant, but her religious policies were hampered by the necessity of maintaining a positive relationship with Philip II of Spain: “In sum, Elizabethan foreign policy aims rarely if ever reflected Habsburg objectives, but rather were meant to avoid being obviously at odds with them.”[[267]](#footnote-267) This religious uncertainty, combined with the political complications caused by Elizabeth’s unwillingness to marry, fueled fears of a return to religious persecutions like that of Mary’s reign, or the resumption of dynastic civil war.

Foxe’s primary concern was the religious question. For him and his fellow Marian exiles, Elizabeth’s rule represented a ray of hope for both a more generalized religious gain and a more individual chance to return to England and live and worship safely while promoting their reformed teachings. The 1559 Parliament must have both encouraged Foxe and his colleagues and reminded them of the precariousness of their situation; it passed bills which in effect enforced a return to Edwardian Protestantism, but only after a first act regarding royal supremacy was scuppered by the Catholics in the House of Lords.[[268]](#footnote-268) Parliament reconvened and was able to push through new Acts of Uniformity and Supremacy, which essentially were attempts to soothe religious tensions by attempting to placate as many of the fragmented Protestant sects as possible without explicitly declaring Catholicism heretical.[[269]](#footnote-269) They were largely successful, though the Act of Supremacy was passed only after several revisions, and the Act of Uniformity passed due in part to the absence of several key Catholics in the House of Lords.[[270]](#footnote-270) Most significantly, the Acts were passed without the support of a single churchman; the bishops were all leftover appointees from Mary’s reign, and represented a truly significant barrier to Protestant politics. Despite the Protestant victory in Parliament, the bishops (along with the temporal Catholic peers in the House of Lords) still wielded considerable power. Foxe—only recently returned from his exile in Germany—would certainly have been cognizant of the precariousness of the Protestant political position.

Over the next few years the overall tensions changed little, though the situation had developed dramatically. The death of Henry II of France meant that the throne of France was now occupied by the short-lived Francis II, who was married to Mary, Queen of Scots. French machinations in Scotland led to a massive Protestant rebellion led in part by John Knox. The Scottish Protestants knew, however, that they could not hope to defeat the French army sent by Philip and Mary. The Protestant rebels therefore applied to England for assistance. Though this would seem like an ideal situation for the English Protestant government, Elizabeth was not pleased. As John Guy has illustrated, Elizabeth was deeply opposed to John Knox’s brand of Protestantism as well as his personal politics:

[Elizabeth] refused to allow Protestant ideology to dictate her policy; indeed she loathed Knox, whose *First Blast of the Trumpet* asserted that ‘nothing can be more manifest’ than God’s denial that ‘a woman should be exalted to reign above men’. Knox’s targets were Mary I and Mary of Guise, but his book appeared in 1558![[271]](#footnote-271)

Elizabeth’s unwillingness to embrace the Scottish Protestant rebellion but her decision to intervene in the 1562 French War of Religion served only to reinforce the editorial difficulties facing Foxe.[[272]](#footnote-272) In the run up to publishing the *Acts and Monuments* and the 1563 Parliament (which subsequently passed the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, further solidifying English Protestantism) Foxe and Day would have felt pressure to be circumspect about how they promoted their particular propagandist narrative. If they appeared to be pushing radical Protestantism, they would find it difficult to avoid governmental censure. Equally importantly, if they were too mild on reform and anti-Catholic propaganda, their influence on the precarious religious situation in England would be negligible.

As a result of these competing political pressures, the 1563 edition tends to present Wolsey’s activities as farces illustrative of both his personal sinfulness and the broader evils of the Roman Church. There is a strong element of humor; certainly it is telling that, as we will see, the first anecdote about the Cardinal in the 1563 edition tells how Wolsey and his legatine counterpart Campeius were embarrassed by a comical (and, for Foxe, metaphorically appropriate) accident. Whether or not the incident actually took place is both not known and is rhetorically irrelevant: Foxe’s jovial but pointed tone makes clear that he was attempting to guide his readers to understand the clownish nature of these Popish prelates.

The *Acts and Monuments*, by and large, is not a particularly humorous text, however, and while all four editions (to a greater or lesser extent) do portray Wolsey as a foolish character, there is a distinct change in tone in the later three editions. The transition from the 1563 treatment of the Wolsey stories as satire-minded humor to the 1570 adoption of a much more serious and condemnatory tone is particularly marked. As we will see below, Foxe alters the titling, marginalia, and the body of the text to adjust the image of Wolsey as a comic character to that of Wolsey as a dangerous representative of a sinful Roman Church. This sharp change in tone has a clear antecedent; the political upheaval of 1568-1570 brought into focus the very real danger of the collapse of Elizabeth’s Protestant reign and the resumption of a Catholic monarch on the throne of England. As King states, “Foxe’s intensification of antipapal animus as the second edition was in press was in keeping with the nationalistic reaction against the more recent Roman Catholic challenge to the Elizabethan religious settlement.”[[273]](#footnote-273) The widespread 1569 Northern Rising (led by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland) and the subsequent Dacre rebellion was a stark reminder that Elizabeth’s throne and English Protestantism was far from stable. The Northern Rising was touched off by the collapse of a plan to marry the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots to Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk (nominally Protestant, but allegedly at least semi-Catholic).[[274]](#footnote-274) Though the marriage plan initially enjoyed some support from within the Privy Council, Elizabeth angrily scuppered the idea and summoned its proponents to court. Though most of the organizers emerged relatively unscathed, the Earls of Northumberland and Westmorland (Thomas Percy and Charles Neville respectively) refused to obey Elizabeth’s summonses and rose up in rebellion.

Though the rebellions were crushed, the concerns of English Protestants were far from allayed. In early 1570 Pope Pius V published a Papal Bull (*Regnans in excelsis*) excommunicating Elizabeth and her supporters. This bull provoked fears that the Spanish would seize the opportunity to amass an army and assist a Catholic rebellion led by Mary from Scotland.[[275]](#footnote-275) To make matters worse, the Ridolfi assassination plot of 1570/71 was unraveling (though it would not be discovered by the Elizabethan government until 1571), implicating Mary, Norfolk, Pius V, and the Spanish in a vast conspiracy to assassinate Elizabeth. The Spanish were a constant worry for the English Protestant reformers; Pauline Croft has argued convincingly that the Spanish and English governments—far from rushing towards war—were desperate to avoid conflict, but it was not a simple process.[[276]](#footnote-276) Philip II had protected Elizabeth from the French and from papal excommunication until as late as 1570. However, the Ridolfi plot and subsequent English privateer raids on Spanish shipping interests cooled relations (though the 1574 Treaty of Bristol would later go some way to reconciling the two governments).[[277]](#footnote-277) The resulting tensions must have raised the hopes of Protestant reformers that further separation from the Catholic powers of Europe was in the offing. In addition, English Catholics were producing powerful propaganda of their own; as Richard Williams has demonstrated, the anti-Catholic bills of the 1560s and resulting persecutions pushed many English Catholics from moderate protest into full-blown resistance.[[278]](#footnote-278) To veterans of the transition from Edwardian Protestantism to the Marian persecutions, the events of 1569-1570 must have made it seem as though the odds of a Protestant England surviving to the end of the century were, if not slim, at least rather nerve-wrackingly long.

For Protestant reformers like Foxe, the prospect of a successful Catholic rebellion and a subsequent return to the Marian persecutions would have been terrifying in the extreme. The 1570 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* expresses that fear by means of a far more combative editorial and authorial tone. The 1569 rebellions and the constant concerns about assassination plots (both foreign and domestic) as well as the increasing levels of resistance propaganda led Foxe to revise the *Acts and Monuments* to combat more actively the heightened Catholic threat. In addition, Foxe used the 1570 edition to encourage further Elizabeth herself—the dedicatee of the work—to effect greater religious reforms; concerned with the progress of reformation, Foxe manipulated his text to reflect that dissatisfaction:

The 1570 version embodies an ambivalent stance according to which Foxe champions England’s independence from the Church of Rome at the same time that he articulates discontent with the progress of ecclesiastical reform within the Church of England. …Foxe hints at criticism of the queen as one who as failed to fulfill expectations that she would not only restore the Edwardian settlement of religion, but also go beyond it by implementing a full set of ecclesiastical reforms.[[279]](#footnote-279)

The changes made to the 1570 edition clearly demonstrate that Foxe and Day not only realized the tremendous impact of the 1563 edition, but that the 1570 edition represented an opportunity to compound that impact on the highest levels of English government.[[280]](#footnote-280) With the advantage of having a powerful patron and significant support in the Privy Council—in the form of William Cecil—the 1570 edition was clearly going to be a success. Of course, Foxe’s and Day’s supposition was correct; the 1570 edition was embraced by the government and distributed broadly throughout England:

It seems likely that William Cecil, the patron of Foxe and Day, took a leading role in crafting a 1570 directive designed to ensure public access to this book. This order of the Privy Council instructed the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and Bishop of London to ensure that parish churches acquire copies of Foxe’s book on the grounds that it was “very profitable to bringing her majesty’s subjects into good opinion, understanding and dear liking of the present government.”[[281]](#footnote-281)

This directive made the *Acts and Monuments* one of the most important and accessible books in England. This mandate supporting the efforts of Foxe and Day encouraged the men to proceed to a third edition, which appeared in 1576.

The 1576 and 1583 editions were composed in a similar key to the 1570 edition; the solidifying of Elizabeth’s reign in response to external pressures (both political and religious) and the concurrent identification of Elizabethan Protestantism with loyal Englishness encouraged Foxe to continue with a stern approach to propaganda. Day, for his part, nominally retired from the project in favor of his son, Richard Day. However, the elder Day maintained a considerable degree of editorial control over the 1576 edition, and between them, the father and son condensed the 1570 text considerably. King cites Lander to confirm that “the 1576 version of the *Book of Martyrs* is the product of a concerted effort to produce a more affordable book.”[[282]](#footnote-282) Despite the 1576 edition being printed on cheaper paper and having undergone extensive abridgment, it does contain considerable paratextual developments: tables of referenced Biblical texts and a redesign of the index being the most significant.[[283]](#footnote-283)

Like the previous two editions, the 1576 edition was not produced purely out of a commercial motive, though certainly the Days’ efforts to produce a cheaper edition reflects a clear attempt to increase readership (and thus increase profits). There were several major events which would doubtlessly have reinforced Foxe’s belief in the need for a re-energized *Acts and Monuments*. First, the 1571 Parliament did not permit revision of the Prayer Book, an action (or lack of action) that angered more radical Protestants. Second, and more worryingly to reformers like Foxe, Elizabeth forbad the 1572 Parliament to consider religious reform at all. Third, in 1572 the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (wherein as many as 30,000 French Huguenots were killed by Catholic mobs throughout France) sparked a renewal in the French Wars of Religion and a subsequent solidifying of anti-Catholic opinion in England. Finally, Elizabeth’s personal ratification of the Anglo-Spanish reconciliatory 1574 Treaty of Bristol and the significant public support for that rapprochement would have renewed concerns about the progress (or lack thereof) of religious reform in England.[[284]](#footnote-284) These particular events, along with the Elizabethan government’s efforts in the second half of the decade to create a pan-European Protestant alliance made clear that there was still a need (at least, a perceived need) for further pro-reform propaganda. Indeed, with a lower price point, the 1576 edition may well have been intended for broader private ownership: a heretofore limited market for the *Acts and Monuments* by reason of its considerable cost to produce (and its correspondingly high price tag).

Whatever the reasons for producing an abridged and lower-quality edition, they apparently were not terribly convincing. The 1583 edition returned to the 1570 pattern; instead of abridging the text, as he had done for the 1576 edition, Foxe expanded: according to King, Foxe added some 300,000 additional words beyond the 3.5 million words in the 1570 edition.[[285]](#footnote-285) However, not all of the passages cut from the 1570 edition reappeared in the 1583 edition, nor did most of Richard Day’s paratextual additions. It is not wholly clear why Foxe did not restore all of the cut passages, nor is it obvious why John Day did not include most of his son’s helpful paratextual additions. What did emerge was a text that, according to Glynn Parry, began to embrace a much more apocalyptic vision of England and English Protestantism.[[286]](#footnote-286) This apocalyptic tone was due, in part, to setbacks to religious reformation. One of the key blows to radical English Protestantism was the 1577 dismissal of the reformist Archbishop of Canterbury, Edmund Grindal:

Foxe’s singular addition to the paratext consists of a set of “Four considerations geven out to Christian Protestantes”…. Printed at the very end of the process of printing the fourth edition, they reflect the defeat suffered by English Puritanism during the years following the suspension from office in 1577 of Edmund Grindal, the reform-minded Archbishop of Canterbury.[[287]](#footnote-287)

Not only did the reformists lose a valuable mouthpiece and patron in Grindal, but there was an even greater blow yet to come. In late 1583, John Whitgift was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury. Whitgift was staunchly conservative and opposed to nonconformity; this appointment clearly upset Foxe, who responded by closing the 1583 edition with an apocalyptic warning against relaxation of reform to the reader:

He [Foxe] closes with a Deuteronomic warning against backsliding, which draws a barbed parallel between the punishment of ancient Israel and the reign of terror during the reign of Mary I. Foxe warns Protestants to renew their commitment to religious reform: “Otherwise if we walke like children of disobedience, God hath his roddes to scourge us.” Penning what appear to be his final words for the *Book of Martyrs*, he closes with a valedictory address to the “gentle reader, that long mayst thou read and much mayst thou profit.”[[288]](#footnote-288)

The final edition for which Foxe was personally responsible, the 1583 version became in many regards the definitive edition for successive generations. It certainly formed the basis for all the early modern post-Foxe editions (Bright’s Abridgement of 1589, 1596-7, 1610, 1613-16, 1631-32, 1641, and 1684). The first four editions of the *Acts and Monuments* thus clearly were created and continually adapted in reaction to domestic and international events, both political and religious. The images of Wolsey, as a vehicle for anti-Roman sentiment similarly metamorphosed over time, as did the means by which Foxe created those images. Over the four editions, Foxe (and Day, of course) continually revised the anecdotes and episodes featuring Wolsey as part of the broader adjustments made to the individual editions.

### A Ridiculous Spectacle

Having considered the historical backdrop and organizing principles behind the *Acts and Monuments*, let us apply these features directly to analysis of the Wolsey anecdotes found in the text. One of the primary textual examples of Foxe’s wilful propagation of anti-Wolsey characterizations appears in all four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*; indeed, it is the first anecdote about Wolsey in the 1563 edition, and forms the first part of the sections devoted to Wolsey in the later three editions. Foxe relates how Wolsey was responsible for a “ridiculous spectacle” in 1517 for the arrival of Cardinal Campeius, sent by Pope Leo X as *legate a latere* to convince Henry VIII to join the other European monarchs on a crusade against the Turks. As Foxe relates the story, Wolsey, having been informed of Campeius’ arrival in Calais, immediately sent a delegation of “Byshops and Doctors, with as much speede as he could, to meete the Legate.”[[289]](#footnote-289) He did so in order to demand that before Campeius would be allowed to enter England the Pope must appoint Wolsey *legate a latere* as well; he argued that a perceived lack of authority or Papal trust would undermine his position as chief churchman in England. Foxe informs his readers that:

Campeius being a man light of beliefe, and suspecting no such matter, gaue credite vnto hys wordes, & sent vnto Rome with such speede, that within xxx. dayes after, the Bull was brought to Callis, wherin they were both equally ioyned in commission.[[290]](#footnote-290)

Having established himself as equal to Campeius (and in doing so having risen to the highest degree of power in the Church below the Pope himself), Wolsey then set about crafting a public spectacle worthy of a cardinal. He ordered various courtiers to ride to Dover: indeed, Foxe tells his readers that “all the Lordes and Gentlemen of Kent” followed Campeius from Dover to Blackheath, where “there mette hym the Duke of Northfolke, with a great number of Prelates, Knightes, and Gentlemen, all richlye apparelled”.[[291]](#footnote-291) Obviously cognizant of the value of such a display of power and wealth, Campeius was provided with a tent made of cloth-of-gold in which he changed into a cardinal’s robe decorated with ermine fur. He then remounted his mule (ostensibly a symbol of Christ-like humility perhaps diminished somewhat by the procession of the ermine-wearing Cardinal) to continue on to London. Wolsey, upon learning that Campeius only had eight mules to carry his belongings, sent a further twelve mules laden with bags filled with garbage, so as to make Campeius’ entry into London seem more spectacular:

The Cardinall of Yorke, thinkyng them not sufficient for hys estate, the nyght before he came to London, sent him xij. mules more, with emptie cofers couered with red, to furnishe hys cariage withall. The next day, these xx. mules were lead through the Citie, as though they had bene loden with treasures, apparell and other necessaryes, to the great admiration of all men, that they should receiue a Legate as it were a God, with such & so great treasure, & riches.[[292]](#footnote-292)

By displaying such an abundance of wealth (albeit an illusory abundance), the Cardinals attempted to provide an overwhelming projection of power. Foxe certainly knew the value of such a display; he explicitly tells his readers how this was evidence of “Ambition and pompe in the Cardinall”, as well as Wolsey and Campeius’ conscious manipulation of their public images: “For so the common people doth alwayes iudge & esteeme, the maiestie of the clergie, by no other thyng then by theyr outward shewes & pompe”.[[293]](#footnote-293) However, as Foxe gleefully explains to his readers, disaster struck the procession with hilarious (and morally appropriate) results:

but in the middest of thys great admiration, there happened a ridiculous spectacle, to the great derision of theyr pride & ambition. For as the Mules passed through Cheapeside, and the people were pressing about them, to beholde and gase (as the maner is) it happened that one of the Mules breaking his coller that he was led in, ran vpon the other Mules, wherby it happened, that they so running together, & theyr girthes being losed, ouerthrewe diuers of theyr burthens, and so there appeared the Cardinalls gaye treasure, not without great laughter and scorne of many, & specially of boyes and gerles, wherof some gathered vp pieces of meate, other some, pieces of bread and rosted egges, some found horse shoes, and olde bootes, with such other baggage: crying out, beholde, here is my Lord Cardinalls treasure. The Muliters being therwithall greatly ashamed, gathered together theyr treasure agayne as well as they could, and went forward.[[294]](#footnote-294)

In this episode, Foxe makes clear that this farcical event was not merely a comic scene of the pompous brought low. Instead, he explains to his readers that this ridiculous show of pride and arrogance (which he believes is typical of the Roman clergy) is an exemplum. Through the use of *evidentia*, Foxe shows how the cardinals were publicly humiliated as a result of their own pompousness. Indeed, the richly-decorated scarlet bags stuffed with garbage act as a metaphor for the clergymen themselves: grandly draped in the scarlet of princes of the Church, the cardinals are puffed full of sin. Foxe notes in the margin that thus we can see “How God dispointeth pride & pompe in men.”[[295]](#footnote-295)

Of course, it is difficult to determine whether or not this event actually occurred: unsurprisingly, Cavendish makes no mention of it; if the event had actually occurred, it seems unlikely that Cavendish would have wanted to repeat such an embarrassing story. Perhaps more tellingly, no reference to the alleged embarrassment appears in the items found in the *Letters and Papers* catalogue. Hall is cited by Foxe as the source of the anecdote, and indeed, the 1548 edition of Hall’s *Chronicle* provides a similar account of the same event: [[296]](#footnote-296)

The night before he came to London, the Cardinall of Yorke, to furnishe the carriages of the Cardinall Campeius, sent to hym twelue mulettes with emptie Cofers couered with redde, whiche twelue Mulettes wer led through London, emongest the Mulettes of Campeius, whiche were but eight and so these .xx. Mulettes passed through the stretes, as though thei had been full of treasures, apparell, and other necessaries. And when thei came into Chepe, one of the Mulettes brake from her keper, and ouerthrewe the Chestes, and ouerturned twoo or three other Mulettes cariages, whiche fell with suche a violence, that diuerse of theim vnlocked, and out of some fell olde Hosen, broken Shoen, and roasted Fleshe, peces of Breade, Egges and muche vile baggage: at whiche sight the Boyes cryed, see, see my Lorde Legates threasure, and so the Muleters wer ashamed, and tooke vp all their stuffe & passed furth.[[297]](#footnote-297)

Hall does not provide information about his source for the story. The story is essentially the same as in the *Acts and Monuments*: there are only small editorial differences (“Lorde Legate” instead of “Lord Cardinall”, and “ouerturned twoo or three other Mulettes cariages” instead of “ran vpon the other Mules”). For both Hall and Foxe the absolute historical accuracy of the story is irrelevant; instead, the construction and dissemination of negative images of the cardinals generated by the anecdote are of primary importance, as Foxe explains in the introduction to this episode:

we haue thought good, because the nomber of the yeares doth also serue, to anexe here in this place a mery spectacle or iest which happened in London, no lesse to be noted, as also to be laughed at, for that thereby the detestable pompe and ambition of the Cardinalles was detected and shewed.[[298]](#footnote-298)

In this excerpt from the 1563 introduction to this anecdote, we can clearly see Foxe’s intentions: the story is included (and constructed) because it does provide a clearly negative image of the cardinals, and Wolsey in particular. It would seem to be for this reason that Foxe includes this anecdote as the first major episode about Wolsey in all four English editions of the *Acts and Monuments*: a simple, comic (“mery”), and eminently memorable scene, it reveals both the foolishness and the sinful pride of Wolsey.

Foxe’s efforts to imbue these anecdotes with moralistic judgments is apparent; however, we can further confirm that he was not interested in portraying an accurate and objective characterization of Cardinal Wolsey by examining contemporary accounts of the same events. It is essential to remember that Foxe’s interpretations of these events are explicit attempts to belittle Wolsey; as a result, they may never have occurred (or may not have occurred as Foxe relates). George Cavendish, Wolsey’s gentleman-usher, relates the same 1516 mission of Campeius—sent by Pope Leo X to encourage Henry VIII to join the other European monarchs on a crusade against the Turks—in his *Life*:

Long was the desier & greatter was the hoppe/ on all sides expectyng the Commyng of the lagacion & Commyssion frome Rome yet at lengthe yt came/ And after the arryvall of the legat Campasious (with thys solompne commyssion) in England/ he beyng sore vexed with the gowtte was constrayned by force therof to make a long Iorney or euer he came to london/ who shold haue byn most solompnly receyved at Blak hethe/ And so with great tryhumphe conveyed to london but his glory was suche/ that he wold in no wyse be entertayned with any suche pompe or vaynglory/ who suddenly came by water in a wyry to his owen howsse... which was furnysshed for hyme with all maner of Stuffe & Implementes of my lordes provysion[.][[299]](#footnote-299)

Cavendish was no less biased than Foxe (indeed, his explicitly stated goal was to defend the Cardinal), which may have influenced his reporting of this (non-)event. Instead of blaming Wolsey for forcing Campeius to wait in Calais for a Papal bull making Wolsey equal to Campeius, Cavendish blames the delay on Campeius’ gout. The embarrassing story of the mules which Foxe relates is not mentioned. Cavendish’s account of the procession to London is markedly different from the elaborate reception Foxe relates in the *Acts and Monuments* as being full of pomp and vanity. Instead, Cavendish explains that Campeius was too humble to accept any show of “vaynglory” and so came quickly to the residence provided for him by Wolsey without any fanfare.

As has been observed, both Cavendish and Foxe were explicitly defending their respective causes and therefore manipulated source material to enhance their own texts. Though this manipulation perhaps creates difficulties in discovering what actually took place, it does make even more clear how both these men consciously manipulated their language to convince their readers. While Cavendish used exhaustive detail to denote legitimacy, Foxe preferred to provide explicit authorial guidance to the reader. In Foxe’s preface to this story, he uses a classical parallel to make even more clear how his readers should understand both the anecdote and the reason for the moralizing of the events recounted thereafter:

For lyke as the Lacedemonians[[300]](#footnote-300) in times past, were accustomed to shewe and demonstrate dronken men vnto their children, to beholde and looke vpon, that through the foulnes of that vice, they might inflame them the more to the studie and desire of sobrietie: euen so it shall not be hurtfull sometimes to set forth the examples which are not honest, that others might therby gather the instructions of better and more vnright liuing. Wherfore thou shalt note here (good reader) in thys historie, with all iudgement, the great difference of life and Christian conuersation, betwene thys church, and the other true humble Martyrs and seruantes of God, whom they haue, and doe yet persecute.[[301]](#footnote-301)

Just as the Lacedemonians made a humiliating spectacle of the flawed members of their society with a pedagogic intent, Foxe purports to highlight the “ridiculous” qualities of the Roman Church in order to demonstrate the necessity for ecclesiastic reform. The severe and ostensibly morally upright Protestants—connected with the near-mythical Lacedemonians in Foxe’s narrative—provide a clear contrast to the ostentatious sinfulness of Wolsey (and by extension, the entire Roman Church).

Foxe’s motivations regarding the propagation of a negative public image of Wolsey are revealed not only by his explicit condemnations in the text itself, but also in the alterations made by Foxe throughout his four editions. In the 1563 edition, Foxe introduces the previous anecdote about Campeius’ arrival in England and the humiliation of the mule incident with the following explanatory title: “The history of a certaine ridiculous spectacle of the Cardinalles pompe, at London in the yeare of our Lorde 1517.”[[302]](#footnote-302) Though it is a rather precise summary of the anecdote—and provides the first clue as to how Foxe wants the story to be interpreted—the title gives no indication of how the anecdote fits within the larger framework of the 1563 *Acts and Monuments*. Indeed, in that edition the story is wholly separated thematically from the surrounding text; the anecdote is preceded by a description of the death of Martin Luther and is followed by a list of Protestants forced to abjure in the reign of Henry VIII). In the later editions, the same story appears at the beginning of a much more substantial section with a broader focus on the evils of Cardinal Wolsey, which the title reflects:

A briefe discourse concerning the storye and lyfe of Thomas Wolsey, late Cardinall of Yorke, by way of digression, wherin is to be seene and noted, the expresse image of the proud vainglorious church of Rome, how farre it differeth from the true church of Christ Iesus.[[303]](#footnote-303)

Instead of merely referring to the arrival of Campeius and the upsetting of the mules’ bags as a “ridiculous spectacle” that exemplified Wolsey’s pompousness, the titling of the section in the later three editions ties in this anecdote with several others: by clumping negative images of Wolsey together, the reader is presented with a more memorable, cohesive, and powerful sense of the Cardinal (as Foxe represents him). In addition to a more structured approach, Foxe also includes more editorial commentary in the later three editions. In the 1563 edition, Foxe introduces this story by offering it as a short comic respite from the weighty historical matters that form the bulk of the text:

ALbeit that it is not greatly pertinente vnto thys hystory, nor gretly requisit in these so waighty matters, to intreaet much of Thomas Wolsey Cardinall of York, notwithstanding it semeth good not to passe ouer this one thing, that through the variety of matter, the tediousnes of the history may be taken away, as also that the thynge it self may be profitable, for example.[[304]](#footnote-304)

The anecdote, as Foxe says, is offered both as an allegory and as an entertaining aside. Though the example Foxe wishes to make of Wolsey and his vices is important, Foxe indicates that this is but one “profitable” example in the myriad events demonstrating the corrupt nature of the Roman Church. However, in the seven intervening years between the 1563 and the 1570 edition, Foxe’s purpose has hardened. He pursues the same goal as in the 1563 edition—that is, to illustrate to his readers the sinfulness of Wolsey and the Roman Church—but does so in a more detailed, urgent, and explicitly didactic manner:

ALthough it be not greatly pertinent vnto thys our historye, nor greatly requisite in these so waightie matters, entreating of Christes holy Martyrs, to discourse much of Thomas Wolsey Cardinall of Yorke: notwithstanding, forsomuch as there be many whiche being caried away with a wronge opinion, and estimation of that false glittering church of Rome, doe thinke that holines to be in it, which in deede is not: to the entent therfore that the vaine pompe & pride of that ambitious church, so farre differing from all pure Christianitie, and godlines, more notoriouslye may appeare to all men, and partlye also to refreshe the reader with some varietie of matter, I thought compendiouslye to expresse the ridiculous and pompous qualities, and demaner of thys foresayd Thomas Wolsey.... Wherfore thou shalt note here (good reader) in thys historie, with all iudgement, the great difference of life and Christian conuersation, betwene thys church, and the other true humble Martyrs and seruantes of God, whom they haue, and doe yet persecute.[[305]](#footnote-305)

Whereas previously Foxe offered this story as a comic and instructive aside from the more serious tales of the early English Reformation (squashed as the anectode is between the death of Luther and the names of English Henrician Protestant martyrs), in the 1570 edition Foxe presents an altogether more serious tone. In this introduction Foxe explains that his anecdotes about Wolsey ought to be taken as metonymic examples of the sinful pride of the image-obsessed Roman Church. Though he retains the initial apology (“ALthough it be not greatly pertinent vnto thys our historye”), the language of the 1570 introduction makes clear that Foxe felt strongly that Wolsey’s actions supported his negative view of the Roman Church. Indeed, the language of the introduction is marked by phrases that indicate how the evil of the Roman Church lies chiefly in its ability to deceive and corrupt: “false glittering church”, “caried away with a wrong opinion”, and “the vaine pompe & pride of that ambitious church…more notoriouslye may appeare to all men”. Thus the reader can clearly see how Foxe carefully selected and constructed images of Wolsey to create this “ridiculous spectacle”.

### “See a butchers dogge”

The *Acts and Monuments* presents several different characterizations of the Cardinal to steer readers towards an overall negative (and politically applicable) image. While Foxe favors anecdotes about Wolsey’s pride that act as metonymic attacks on the Roman Church, he also does make reference to Wolsey’s lower-class ancestry. Sybil M. Jack states that Wolsey “was the son of Robert Wolsey of Ipswich (*d*. 1496), often described as a butcher but evidently also a grazier”.[[306]](#footnote-306) While there is some confusion to Robert Wolsey’s exact occupation (Gwyn agrees with Cameron, Redstone, Pollard, and Ridley that Robert Wolsey may also have been an innkeeper), it is clear that Wolsey certainly was “an honest poore mans Sonne”,[[307]](#footnote-307) as Cavendish characterized him. For some—including Skelton—Wolsey’s rise to the pinnacle of Tudor government represented a deeply-disturbing reversal of the established social structure. The promotion of commoners to high office was nothing new; indeed, Henry VII had made a concerted effort in his government to promote men of ability rather than relying solely on men of good birth.[[308]](#footnote-308) This was far from a standard arrangement, however, and Foxe attempts to demonstrate that concerns about these *homines novi* may have been reasonably widespread at the time:

at this time[[309]](#footnote-309) the Cardinall gaue the kynge the lease of the manor of Hampton Court, and the king againe of his gentle nature licenced him to lie in his manor of Richmonde. And so he lay there certain times, but when the common people & specially such as wer king Henry the vii. seruauntes saw the Cardinall kepe house in the royall manner of Richmonde, which king Henry the vii. so muche esteamed, it was a meruaile to here, howe they grudged sayinge. See a butchers dogge lie in the manner of Richmond. These with many other opprobrious woordes were spoken agaynste the Cardinall, whose pride was so hie, that he regarded nothing, yet was he hated of all men.[[310]](#footnote-310)

The former servants of the austere Henry VII found Wolsey’s ostentatious lifestyle difficult to bear, according to Foxe: he found it a “meruaile” to hear how they often insulted the Cardinal, in particular calling him a ‘butcher’s dog’. Though Foxe made many changes to the 1563 edition, he retained this story virtually unaltered in the 1570, 1576, and the 1583 editions. By including this anecdote, Foxe not only pursues his overall theme on Wolsey—that the Cardinal was an example of the vices of over-proud prelates and was fundamentally unworthy of authority—but he also indicates that this was not an unpopular or unusual view of Wolsey. Foxe emphasizes that it was not he who mocked Wolsey’s common birth, but that it was “the common people” themselves and the former servants of Henry VII in particular who were most shocked at Wolsey’s grandiose decorations and entertainments. Thus Foxe is able to characterize Wolsey as lacking the qualities of either a nobleman (in that his pride was not excusable by his birth) or of a humble common man of God (by virtue of that same unwarranted pride). Neither fish nor fowl, Foxe’s Wolsey possesses only the vices and none of the virtues of both the common people and the nobility.

As with the anecdote about the mules, this episode also appears in Hall’s 1548 *Chronicle*:

And at this tyme, thesaied Cardinall gaue to the kyng, the lease of the Manor of Hampton Court, whiche he had of the lease of the lord of Sainct Ihones, and on whiche he had doen greate coste. Therefore the kyng of his gentle nature, licensed hym to lie in his Manor of Richemond at his pleasure, and so he laie there at certain tymes: but when the common people, and in especiall suche, as had been kyng Henry the seuenthes seruauntes, sawe the Cardinal kepe house in the Manor royal of Richmond, whiche kyng Henry the seuenth, so highly estemed it, was a maruell to here, how thei grudged and saied, see a Bochers dogge lye in the Manor of Richemond: these with many approbrious wordes, were spoken against the Cardinall, whose pride was so high that the nothyng regarded, and yet was he hated [by] moste men.[[311]](#footnote-311)

Both Hall and Foxe end on a particularly striking note: Foxe writes that Wolsey was “hated of all men”, and Hall concludes that Wolsey was “hated [by] moste men”. By ending this anecdote by highlighting how universally unpopular Wolsey was, Hall leaves the reader with the final and simple image of Wolsey as an over-proud and wholly hated man. When Foxe decided to incorporate this entire passage into the *Acts and Monuments*, he did so because Hall’s image of Wolsey clearly fits with Foxe’s own images of the Cardinal. Furthermore, we can see that Foxe made a conscious effort to edit the typographical errors and awkward wording of the Hall passage by replacing “whose pride was so high that the nothyng regarded, and yet was he hated [by] moste men” with the more composed phrase, “whose pride was so hie, that he regarded nothing, yet was he hated of all men.”

### The King’s Great Matter

By carefully composing, selecting, and editing these anecdotes, Foxe gradually constructed and reinforced his image of Wolsey as a man reviled and disdained by both the common people and the nobility. These anecdotes build a characterization of the Cardinal that reaches its peak with Wolsey’s role in Henry VIII’s divorce from Katherine of Aragon. In these excerpts, we see how Foxe draws together numerous threads from previous anecdotes to include in his recounting of the divorce. Foxe would have been greatly remiss to have foregone the opportunity to lambaste Wolsey for the Cardinal’s alleged role in Henry VIII’s divorce of Katherine of Aragon and his subsequent marriage to Anne Boleyn. Foxe clearly felt that this event was a telling one; not only does he provide editorial commentary on the proceedings of the divorce, but he includes substantial portions of the key players’ initial letters and arguments, from before and during the legatine trial convened by Wolsey and Campeius. In particular, Katherine’s response to Henry VIII’s opening argument focuses heavily on blaming Wolsey for his alleged instigation of the divorce: of Katherine’s 371 quoted words in her response, 161 (43% of the total response) are devoted to confronting Wolsey. She accuses him not merely of stirring up the king against her, but also of sins ranging from pride and lechery to instigating pan-European violence:

But of thys trouble I onlye maye thanke you my Lorde Cardinall of Yorke, for because I haue wondered at your hyghe pryde and vaine glorye, and abhorre your volupteous life, and abhominable Lecherye, and little regarde your presumpteous power and tirannye, therefore of malyce you haue kyndeled thys fyre, and sette this matter a broche, and in especiall for the greate malyce that you beare to my Nephewe the Emperoure, whome I perfectlye knowe you hate worse then a Scorpyon, because he woulde not satisfye your ambition, and make you Pope by force, and therefore you haue sayed more then once, that you wold trouble hym and his frendes, and you haue kepte hym true promyse, for of all his warres and vexations, he onlye maye thancke you, and as for me his pore aunt and kinswoman, what trouble you putte me to, by thys newe found doubt, God knoweth, to whome I commit my cause according to the truth.[[312]](#footnote-312)

Even for an age accustomed to hyperbole, this excerpt exhibits very strong language. Accusing Wolsey of “hyghe pryde and vaine glorye” and expressing her disgust for his “volupteous life, and abhominable Lecherye”, Katherine’s words resonate strongly with Foxe’s own editorial condemnations of the Cardinal. Not only does Katherine accuse Wolsey of being the author of her and the king’s troubles, but she explicitly states that the reason for the Cardinal’s malice lies in his political machinations. Because her nephew Charles V, as Holy Roman Emperor, had refused to back Wolsey’s bid to become Pope (an event which Foxe describes elsewhere in all four editions), she argues that Wolsey had arranged the divorce proceedings to “trouble hym [Charles V] and his frends”.

While the final outcome and purpose of this excerpt is clear—to promote and reinforce the same negative image of Wolsey as a sinful and manipulative prelate—and does not rely on a clear sense of authorship, it is important to note that this speech is virtually identical in the 1548 edition of Hall’s *Chronicle*. Indeed, Hall’s version has 370 words to the 371 words in the 1563 Foxe and 372 words in the 1570 Foxe. In addition, Foxe cites Hall in the 1570 editon, stating that “These woordes were spoken in French, and written by Cardinall Campeius Secretary, whiche was present, and afterward by Edward Hall translated into Englishe.”[[313]](#footnote-313) This is confirmed in the 1548 *Chronicle*, in which Hall writes in an aside that “These woordes were spoken in Frenche, and written by Cardinall Campeius secretory, whiche was present, and by me translated as nere as I could.”[[314]](#footnote-314) However, a rather different version of events appears in both editions of Holinshed’s *Chronicle*. While Hall (and thus Foxe as well) agrees that Katherine’s statement covers two topics (first, her love and fidelity regarding Henry VIII; second, her animosity towards Wolsey), Holinshed breaks up Katherine’s response into two parts. First, Holinshed quotes directly from Katherine’s speech regarding her obedience to Henry VIII; then Holinshed writes a summary of the second part of what clearly is the same speech that Hall and Foxe provide in direct speech:

Héere is to be noted, that the quéene in presence of the whole court most gréeuouslie accused the cardinall of vntruth, deceit, wickednesse, & malice, which had sowne dissention betwixt hir and the king hir husband; and therefore openlie protested, that she did vtterlie abhorre, refuse, and forsake such a iudge, as was not onelie a most malicious enimie to hir, but also a manifest aduersarie to all right and iustice, and therewith did she appeale vnto the pope, committing hir whole cause to be iudged of him.[[315]](#footnote-315)

As a result of Holinshed’s paraphrasing Vergil (and not providing a direct reproduction of Katherine’s actual speech) we can definitively trace the influence of Foxe and Hall to yet another anti-Wolsey speech of Katherine’s: this time, in Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII*:

WOLSEY: Be patient yet.

KATHERINE: I will, when you are humble; nay before,

Or God will punish me. I do believe,

Induced by potent circumstances, that

You are mine enemy, and make my challenge

You shall not be my judge. For it is you

Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me –

Which God’s dew quench! Therefore I say again,

I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul

Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more

I hold my most malicious foe, and think not

At all a friend to truth.[[316]](#footnote-316)

Despite a general scholarly acknowledgement that Shakespeare and Fletcher relied heavily on the 1587 Holinshed for the historical basis for *Henry VIII*, a number of thematic elements that appeared in Hall and Foxe—but not in Holinshed’s summary—make their way into *Henry VIII*. [[317]](#footnote-317) In 2.4, Katherine accuses Wolsey of having “blown this coal”, which causes her to “utterly abhor” the Cardinal, who is thus her “most malicious foe”. She also touches on Wolsey’s lack of humility and apparent aversion to truthfulness. Later in the same scene Katherine repeats her earlier insults and adds that “Y’are [Wolsey] meek and humble-mouthed… but your heart / Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride.”[[318]](#footnote-318) This progression of themes (from Wolsey’s pride to fire to the Cardinal’s personal malice) is identical with the thematic arrangement of Katherine’s quoted speech in Foxe (and, by extension, Hall). Stuart Gillespie acknowledges that Shakespeare must have used Foxe and Hall as well as Holinshed (there are numerous instances of Foxe- or Hall-sourced material throughout Shakespeare’s plays); however, Gillespie hypothesizes that Shakespeare used the 1583 or 1597 edition of the *Acts and Monuments* for *2 Henry VI* and *King John*, and suggests that it seems likely that Shakespeare used the 1597 edition for *Henry VIII*.[[319]](#footnote-319) However, Katherine’s impassioned speech in the legatine court does not appear in either the 1583 or the 1597 editions. It therefore seems logical to assume that Shakespeare had access to either the 1563 or 1570 Foxe or the 1548 Hall; the 1570 edition of Foxe seems most likely, as it enjoyed the broadest distribution as part of its governmental support.[[320]](#footnote-320) Regardless of the exact source, Katherine’s speech (or, at least, the speech attributed to Katherine by Hall and Foxe) contained such powerful images complimentary to the images of Wolsey elsewhere in the *Acts and Monuments* that by the end of the sixteenth century those same images had become the dominant public characterizations of the Cardinal. That Shakespeare utilized Foxe over Holinshed demonstrates a conscious selection process for source material and reinforces the argument that Foxe’s representations of Wolsey had a traceable impact on subsequent literature.

There is, however, a difficulty raised by the inclusion of Katherine’s testimony in the legatine court. The Katherine presented by Foxe is a powerful and sympathetic character; it is perhaps difficult to understand why Foxe would have promoted such a positive image of a figure who was, after all, a pro-Rome symbol in England. Clearly there was some conflict regarding the inclusion of this episode: as mentioned previously, it appears in the 1563 and 1570 editions, but is absent in the later editions. Yet there is a plausible reason for Foxe’s initial positive characterization of Katherine: by including a condemnation of Wolsey from such a strong Catholic figure, Foxe underlines Wolsey’s negative qualities even more distinctly. Foxe shows his readers that Wolsey was such a sinful and morally corrupt person that even the staunchly Catholic Katherine saw him as an “enemy of truth”: in this interpretation, Wolsey represented a great danger to the Roman Church because he deceived and abused his own congregation. This episode highlights how Foxe saw Wolsey—or wanted his readers to see him—as an amoral opportunist who was willing to undermine his fellow Catholics in his quest for temporal power.

### The Significant Death

Many of Foxe’s anecdotes about Wolsey contain an element of gleeful and self-righteous humor. However, some are purely condemnatory: one of the more powerful stories about the Cardinal is the allegory-rich tale of the Cardinal’s death in 1530. Wolsey died at Leicester Abbey while en route to London to stand trial for treason, having been arrested by George Talbot (4th Earl of Shrewsbury). Foxe states that Wolsey poisoned himself, though it is unclear (perhaps intentionally so) if Foxe felt that Wolsey killed himself intentionally to avoid execution or if the death was an accident.[[321]](#footnote-321) This ambiguity can be seen in how the 1563 and 1570 editions differ on the interpretation of the events that led to the Cardinal’s death.[[322]](#footnote-322) In the 1563 edition, the manner of Wolsey’s death is only mentioned as an aside in a larger discussion about Stephen Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester. In that aside, Foxe writes that Wolsey poisoned himself:

whether he stonke before he dyed, as Cardinall Wolsey dyd, (who as he had vsed coniuration before, so after he had poysoned hym selfe by the waye,

at his buriall was so heauy that they let him fall did geue suche a sauoure that they coulde not abide him, with such a sodain storme & tempest aboute him, that al the torches wente out and coulde beare no light) or whether he died in dispaire. &c. al this I refere either to theire reportes of whom I hard it, or leaue it to the knoledge of them which knowe it better.[[323]](#footnote-323)

Besides telling his readers that Wolsey had poisoned himself, Foxe also includes disturbing omens and portents that he clearly included to reflect on the life of the Cardinal. Certainly it would have been difficult for his readers not to feel revulsion at the description of a body, unnaturally heavy, that produced terrible smells even before death. Certainly the smell would not have been viewed as a mere symptom of illness. One of the traditional signs of saintliness was a sweet, floral smell emanating from the body, persisting even years after burial; the odor of sanctity is generally thus associated with saints and martyrs, and by contrast, foul smells were associated with hell and the devil.[[324]](#footnote-324) By emphasizing how Wolsey stunk even before his death, Foxe underlines the sinful nature of the Cardinal. The entire event is perceived as being distinctly unholy: because of the smell, Wolsey is buried in haste and at night, without even the benefit of torchlight. Furthermore, Foxe accuses Wolsey of using ‘conjurations’ to heal himself in the past. In accusing Wolsey of having mysteriously cured himself of serious illnesses before, Foxe confirms other accounts that describe the Cardinal as having been ill repeatedly in the final years of his life:

At first Wolsey had been a robustly healthy man, but as he aged he suffered from the stone (perhaps gallstones rather than kidney stones), jaundice, fevers, throat infections, and colic, and latterly from oedema (localized dropsy). His sickness grew worse after his fall, so that he lost his appetite and slept badly. He also suffered several times from the sweat. In the last two or three years of his life, moreover, he underwent several moments of near collapse, though skilled medical attention enabled him to recover from them. Adult onset diabetes seems a possible diagnosis. Even then easily identifiable, it was often linked to loosenesses of the bowels which were commonly termed ‘dysentery’.[[325]](#footnote-325)

Having survived such serious illnesses, Foxe (and others) may well have felt that Wolsey possessed unnatural healing powers. Perhaps conscious of the opportunity to exploit the power of the imagistically significant death, Foxe revisted Wolsey’s death to reinforce Wolsey’s own culpability as part of a substantially expanded account of the death of the Cardinal:

When the Cardinal was thus arrested, the king sent Syr William Kingston, Knight, Captaine of the Garde and Constastle of the Tower of London, with certayne yomen of the Garde, to Sheffeld, to fetch the Cardinal to the Tower. When the Cardinall saw the Captain of the Garde, he was sore astonied and shortly became sicke, for then he perceiued some great trouble toward him,

and for that cause, men sayd that hee willyngly tooke so much quantitie of a strong purgation, that his nature was not able to beare it.[[326]](#footnote-326)

In this account, Foxe clarifies the manner of Wolsey’s death using rumor to claim that the Cardinal took too strong a dose of purgatives: in the 1563 edition, Foxe only says that Wolsey “poysoned hym selfe”. Foxe implies that rumor (“men sayd”) had that Wolsey committed suicide, a mortal sin especially criminal for a prince of the Church. However, Foxe markedly does not indulge himself in speculating about rumor and instead continues his account with a wealth of grotesque and morally-weighted detail:

Also the matter that came from hym was so blacke, that the steining therof, could not be gotten out of hys blanckets by any meanes. But Syr William Kingston comforted hym, and by easie iorneys hee brought him to the Abbey of Leycester, the. xxvij. day of Nouember, where, for very feblenes of nature, caused by purgations and vomities, he dyed the second night folowyng, and in the same Abbey lyeth buryed. It is testified by one, yet beyng a lyue, in whose armes the sayd Cardinall dyed, that his body beyng dead, was blacke as pitch, also was so heauy, that vi. could scarse beare it. Futhermore, it did so stinke aboue the ground, that they were constreyned to hasten the buriall therof in the night season, before it was day. At the which buriall, such a tempest, with such a stinche there arose, that all the torches went out, and so he was throwen into the tombe, and there was layd.[[327]](#footnote-327)

Besides encouraging a quite understandable physical revulsion in his readers towards the Cardinal, Foxe’s version of the death and burial of Wolsey is loaded with symbols and portents of Wolsey’s sinfulness. The ‘black matter’ that stained Wolsey’s sheets is both a medical symptom and divine confirmation of Wolsey’s wickedness. As Thomas Freeman points out, illnesses involving the bowels were often seen as divine retribution; Foxe writes that a William Grimwood (whom Foxe accused of perjuring himself against a Protestant) was struck down by God: “sodenly hys bowelles fel out of hys body, and ymmediatly most miserably hee died: such was the terrible iudgemente of God”.[[328]](#footnote-328) Freeman notes that this was the same uncomfortably imagistic manner of death as the heresiarch Arius, founder of the fourth century Arian heresy condemned at the Council of Nicaea.[[329]](#footnote-329) Certainly these grim images of sudden illness and death fit well with Wolsey’s own death. Foxe emphasizes the grotesque nature of Wolsey’s death by detailing how Wolsey’s body was “black as pitch” and so unnaturally heavy that six men could hardly carry him. Finally, Foxe reiterates how badly Wolsey’s body smelled. Unlike the 1563 edition, however, in the 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions Foxe adds further details; not only does he retain the foul-smelling “tempest” that blew at the burial and snuffed the torches, but he states that the smell of the body was so bad that the burial was forced to take place the night before it was originally scheduled and that the bearers, unable to bear the stench, threw the body ignominiously into the tomb:

Futhermore, it did so **stinke** aboue the ground, that they were constreyned to hasten the buriall therof in the night season, before it was day. At the which buriall, such a tempest, with such a stinche there arose, that all the torches went out, and so he was throwen into the tombe, and there was layd.[[330]](#footnote-330)

It may well be objected that Foxe was simply reporting the details of the Cardinal’s death as they were told to him: however, a comparison of the account of Wolsey’s death with those of other figures reviled by Foxe reveals the martyrologist’s editorial presence in the text. Foxe often imbues his death accounts with particular moral imagery or editorial comments designed to lead his readers to share his moral judgment of the person(s) being discussed. For example, he tells his readers that Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury (1353–1414) died of an appropriately swollen tongue:

Thomas Arundle Archbishop of Canterburye was so stricken in his tongue, that neither he could swalow nor speake, for a certain space before hys death, much like after the example of the rich glotton, and so died vpon the same. And thys was thought of manye to happen vnto hym, for that he so bound the word of the Lord, that it should not be preached in his daies &c.[[331]](#footnote-331)

Foxe directly links the cause of Arundel’s death with his allegedly sinful nature: as Arundel preached falsely, divine retribution made his tongue swell and stopped his preaching. In the 1570, 1576, and 1583 editions, Foxe revises the brief mention of Wolsey’s death in the account of Stephen Gardiner’s death, making clear that Wolsey’s portentous death was in a similar vein to Stephen Gardiner’s and Jacob Latomus’:

But (as I sayd before) of vncertaine thinges I can speake but vncertaynly. Wherfore as touching the maner and order of his [Gardiner’s] death, how rich he dyed, what wordes he spake, what litle repentaunce hee shewed, whether hee dyed with his tounge swolne and out of his mouth, as Archbishop of Caunt. pag. 700. or whether hee stonke before he dyed, as Cardinall Wolsey dyd, read before pag. 1133. or whether he dyed in dispayre as Latomus and others dyd. &c. all this I referre either to their reportes of whom I heard it, or leaue it to the knowledge of them which know it better.[[332]](#footnote-332)

Foxe uses a indirect approach to characterization in this excerpt: he does not actually say that Gardiner died unrepentant, stinking, with a swollen tongue, and in despair. He instead states that he can only speak “vncertaynly” (and, in fact, ignorantly) about these hypothetical details of the bishop’s death. Nevertheless, by providing such specific and graphic details, the reader is left with mental connections between all these images, Bishop Gardiner and the other discredited churchmen in the *Acts and Monuments*. Foxe’s editorial process also confirms his manipulation of the text in order to encourage negative imagery of Gardiner. In the 1563 edition, Foxe includes the following anecdote:

I wyl not here speake of, what hath bene constantly reported to me, of the monstrous makinge and fashion of his feat and toes, the nailes wherof are said not to be like other men, but to croke doune ward & sharp like the clawes of a beast.[[333]](#footnote-333)

This story is related through the same authorial practice as the imagined details of Gardiner’s death; as Freeman observes, “Foxe does not say that this information is true, he merely repeats it by saying that he will not repeat it.”[[334]](#footnote-334) However, the anecdote is absent from the later editions; though we cannot say for certain that Foxe himself felt that the tale was inappropriate, its absence indicates a clear editorial manipulation of these morally-weighted anecdotes about men like Gardiner and Wolsey.

Foxe’s account of the death of Wolsey certainly reflects the author’s attempt to inject moral judgments into perhaps fictitious and clearly allegorical events. As with the story about the humiliation of Wolsey and Campeius with the mules, the account of Wolsey’s death given by Cavendish is substantially different from that given by Foxe. Cavendish provides a wealth of details about the death of the Cardinal, but confirms almost none of the elements Foxe mentions. Instead, Cavendish relates how Wolsey was taken ill while travelling to London; despite his illness, Wolsey would not eat upon realizing that it was a fast day. He confessed his sins and foretold that he would not live long:

Sir/ quod he/ I tary but the wyll & pleasure of god/ to render vnto hyme my symple sowlle in to hys dyvyn handes/ Not yet so sir/ quod master kyngeston/ with the grace of god ye shall lyve & do very well if ye wyll be of good cheare/ Masterkyngeston my desease is suche that I cannot lyve/...And if ye se in me no alteracion/ than is there no remedye (allthoughe I may lyve a day or twayne)/ But deathe whiche is the best remedy of the three//[[335]](#footnote-335)

Wolsey’s deathbed apology and piety is no less a propagandist’s image than that of his black and bloated body being dumped into a grave in the night. Cavendish not only enriches his account with direct speech from the Cardinal, but also arranges that speech to make Wolsey seem a polar opposite to the evil creature Foxe describes. Indeed, one of the most well-known reported statements of Wolsey’s is included by Cavendish to demonstrate both Wolsey’s humility and the diligence with which he pursued the king’s business: “I se the matter ayenst me howe it is framed/ But if I had serued god as dyligently as I haue don the kyng he wold not haue gevyn me ouer in my gray heares/”[[336]](#footnote-336) Wolsey’s final words underscore Cavendish’s image of the Cardinal as a fundamentally good (if somewhat flawed) character who ultimately deserves sympathy, not scorn.

The examination of how Foxe constructed a particular characterization of Thomas Cardinal Wolsey is an essential step towards understanding not only how early English Protestant writers created propagandist literature, but also towards a greater understanding of the period and the people who shaped it. Though this study does not constitute an attempt to examine historical figures and events exlusively out of a historiological impulse, a happy by-product of this investigation is to provide material from which conclusions about those figures and events may be drawn. Whatever the value of historical insights that might be gleaned from examining these characterizations, however, we cannot ignore the value of the *Acts and Monuments* as a rhetorical and polemical work. The anecdotes about Wolsey collected, composed, and edited by Foxe were manipulated for a single propagandist purpose: to demonstrate and reiterate to the reader that Wolsey was a symbol of all the alleged evils of the Roman Church. By highlighting specific incidents (real or rumored) in Wolsey’s life and creating striking, highly visual descriptions of these moments, Foxe demonstrates evidence of a turning point in sixteenth-century representations of Wolsey. Whereas prior authors had attacked or defended Wolsey individually for satirical, personal, or historiographical reasons, Foxe utilized Wolsey as a metonym in a wider religious discussion. Vain, proud, ostentatious, and greedy for temporal power and wealth, Foxe’s Wolsey embodies the pompous and monstrous prelates pictured in the woodcuts of the *Acts and Monuments*: a powerfully memorable image which informed public conceptions of Wolsey for the rest of the sixteenth century and beyond.

## Chapter IV

## ‘Handling This Story Effectualie’: Editorializing Wolsey in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*

In reflecting on the life of Thomas Wolsey, posterity has largely settled in favor of an image of a stereotypically grand prelate of Rome: overly-worldly, over-reaching, pompous, and manipulative. As we have seen, these images came to be stereotypical largely because of the characterizations of Wolsey created by authors like Foxe. However, Foxe’s polemical manipulation of Wolsey’s image was not the only manner in which Elizabethan historiographers characterized Wolsey. Raphael Holinshed’s Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which was published initially in 1577 and extensively revised by Abraham Fleming in 1587, presents a significantly more complex construction of the Cardinal, adapted from previous historiographies. Widely disparate motivations amongst the various editorial and authorial teams meant that the two editions of the Chronicles have often seemed like a patchwork, without a “conception of history writing as selective” and therefore disorganized and self-contradictive.[[337]](#footnote-337) This pejorative interpretation of the Chronicles has forced the relegation of Holinshed to the footnotes of Shakespeare’s works and has, by and large, been the dominant view for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Works like W. G. Boswell-Stone’s Shakspeare’s Holinshed, though extremely valuable for studying Shakespeare, only served to reinforce the view that “we care about Holinshed’s Chronicles because Shakespeare read them.”[[338]](#footnote-338) Only recently has the Chronicles been considered as a seminal work, essential not only to understanding Shakespeare but also to considering much broader themes across diverse disciplines. Annabel Patterson, in her defense of the *Chronicles* has decried the tendency of these earlier scholars, chiefly historians, who have largely seen the *Chronicles* as “useful *only* for literary purposes” (that is, for studying Shakespeare).[[339]](#footnote-339) Though the conflicting nature of Wolsey in the *Chronicles* is essential to understanding how Shakespeare and Fletcher created their own Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, this characterization is more significant than just as a source for that play. It is therefore crucial not to castigate those historians broadly and ignore the features they correctly identified, if in a limited sense, as the literary applications of the *Chronicles*. The characterizations of Wolsey in the *Chronicles* provide a unique opportunity to see how two editors, drawing on diverse sources, utilized different editorial methods to provide negative characterizations of Thomas Wolsey.

All other concerns aside, there is a glaring issue that every Holinshed scholar must confront: who was responsible for the content of the Chronicles? Merely using the name ‘Holinshed’ is contentious: both editions were the products of various editors, authors, assistants, and outside contributors. The question of authorship has rightly been a lively arena for discussion. However, the sheer size of the text makes it very difficult to track down the authors and editors of individual passages, particularly as there are rarely any editorial or stylistic markers which distinguish one contributor from another. To attempt to deconstruct and identify the authors of particular passages is not unimportant and is often, as with Edmund Campion’s contributions, extremely illuminating: however, to do a thorough job would be far outside the scope of this project. In addition, questions about specific authorship are largely mooted because each edition was organized, edited, and produced almost exclusively by either Raphael Holinshed (for the 1577 edition) or Abraham Fleming (for the 1587 edition). Therefore, in the interest of maintaining a wider focus on the composite image of Wolsey created by these editors and contributors, rather than focusing on specific authorial attributions this consideration uses ‘Holinshed’ to acknowledge the man’s editorial role and not necessarily only the writings of the man himself, unless otherwise noted. When considering the 1587 edition, the significant additions and revisions produced by Abraham Fleming demand that we recognize the 1587 edition as a product not of Raphael Holinshed but instead as the result of the efforts of an entirely new editorial team, which was overseen by Abraham Fleming. For this reason, we will consider the 1587 edition to be a product of Fleming. This will not apply to passages explicitly cited as deriving from named authors or sources.

This concern about editorial authority raises a further complication. Speaking about ‘the Chronicles’ as though they were a single text is misleading and, as this chapter will demonstrate, is fundamentally flawed. These two editions are distinct from one another, though certainly they are closely related, and to gloss over the differences between these two texts hobbles more specific textual analysis. Annabel Patterson argues that the problems associated with conglomerating these two separate editions are, in fact, a strength: she has listed this multivocality as one of her four posited ‘guiding principles’ in the *Chronicles*:

Given the nature of post-Reformation experience, which set Protestants and Catholics against each other in changing patterns of domination and repression, a national history should not and could not be univocal, but must shoulder the responsibility of representing diversity of opinion. Wherever possible, moreover, diversity should be expressed as multivocality, which the *Chronicles* recording verbatim what they found in earlier historians or contemporary witnesses. A corollary of this principle was that although the individual chroniclers might hold and express strong opinions of their own, especially on religion, the effect of the work *as a whole* would be of incoherence, here used as a positive term.[[340]](#footnote-340) (Italics Patterson’s)

This characterization of the *Chronicles* as ‘incoheren[t]’ provides an excellent opportunity to summarize how the Wolsey episodes demonstrate the difficulties with discussing the *Chronicles* as a whole. In one respect, Patterson’s characterization of the *Chronicles* is accurate. If we consider both editions together as a larger work, they are ‘incoheren[t]’: the 1577 and 1587 edition are distinct texts, with different authors, editors, and approaches to historiography, and Patterson’s argument (which focuses primarily on broader socio-political themes) acknowledges and celebrates this. For analysis of a specific figure, this approach is limited to a collective demonstration that the Wolsey episodes in both texts adapted and reinforced previously-available negative imagery of the Cardinal (though editorial interpretation and commentary makes Patterson’s use of ‘*verbatim*’ contentious). For our purposes, it is therefore most useful not to think of the *Chronicles* collectively, but rather to consider both editions separately and demonstrate the differences between their editorial practices: the 1577 edition systematically undercuts positive anecdotes with negative ones, and the 1587 edition steers the reader through editorial interjections. These distinct mechanisms typify the significant differences in editorial approaches taken by Holinshed and Fleming, and further complicate any reference to the *Chronicles* as a single text.

When approaching texts as massive as the Chronicles, particularly when the issues surrounding authorship and editorial responsibility are taken into consideration, it is essential to isolate key elements of the text for examination. However, even restricting one’s attention to the anecdotes featuring Wolsey to the exclusion of all others leaves just under a hundred unique episodes in each edition. This discussion therefore focuses on episodes which most clearly demonstrate one or more of several key features. Episodes featuring guiding paratextual elements and, in particular, those which contain editorial marginalia have been selected as broadly representative of a particular author’s attempt to steer the reader’s understanding of a passage. Equally, episodes that contain clear editorialization of an event (as compared with the same event in Foxe, Cavendish, or Hall) have also been considered. In addition, episodes that differ significantly from the source text or account from which they were taken have been analyzed based on the assumption that if Holinshed (or one of his colleagues), having read a passage by an earlier writer, had decided to alter that anecdote, that must indicate a conscious attempt to manipulate the effect of that section. Finally, for the purposes of comparison, episodes that present a clear image of Wolsey which is thematically linked to editorialized portions of the text, but do not themselves contain overtly editorialized elements, have been examined to reveal more subtle means of image-crafting. Episodes from the 1577 edition are analyzed first, followed by episodes from the 1587 edition, to facilitate comparison and draw out editorial techniques.

In order to reveal these four key elements (paratext, editorialization, adaptation, imagery), this study includes an annotated tabulation of every anecdote or marginal comment referencing Cardinal Wolsey in both editions of the Chronicles (see Appendix Two). By assigning numerical tags to each reference and measuring the physical properties of the same, the reader can more easily see what each passage contains, how large it was, how heavily annotated it was, and how it changed (if indeed it did change) from the 1577 to the 1587 edition. In addition, this table will work in conjunction with the other tables provided in Appendix Two so that readers may more easily compare the differences in recording the same events within the corpus of chronicles in this dissertation.

### The 1577 Edition: Holinshed and Wolsey

The 1577 edition of the Chronicles, produced at the very end of Holinshed’s life, was initially supposed to form only a section of a much larger and more ambitious project—the Polychronicon—to create a chronicle for the entire world. Conceived of as a universal cosmography by Reyner Wolfe (d. in or before 1574), king’s printer during Edward VI’s reign, the Polychronicon never managed to get beyond the research phase after Wolfe’s death (though the groundwork was utilized extensively by later chroniclers, John Stow being foremost among them).[[341]](#footnote-341) The one exception to this general lack of completion was the history of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which had been given to Wolfe’s assistant, Raphael Holinshed (c.1525-1580?). Little is known about Holinshed, who likely was a Cambridge graduate and may have been a Protestant minister in Edward VI’s reign, who left (or was removed from) his ecclesiastic career when Mary acceded to the throne.[[342]](#footnote-342) The textual evidence he bequeathed to posterity suggests he was a moderate Protestant; his Chronicles contains far less of the fiery Protestant polemic of his more radical contemporaries, of whom Foxe was most prominent. He was supported by two chief assistants, William Harrison (1535-1593) and Richard Stanyhurst (1547-1618). Harrison was a radical Church of England ecclesiastic who, much like Holinshed, generally endeavored to keep his religious feelings out of the *Chronicles* despite his religious affiliation.[[343]](#footnote-343) Stanyhurst (also Stanihurst) by contrast was an outspoken Catholic and the protégé of Edmund Campion, from whose *History of Ireland* significant material was drawn.[[344]](#footnote-344) Though all three men did attempt to keep the *Chronicles* as a non-polemical history, elements of their religious feelings did impact on the project, as is evidenced in many of the Wolsey anecdotes. Nevertheless, in many ways the 1577 edition acts as a secular history, particularly when paired with John Foxe’s ecclesiastic history, the *Acts and Monuments*. Holinshed and his assistants therefore needed to minimize their own authorial hand in the text as a result of their personal religious beliefs. In many ways the various spiritual and political positions held by these men aligned when preparing the sections on Wolsey in the 1577 edition; the Protestants Holinshed and Harrison could write negatively about Wolsey because he was a Catholic, and the Catholic Stanyhurst could do the same because Wolsey had failed to head off the chain of events which led to the split with Rome, had attempted to obtain Henry VIII’s divorce, and had ordered the suppression of monasteries.

As mentioned above, to highlight some of the trends in the characterization of Wolsey, particular anecdotes have been selected to act as case studies because they exemplify particularly relevant facets of the Chronicles and its characterization of Wolsey. In addition, we will examine how in the text the reader is presented with two general themes concerning Wolsey’s pride: first, that Wolsey himself was flawed and unworthy to be a prince of the Church or high-ranking statesman; second, that Wolsey, being in a position of spiritual and secular authority, served as a bad example to lesser men and actively prevented good men from doing their work. The first theme, that of the personal problems associated with Wolsey’s less-than-laudable character, is laid out clearly throughout the 1577 edition and forms the backbone of this particular representation of Wolsey. The first explicitly editorialized anecdote in which Wolsey appears details how the Cardinal, having received his appointment as Lord Chancellor, began to make enemies:

At the ende of this Parliament, Doctor Warham Archbishop of Canterburie, and as then lord Chauncellour, perceyuing howe the new Lorde Cardinall medled further in his office of Chauncellourship than he could well suffer, except hee should aduenture the kings displeasure, for thys and for other considerations gaue vp his office of Chauncellor into the kings handes, and deliuered to him the great seale, which incontinently was deliuered by the king vnto the Lorde Cardinall, and so was he made Lorde Chauncellor. He was no sooner in that office, but hee directed forth Commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his doings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him, which caused him to be greatly mislyked of many, and the more, for that his base byrth was knowne of all men, so that the nobilitie (as reason was) disdeyned to be at his correction.[[345]](#footnote-345)

Even before he gained his first major secular office, Wolsey is represented as having “medled” in his predecessor’s affairs, and from the moment he gained that office, as being “more loftie and presumptious” than Warham, negative qualities which made him broadly unpopular. These pejorative terms set the tone for how Wolsey is portrayed throughout the 1577 edition: he is consistently referred to in this manner, and is particularly linked with pomposity. References to Wolsey’s pride are included even in relatively innocuous or brief passages:

When al things were concluded, the king and the Ambassadors coude to the cathedrall Church of S. Paule in London from Durham place, where the Cardinal of England sang the Masse in moste pompous maner: and after that Masse was ended, Doctor Pace the kings Secretarye, made an eloquent Oration in praise of peace: and that done, the king and his nobles and the Ambassadors went to the Bishops Palace, and ther dined, and after dinner, the king roade againe to Durham place.[[346]](#footnote-346)

This passage particularly highlights the facility with which the 1577 authors label Wolsey as “pompous”: it is a simple, relatively straightforward passage describing a series of events which, plainly speaking, do not have much to do with Wolsey. Despite his lack of general importance to the anecdote, Wolsey is only one of two figures in the anecdote whose actions are given any sort of adjectival adjustment: the other, Richard Pace, is praised for his “eloquent Oration”. It is therefore likely that the reference to Wolsey’s being “pompous” is not exclusively meant to indicate Wolsey’s sinful pride, but rather to indicate the grandeur of the event.[[347]](#footnote-347)

Much like Foxe, the 1577 Chronicles makes much of Wolsey’s pride and it would be tempting to claim that the two chronicles are closely similar. Though certainly similarities do exist, there is a particularly striking difference in how the two chronicles interpret Wolsey’s character. Foxe holds up Wolsey as an exemplar of a prelate of Rome: over-proud and over-promoted, he is made into a metonym for the Roman Church and embodies all the perceived evils of that organization. The Holinshed authors take a different approach and instead describes Wolsey’s pride as a personal vice, made all the more grievous by his ostensible responsibility to be pious. Indeed, Holinshed implies that Wolsey not only saw himself as of higher status than the secular nobility, but also superior to his fellow churchmen: “And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides.”[[348]](#footnote-348) Here Holinshed uses irony to demonstrate how Wolsey was over-focused on accruing honors and dignities: having just received his cardinal’s hat, Wolsey now is a “perfit” cardinal and grants himself license to behave inappropriately and above his station. The implication is that Wolsey, who so clearly believes in the potency of the symbolic power of the hat (as we shall see), does not understand that the values the hat really represents (i.e., piety and service in the Church) are absent from his character; to this Wolsey, the hat makes the cardinal. Indeed, Holinshed does something rather different in this passage than the equivalent passage in Foxe: instead of using scenes like these to portray Wolsey as representative of all cardinals (and Roman churchmen), Holinshed uses irony to underscore how this over-proud Wolsey had not only misunderstood the purpose of the prelatic symbols, but that in doing so he had demonstrated his unfitness for that office. This distinction is made more clear when the rest of the ostensibly more objective passage preceding this one is taken into account:

In the end of Nouember, the Cardinals hat was sent into Englande, which the Gentlemen of Kent receyued, and brought to London*, wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king*. And on a Sunday in Saint Peters Church at Westminster he receyued the habite, Hat, piller, & other such tokens of a Cardinal. *And now that he was thus a perfite Cardinall he looked aboue all estates, whiche purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides*.[[349]](#footnote-349) (Italics added for emphasis)

By adding interjections like “wyth such tryumph as though the greatest Prince in Europe had bene come to visit the king”, the 1577 Chronicles portray Wolsey as a man more concerned with self-gratifying symbols than the positive qualities which the symbol ought to represent: a concern which earned him general unpopularity.

This concern with symbols is a theme which is common throughout Wolsey’s character in the 1577 edition. Two particular episodes are constructed to demonstrate the problem with such a misalignment of priorities. The first states how Wolsey was so proud that he forced the highest peers in the realm to serve him when he sang Mass:

The Cardinall himselfe grew so into such exceeding pryde, that hee thought himselfe e[qu]all with the King, and when he sayde Masse (which he did oftner to shew his pompe, rather than for any deuotion) he made Dukes and Erles to serue him of wine, with a say taken, and to hold to him the Bason at the La[v]atorie.[[350]](#footnote-350)

Opprobrious phrases like “exceeding pryde” and “thought himselfe e[qu]all with the King” here work in conjunction with the parenthetical statement informing the reader that Wolsey said Mass often not out of piety, but pride. Holinshed also further emphasizes the exceptional level of pride Wolsey displayed with a succinct marginal comment: “The excess[ive] pride of the Cardinal.”[[351]](#footnote-351) Of course, there is no evidence provided that Wolsey did actually think himself on an equal footing with the King, and the author supports his conjecture with the observable fact of the nobility of England serving him at mass. This scene, that of a pompous cardinal “gr[o]w[ing]” into such a proud state that he compelled dukes and earls to serve him in his office, is both simple and striking. It meshes with the author’s earlier statement that Wolsey’s own exploitation of these displays bought him enmity. Holinshed follows this episode with another that underlines Wolsey’s obsessive concern with image; in this example, we can see how Wolsey not only publicly promoted a grandiose image of himself through belittling others, but he also did so in private correspondence, even at the highest levels of the English Church:

It fortuned that the Archbishop of Canterburie wrote a letter to the Cardinal, an[d] after that he had receyued his power lega[t]tine, the whiche letter after his olde familiar maner, he subscribed thus: Your brother William of Canterburie. With which subscription, bycause the Archbishop wrote him brother, he was so much offended, as though the Archbishop had done him great iniurie, that he could not temper his mood, but in high displeasure sayde, that he would so worke within a while, that he should well vnderstand howe he was his superior, and not his brother.

When the Archbishop (beeing a sober wise man) hearde of the Messenger that bare the letter how the Cardinall tooke it not well, but so as it might seeme there was a great fault in the letter, and reported the tale as one that mislyked the Cardinals presumption herein: peace (sayde the Archbishop) knowest thou not howe the man is become madde with too muche ioy. And thus the Cardinall forgetting to hold the right path of true la[u]de and prayse, sought to be feared rather than beloued of all good men.[[352]](#footnote-352)

This parable of the dangers of pride is all the more effective in that it does not succumb to the lure of polemical invective, as Foxe often does. This is not an attack upon the Roman Church, nor even on the Church’s prelates. It is essential to note that it is only Wolsey who is being castigated, whereas Archbishop Warham (who was Wolsey’s superior and the pre-eminent ecclesiastic in England prior to the Cardinal’s being appointed legate a latere) is described by way of contrast as “beeing a sober wise man”. By highlighting the differences between these two most senior churchmen, Holinshed emphasizes how Wolsey had “forgott[en] to hold the right path of true [laude] and prayse”. In characterizing Wolsey as having lost this ‘right path’ and Warham as having remained true to it, Holinshed makes clear the distinction between Wolsey and a more positive example of a high-level ecclesiastic. The chief danger associated with Wolsey’s pride, as Holinshed has represented it, was not an issue specifically or exclusively associated with the Roman Church. Wolsey’s was an individual flaw, not an institutional one. The final sentence of the passage underscores Wolsey’s amorality by virtue of a topical literary association: Holinshed here is referencing Niccolo Machiavelli’s 1514 The Prince, which advised its readers to understand that a ruler should seek to be loved and feared.[[353]](#footnote-353) Machiavelli advises that if both were not possible, the ruler should cause his subjects to fear rather than love him. Machiavelli’s reputation in the sixteenth century was not positive, to say the least: Reginald Cardinal Pole, one of his earliest English detractors, associated Machiavelli with the devil, and Machiavelli was often accused of being an atheist.[[354]](#footnote-354) By making reference to The Prince in such a manner as to imply Wolsey’s conscious adoption of Machiavellian politics, Holinshed accuses Wolsey of amoral manipulation of the English state and Church, hardly a model of a pious churchman.

The second theme of the 1577 Wolsey, as has already been mentioned, was that the Cardinal’s vices prevented good works and positive reforms being carried out. Holinshed and his assistants are careful to demonstrate Wolsey’s greed, ambition, and pride as detrimental not just to Wolsey personally but also more broadly throughout the ecclesiastical and political spheres, as we can see in the following excerpt:

There attended him to Rome one Iohn Clearke a Lawyer, as Ambassadour from the King, which obteyned for the Cardinall authoritie to dispense with al men for offences committed agaynst the spirituall lawes, which parte of his power legantine was verie profitable and gainfull. For then he set vp a Court, and called it the Court of the Legate, in the whiche he proued testaments, and hearde causes, to the great hynderance of al the Bishops of this Realme.

He visited Bishops, and all the Cleargie exempt and not exempt, and vnder colour of reformation hee got much treasure, for through brybes and rewards, notorious offendours were dispensed with, so that nothing was refourmed but came to more mischiefe.[[355]](#footnote-355)

Having been led—through ambition, it must be noted—to petition the Pope to name him as a papal legate, Wolsey used his legatine powers to profit himself and bypass the authority of the bishops, which naturally earned him many enemies. To make matters worse, he cloaked his “mischiefe” under the guise of reform: a matter of substantial public interest and unrest. Thus Wolsey enriched himself at the expense of undermining the other power centers in the English Church, a course of action which created weakness throughout the entire organization. Indeed, the Cardinal’s poor example trickled down to create degeneracy throughout the English Church:

The example of his pride, caused Priste[s] and all spirituall persons to waxe so prowde, that they ruffled it out in veluet and silles, which they ware both in gownes, iackets, doublets and sh[oe]wes.

They vsed open lechery, and bare themselues so stoute by reason of his authorities and faculties, that no man durst reproue any thing to them.[[356]](#footnote-356)

If we, as readers, are left in any doubt about the effects of Wolsey’s bad example, the marginal comment associated with this episode further underscores the message. Holinshed reminds his readers that the actions of public figures ripple down throughout society: “Example of great ones what it d[id]”. Holinshed presents a strong characterization by giving an account of an event, describing the effects of the actions that take place, and then sums up the moral of the anecdote in the text and in a marginal comment.

Not all of the anecdotes about Wolsey were purely derogatory, however. Holinshed’s inclusion of a small number of more positive anecdotes provides a superficial semblance of balance between positive and negative representations of the Cardinal. That is not to say that Wolsey is a positive character in the *Chronicles*: indeed, each positive statement is closely followed by a negative anecdote, editorial, or proviso which largely undermines the previous positive excerpt. In the following two extracts, we can see a clear example of this organizational tool:

This yeare the Cardinal caused all those to be called to accounts that had medled with the kings money, and had the occupying thereof, in the warres or else where.

This audite troubled manye, for some were founde in arrerages, and some saued by policie and briberie, and waxed rich, and some were wrongfully punished. And surely he so punished periurie with open infamie, causing the offenders to weare Papers,[[357]](#footnote-357) and so forth, that in his time it was lesse vsed. He punished also Lordes, knights, and men of all degrees, for riots, for bearing out wrongs, and for maintenance practised in their country, that the poore men liued quietly, so that no man durst vse suche bolstring, for feare of imprisonment.[[358]](#footnote-358)

Here, the author describes how Wolsey aggressively pursued wrongdoers irrespective of their social station, despite the obvious political dangers of such a course of action. Of course, Holinshed does observe that some were able to escape punishment by means of bribery, and that some were wrongfully punished: despite those hitches, however, Wolsey did manage to repress perjury. Holinshed provides commentary and further examples immediately following this anecdote:

These doings were worthie of commendation in him, but surely much more, if hir had beene a man that coulde haue kept a meane, which hee coulde not doe, but through his pompe and presumptuous pride, wanne him high disdaine in the ende, of al men, not only offending the nobles, and high estates of the realme, but also the whole multitude of people, which could not away with his vaineglorious pride, and namely for that hee tooke vppon him the gouernaunce of the whole realme, in maner into his only hands.[[359]](#footnote-359)

This summative assessment of Wolsey’s fatal flaw—his inability to work positively within the Church and state without turning those good deeds to reinforce his pride—does acknowledge that Wolsey did do some good. Indeed, the 1577 *Chronicles* lament Wolsey’s pride as being the chief barrier to what otherwise could have been a very positive administration. The author goes on to elaborate on Wolsey’s deeds as Lord Chancellor; by way of example, he includes a summary of Wolsey’s unconventional doings within the law courts:

It was a straunge matter to see, a man not skilled in the lawes to sit in the seat of iudgement to pronounce the law, being ayded at the first by such as according to the auncient custome, dyd sit as associate with him but he would not sticke to determine sundrie causes, neyther rightly derided nor adiudged by order of law, and againe suche as were cleare cases, hee would sometime prohibite the same to passe, call them into iudgement frame an order in controuersies, and punish such as came with vntrue surmises, afore the Iudges, and sharply reproue the negligence of the Iudges themselues, whiche had receyued such surmises, and not well considered of the controuersies of the parties. [...] Hee ordeyned by the kings Commission, diuerse vnder Courtes, to heare complaynts by byll of poore men, that they might the sooner come by iustice.[[360]](#footnote-360)

Wolsey’s uncompromising tendency to cut through bureaucracy and his efforts to make justice more accessible to all strata of society here seem very positive. Holinshed goes on to explain how this common-sensical and direct approach was turned to feed Wolsey’s pride and ambitions, and was not based on a fundamental desire to see justice done more ably:

And such was the administration of the Cardinall vnder a colour of Iustice at the first: but bycause the same seemed at length to be but a verie shadow or colour in deed, it quickly vanished away, he taking vpon him the whole rule himself, for that he saw how the king made small account of any other but onely of him. Whereby it came to passe that many of the Peeres and high estates of the realme withdrew them from the Court, as first the Archbishop of Canterburie, and the Byshop of Winchester, which got them home into their Diocesses, but yet before their departure, as good fathers of their Countrey, they instantlye besought the king, that he woulde not suffer any seruant to exceede and passe his maister, borowing that sentence out of the Gospell of Saint Iohn, where our Sauiour speaking to his disciples sayth to them, Verily, verily, I say vnto you the seruant is not greater than his master. Herevnto the king knowing that they ment this by the Cardinal, made this answere, that he would diligently see that euery seruaunt shoulde obey and not commaund.[[361]](#footnote-361)

Holinshed’s purpose in including these rather substantial editorialized passages is made clear in this excerpt. The reader is told that the outcome of Wolsey’s efforts to make justice more accessible and to apply the law more evenly regardless of the social status of the defendant was not a more commendable legal system; instead, Wolsey abandoned reform in favor of consolidating power. Nor, the author writes, was that particularly the desired end result: his reforms were made only ‘under a colour of justice’ and were only meant to give the impression of genuine reform. Wolsey had consolidated his hold on substantial portions of the English government by forcing out competitors and taking as many of the king’s tasks away from Henry as possible, tedious responsibilities that the young monarch was only too happy to abrogate. But Holinshed continues to show the effects of this over-reliance on Wolsey; many of the highest peers and ecclesiastics in the kingdom withdrew from court, not without lodging complaints with Henry VIII first. It is also noted that the Archbishop of Canterbury (already praised as a good example of a prelate) and the Bishop of Winchester acted as ‘good fathers’ to the nation and risked the king’s ire by reminding him of St John’s lesson regarding the proper place of servants. This Biblical reminder is included to juxtapose good ecclesiastic leaders against Wolsey to highlight further the Cardinal’s negative qualities. This focus on the Cardinal’s pride is made more clear when we juxtapose it with the euologistic description of the fall of Thomas Cromwell:

Other who knew nothing but truth by him, both lamented him, and heartilie praied for him. But this is true, that of certeine of the cleargie he was detestablie hated, and speciallie such as had borne swinge and by his meanes were put from it: for in déed he was a man that in all his dooings seemed not to fauor anie kind of poperie, nor could not abide the snuffing pride of some prelats, which vndoubtedlie (whatsoeuer else was the cause of his death) did sho[r]ten his life, and procured the end that he was brought vnto[.][[362]](#footnote-362)

The most striking difference between these two passages is the focus on personal vainglory versus a hatred of pride. These two men, both born of common stock and who both rose to largely govern England and fall suddenly from power are set up as diametrically opposite, with one being proud and the other abhorring pride.

Wolsey is thus not without some virtues: he aggressively pursued criminals irrespective of who he might offend, and he cut through the legal bureaucracy to bring justice even to poor men and to rebuke negligent judges. Holinshed admits as much, and states plainly that these deeds were worthy of commendation: however, Wolsey’s virtues could have been far more praiseworthy if they had not been born out of or overwhelmed by his negative qualities. By constructing these compliments in the form of a paromologia, Holinshed marks Wolsey’s failings as all the more galling. Paromologia, which the *OED* defines as “the figure of partial admission; a strategy in debate in which minor points are conceded to an adversary in order to strengthen one's own position” is not a regularly occurring technique in the Wolsey episodes; unlike the paromologia of the ‘color of justice’ anecdote, the more usual figure is a species of narrative parrhesia (candour, frankness; outspokenness or boldness of speech) when Holinshed appears as though he candidly presents the anecdote and, if he feels it particularly noteworthy, interjects an element of editorialization through a parenthesis (either in the text or as a marginal comment) or more straightforward adjectival modification. [[363]](#footnote-363)

If we consider the marked use of particular rhetorical schemes and tropes, there is another episode which is doubly significant by virtue both of its use of paromologia and the dramatic content of the anecdote. The only other paromologia that appears in the Wolsey anecdotes (in the 1577 edition) is the very last anecdote to feature Wolsey: immediately following the death of the Cardinal, Holinshed provides a eulogistic summary of Wolsey’s life, qualities, and career largely drawn from Edmund Campion’s 1571 *History of Ireland*. Of course, with Campion’s extremely strong Catholic sympathies a certain pro-Wolsey (or pro-Catholic) bias is understandable; however, even Holinshed’s edited quote from Campion utilizes paromologia to create a more three-dimensional Wolsey:

This Cardinall, as Edmonde Campion in his historie of Ireland describeth him, was a man vndoubtedly borne to honor: I thinke (sayth he) some Princes basterd no Butchers sonne, exceeding wise, faire spoken, high minded, full of reuenge, vicious of his body, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so bigge, to those that accepted and fought his friendship wonderfull courteous, a ripe scholeman, thrall to affections, brought a bedde with flatterie, insaciable to gette, and more princely in bestowing, as appeareth by hys two Colledges at Ipswich and Oxeford, the one ouerthrowen with his fall, the other vnfinished, and yet as it lyeth for an house of Studences, considering all the appurtenances incomparable through Christendome, wherof Henry the eigth is now called founder, bycause he let it stand. He helde and enioyed at once the Bishoprickes of Yorke, Duresme, and Winchester, the dignities of Lord Cardinal, Legate, and Chancellor, the Abbey of Saint Albo[n]s, diuers Priories, sundry fatte benefices **in commendum,** a greate preferrer of his seruauntes, and aduauncer of learning, stout in euery quarrell, neuer happy till this hys ouerthrow. Therein he shewed such moderation, and ended so perfectly, that the houre of his death did him more honour, than all the pomp of hys life passed.[[364]](#footnote-364)

This passage provides an excellent example of antanagoge, whereby positive and negative qualities or characteristics are juxtaposed. Campion balances Wolsey’s wisdom, eloquence, courtesy, loyalty, academic acumen, and generosity with his tendency towards vice, vengefulness, flattery, ambition, and arrogance.

By finishing with this laudatory (if not wholly complimentary) epitaph, the 1577 *Holinshed* authors leave the reader feeling that perhaps this Wolsey was not quite the ‘butcher’s cur’ that other contemporary authors had made him out to be. Holinshed thus ultimately characterizes Wolsey as a man of undeniable virtues and talents who was fundamentally unable to recognize the effects of his behavior beyond the prospect of immediate gain. One of the chief results of Wolsey’s machinations was the general ill-will of the nobility. While the king’s favor is effective protection against manifestations of displeasure from others, it is ultimately a short-term strategy and deeply dangerous when applied to a fickle monarch like Henry VIII. By accruing so much power and disregarding the political perils of such centralization, Wolsey left himself vulnerable as soon as Henry VIII’s benevolence vanished. This characterization of Wolsey as too short-sighted and naïve for long-term political success is later reflected by authors such as Shakespeare and Fletcher in *Henry VIII*.

### Wolsey, Post-Holinshed: Abraham Fleming and the 1587 Edition

Ten years after the publication of the first edition of the Chronicles and seven years after the death of Raphael Holinshed, the second edition of the *Chronicles* was released. The 1587 edition had been extensively revised, expanded, and censored throughout the decade, largely due to the efforts of Abraham Fleming (c.1552–1607), the chief editor of the second edition. Fleming, a successful printer and Church of England clergyman devoted two years (1585-1587) to expanding the *Chronicles*. He was primarily responsible for updating the *Chronicles* to include information about Elizabeth’s reign from 1577 to 1587, but his impact on the text was far-reaching:

Besides procuring annals from John Stow for the years following 1577, he also obtained further material for Elizabeth's entire reign, amending omissions that Holinshed had regretted. Throughout the revision of 1587 Fleming generally introduced amendments, and particularly his own, by the symbol ¶ and concluded them with a bracket ], using printed marginalia to identify the sources.[[365]](#footnote-365)

These amendments often include passages taken directly from other chroniclers (Hall and Vergil being the most commonly cited) as well as an increase in editorial passages and marginalia. If we consider the enormous expansion of editorial marginalia in the Wolsey sections, we find that from five editorial comments about Wolsey in 1577 (4.6% of total marginal comments in the Wolsey sections), Fleming increased this number to twenty-five in 1587 (9.8% of total marginal comments in the Wolsey sections). In the 1577 edition, these five comments are included in reference to four separate episodes featuring Wolsey. In the 1587 edition, the twenty-five editorial comments were associated with eighteen separate episodes. These numbers clearly indicate a substantial increase not only in editorial comments, but also in single episodes featuring multiple editorial comments. A single episode which has multiple editorial comments associated with it indicates a clear authorial or editorial emphasis on that particular episode. These additions lead to a markedly increased editorial (or authorial) presence in the text, and provides a more sharply controlled steering of reader reception.

To display better how the 1587 Wolsey compares to the 1577 Wolsey, we will begin by matching up examples previously analyzed with their 1587 counterparts. Unlike Foxe’s continual revision of his *Acts and Monuments*—revision which often featured significant re-writing of episodes—the 1587 *Chronicles* contains many passages from the 1577 edition copied *verbatim*. However, the significant textual additions made to many of these episodes do impact on the text by means of providing additional information or analysis. In the anecdote which appeared in the 1577 edition where Wolsey becomes Lord Chancellor, we can see that the main portion of the text has not been significantly altered in the 1587 edition. However, in 1587 a short anecdote was appended which provides a specific example of the heavy-handed application of the statues of apparel:

At the end of this parlement, doctor Warham archbishop of Canturburie, and as then lord chancellour, perceiuing how the new lord cardinall medled further in his office of chancellorship than he could well suffer, except he should aduenture the kings displeasure; for this and for other considerations gaue vp his office of chancellor into the kings hands, and deliuered to him the great seale, which incontinentlie was deliuered by the king vnto the lord cardinall, and so was he made Lord Chancellor. He was no sooner in that office, but he directed foorth commissions into euerie shire, for the execution of the statutes of apparell and labourers, and in all his dooings shewed himselfe more loftie and presumptuous than became him. *And he himselfe on a daie called a gentleman named Simon Fitz Richard, and tooke from him an old iacket of crimsin veluet and diuerse brooches, which extreame dooing caused him greatlie to be hated: and by his example manie cruell officers for malice euill intreated diuerse of the kings subiects, in so much that one Shinning, maior of Rochester, set a yoong man on the pillorie for wearing of a riuen or gathered shirt.*[[366]](#footnote-366) (Italics added to highlight additional material)

The addition of this anecdote is not explained either by textual analysis or marginal comment, nor is it immediately obvious why it was included in the same paragraph as Wolsey’s appointment as Lord Chancellor. It seems ironic that Wolsey, known and routinely savaged for his opulence in clothing, would require someone to surrender an “old” jacket and a number of brooches in keeping with the sumptuary laws which governed clothing. That Wolsey is hypocritical and overzealous in his application of the law seems to be Fleming’s opinion, as he calls it “extreame”. However, it is not purely for the deed itself that Fleming included this anecdote, demonstrative as it is. This episode was included to show how Wolsey’s hypocritical actions set a negative example which other men followed. As the passage tells the reader, Wolsey’s actions led others to acts of “malice”: in this case, a mayor of Rochester who set a man in the pillory—a humiliating and dangerous corporal punishment—for wearing an apparently ostentatious shirt. These actions were seen by Fleming not merely as shocking or discreditable to the Cardinal (and those who imitated him), but were in fact ‘evil’ and reflected the lack of moral rectitude that Wolsey displayed and others aped.

The most obvious difference between the 1577 edition and the 1587 edition is expansion, as the above excerpt has illustrated. Fleming sought not so much to rewrite Holinshed’s earlier work (though considerable efforts were made to change spelling and manipulate various typographical features) as he attempted to elaborate further on Holinshed’s themes by adding a either substantial editorialization or a wealth of detail.[[367]](#footnote-367) The difference between the 1577 edition and 1587 edition is clear when we compare the two versions of the episode featuring the reception of Wolsey’s cardinal’s hat. The 1577 edition, as we have seen above, is a short statement that Wolsey’s hat was received with the utmost pomp in November of 1516 and that Wolsey saw himself as the “perfite” cardinal once he had received it: thus missing the true meaning of the hat as a symbol of holiness. The 1587 edition contains the same factual information, but a supplementary explanatory anecdote is interjected at the beginning of the excerpt, and a substantial editorial passage has been appended at the end. First we will consider the explanatory anecdote:

In the end of Nouember, the cardinals hat was sent into England, which the gentlemen of Kent receiued, and brought to London with such triumph, as though the greatest prince in Europe had béene come to visit the king [*much like that of the people at Rome in the yeare 1515, when were séene in the said citie two elephants, a nature of creatures which happilie had not béene séene in Italie since the triumphs and publike plaies of the Romans. Emanuell king of Portingall sent to pope Leo the tenth a verie honorable ambassage, and withall presented him with these huge and statelie elephants, which his ships had brought by sea from India; their entring into Rome was celebrated with a verie great concourse of people, some woondering at the strange forme and stature of the beasts, some maruelling to what vses their nature inclined them, and some coniecturing the respects and purposes of such a present, their ignorance making their woonder farre greater than their reason.*][[368]](#footnote-368) (italics indicate added material)

This interpolated anecdote about Manuel I of Portugal’s gift of two elephants to Pope Leo X serves to explain the reaction of the English to the spectacle centered on the reception of Wolsey’s *galero*. The people of England—like the Romans ogling the elephants—reveal their ignorance through their speculation about the reason for this magnificent spectacle; they do not understand why the *galero* was given to Wolsey, merely that if it received such a spectacular reception, then it must have warranted that reception. Fleming continues on to explain the import of Holinshed’s earlier material (1587 additional material italicized for clarity):

No lesse adoo was there at the bringing of the cardinals hat, who on a sundaie (in S. Peters church at Westminster) receiued the same, with the habit, the piller, and other such tokens of a cardinall. And now that he was thus a perfect cardinall, he looked aboue all estates, which purchased him great hatred and disdaine on all sides. *For his ambition was no lesse discernable to the eies of the people, than the sunne in the firmament in a cléere and cloudlesse summer daie; which procured against him the more hatred among the noble and popular sort; for that his base linage was both noted and knowne, in so much that his insatiable aspiring to supereminent degrees of dignitie kindled manifest contempt and detestation among such as pretended a countenance of good will and honorable dutie vnto him, though in verie deed the same parties (if fréelie and without checke they might haue spoken their fansie) would haue intituled him a proud popeling; as led with the like spirit of swelling ambition, wherwith the rable of popes haue béene bladder like puffed and blowne vp: a diuelish and luciferian vice, in the iudgements of men abhominable, and in the sight of God most damnable; as the poet in this distichon trulie witnesseth:*

*Dij superi fastum, fastum mortales abhorrent,*

*Hac homini leuitas displicet atque Deo.*[[369]](#footnote-369)

As we can see in the italicized portion, this episode is expanded substantially, with Fleming explaining that Wolsey’s pride was obvious even to the meanest understanding, and through that pride, the nobility came to hate him all the more. Fleming finishes by injecting some vitriolic Protestant polemic into this anecdote in order to steer readers towards a more harshly critical view of Wolsey specifically and the Roman Church more broadly. This is a distinct departure from Holinshed’s more general tactic of portraying Wolsey not as exclusively emblematic of the Roman Church, but instead as having betrayed the spirit of Christianity more generally. Fleming constructs his link between Wolsey and the Roman Church by alleging that if the people of England (both base and noble) were able to speak freely, they would denounce the Cardinal as a “proud popeling”, being akin to the “puffed-up” popes by reason of their shared “deuelish and luciferian vice”, pride. Using tautologies like “deuelish and luciferian vice” and “puffed and blowne up” and alliterations like “proud popeling” lends a strong air of dramatic hyperbole to the editorial and reinforce Fleming’s editorial opinion that these features made Wolsey “in the sight of God most damnable”. However, these hyperbolic editorial comments are not indicative of Fleming’s standard approach; more commonly, the 1587 *Chronicles* are expanded by providing more episode-specific detail.

This detail-oriented approach is clear in numerous expanded passages; in particular, Fleming reliably includes more descriptive detail in reporting significant political events, whereas Holinshed often restricted the 1577 edition to a succinct mention of the event without elaboration. When Cardinal Campeius was commissioned by Pope Leo X to travel to England to urge Henry VIII to war with the Turks, the 1577 edition provided the following report:

This yeare came to Calais from Pope Leo, a Legate **de Latere** called Laurence Campeius borne in Bologna la Grasse, commonly called Cardinall Campeius, to require the king of ayde agaynst the Turke.

…so that then Cardinall Campeius, after he had remayned at Calays three Monethes, came ouer into Englande, and was receyued with all pompe and honoure that myghte bee deuised: for hys friendshippe shewed in helpyng the Cardinall of Englande to the Bishoprike of Bathe, hee was considered (besyde other rewards) wyth the Byshoprike of Salisburie, the profites wherof hee receyued tyll the acte was established, that no forreyner shoulde enioy anye spirituall benefice within this Realme. But for the chiefest errand, that this Cardinall Campeis came, he coulde haue no towarde aunswere, whiche was, to haue leuyed a summe of money by waye of tenthes in thys Realme, to the mainteinaunce of the warre in defence of the Christian confines agaynste the Turke.

…so that Campeius hearing that it tooke not place in other partyes, left off his earnest suyte about it, and with great rewardes receyued of the King and Cardinall, returned to Rome, not wythoute hope yet (by reason of promises made to him by hys friends,) that the Popes request might hereafter be graunted according to his motion.[[370]](#footnote-370)

Campeius’s attempts to convince Henry VIII to contribute to the Pope’s war had little concrete impact on European politics, as he grew discouraged by a general lack of success amongst his peers in their similar embassies to other European monarchs. However, Holinshed reports that Campeius still earned himself a rich benefice (the bishopric of Salisbury) as reward for his efforts. Beyond this particular fact, there is little in the way of concrete information: from this anecdote, we can determine that Campeius, born in Bologna la Grasse, came to England to ask Henry VIII to tax his nation by ten percent to fund a war against the Turks. He expected help because of his recent efforts to secure the bishopric of Bath for Wolsey. However, Henry VIII was unwilling to commit, and since few other European monarchs were being generous, the entire mission was cancelled. Despite this, Campeius was richly rewarded, with the implication that Wolsey felt it appropriate to maintain goodwill with the Pope and his ‘friend’ Campeius.

By contrast, the 1587 edition contains much more information about Campeius’s arrival and Wolsey’s participation in the Papal embassy. Fleming provides a linear structuring of the events from Campeius’s arrival until his departure (most notable being the embarrassing affair with the garbage-laden mules borrowed from Foxe, as we will see below). Instead of concisely stating the facts (broadly speaking) of Campeius’s arrival as the 1577 edition did, Fleming spied an opportunity to develop his Wolsey’s character:

At the request of the king of England, and also of the French king (which sought now to be receiued into fréendship with the king of England chéeflie by cardinall Woolsies meanes) pope Leo constituted the said cardinall Woolsie his legat in England, ioining him in commission with the said Campeius, the which staid at Calis vntill the bulles were brought from Rome touching that matter. There was also another cause that staid Campeius at Calis, & that was a sute which cardinall Woolsie had mooued for the obteining of the bishoprike of Bath....

…cardinall Campeius, at the instance of cardinall Woolsie, wrote to the pope, that cardinall Adrian might be depriued of that bishoprike to the end that cardinall Woolsie might haue the same. Which request was accomplished, and the bulles sent vnto Calis; so that then cardinall Campeius, after he had remained at Calis thrée moneths, came ouer into England, and was receiued with all pompe & honour that might be deuised. Insomuch that cardinall Woolsie had sent to the legat (whilest he laie at Calis) red cloth to cloath his seruants, which at their comming to Calis were but meanelie apparelled. And when all things were readie, he passed the sea and landed at Douer; and so kept foorth his iournie toward London.[[371]](#footnote-371)

Despite a superficial lack of discursive characterization, the straightforward prose actually acts as a convincing vehicle for conveying a rather unflattering portrait of Wolsey. If we examine the basic facts Fleming is attempting to convey, Wolsey emerges looking distinctly manipulative and petty. First, Wolsey uses his influence with Henry VIII and Francis I to pressure Pope Leo X into naming him as a legate co-equal with Campeius, though there is no apparent reason why there should be two papal legates in England, particularly as Wolsey had no connection with Campeius’s mission. Furthermore, Campeius was compelled to wait in Calais for three months while messengers were sent to Rome to petition Leo X to acquiesce to Wolsey’s request, while they negotiated that request, and while they brought the sought-after Papal bull to England. Finally, when Campeius was permitted to cross over the Channel, Wolsey sent him red cloth with which to clothe his servants, as they apparently did not meet Wolsey’s standards. Of course, these details are not unequivocally negative: they could demonstrate Wolsey’s generosity, or the importance he placed on maintaining the image of the Church. Yet there is no editorial guidance offered in the text: Fleming, having noted that Wolsey received Campeius with “all pompe and honour that might be devised”, allows the reader to draw his own conclusions.

These details, written in a straightforward style devoid of overt editorialization, work in conjunction with occasional hyperbolic editorials to contribute towards the characterization of Wolsey as a deeply flawed man. If Fleming had loaded this anecdote with vicious, adjective-laden rants supplemented with critical marginal comments, as Foxe occasionally does, it would be easy to dismiss this characterization as merely polemical, with little factual grounds for genuine criticism. By avoiding such polemical stereotypes, Fleming uses a more subtle approach to convey the same message.

Not all of the 1587 edition’s expansions were devoted to clear anti-Wolsey rhetoric; Fleming’s editorial decision to include more descriptive passages in the 1587 edition could allow for a relatively objective assessment of how Wolsey conducted his public appearances. In the next excerpt, which follows on from Campeius’s arrival in England to describe his entry into London and subsequent activities in Henry VIII’s court, we are given a window onto an extraordinarily vivid scene in which Wolsey and Campeius make their way into Henry VIII’s presence:

About thrée of the clocke in the after noone on the twentie ninth day of Iulie the said legat entered the citie, and in Southworke met him all the clergie of London, with crosses, censors, and copes, and censed him with great reuerence. The maior and aldermen, with all the occupations of the citie in their best liueries stood in the stréets, and him highlie honoured: to whome sir Thomas More made a bréefe oration in the name of the citie.

Now when he came to Paules, there he was receiued with bishops mitred, and vnder a canopie entered the church: which canopie his seruants tooke for their fees. And when he had offered, he gaue his benediction to all the people, & tooke againe his mule, & so with all his traine aforesaid was conueied to Bath place, and there rested: where he was welcommed of cardinall of Yorke. On sundaie next insuing, these two cardinals as legats tooke their barges, & came to Gréenewich, ech of them had besides their crosses two pillers of siluer, two little axes gilt, and two cloake-bags embrodered, & the cardinals hats borne before them. And when they came to the kings hall, the cardinall of Yorke went on the right hand: and there the king roiallie apparelled and accompanied, met them euen as though both had come from Rome and so brought them both vp into his chamber of presence.[[372]](#footnote-372)

The rich detail of the joint procession of Campeius and Wolsey could arguably have been intended as a bulwark to reinforce Fleming’s characterization of Wolsey as a prelate obsessed with his own grandiosity. However, it seems unlikely that contemporary readers would have seen this passage as an exclusive example of Wolsey’s pride, even for a figure so often lampooned and criticized for his focus on spectacle. Cardinals were princes of the Roman Church and were invested with enormous and wide-ranging powers, with influence over both the temporal and spiritual worlds. For any cardinal to travel to meet a monarch it would be expected that they would present themselves in a grand style, displaying the wealth and power at their disposal. In particular, for a *legate a latere*, a cardinal invested with the power to make decisions on behalf of the Pope himself, to meet a significant European monarch and a brother-cardinal and co-equal legate who was a major figure in European politics (possibly with an eye on the Papal throne itself) required the production of an appropriately spectacular reception to reflect the power and glory of the participants both Roman and English. It therefore is essential that modern readers not suppose that all Fleming’s details about the elaborate procession of Wolsey and Campeius through London were manipulated to reflect poorly on either of these men or the institution they served, nor that all the inferences made by the editors would have unanimously chimed with the public.

Whatever his motivations, by providing more detail Fleming and his assistants turned Holinshed’s 1577 *Chronicles* from an admirable and ambitious framework occasionally lacking in specifics into a significantly richer and denser text. Just as Fleming enriched the account of Campeius’s arrival in England by including specific details, so too did he with many aspects of Wolsey’s life. Towards the end of 1529, following Wolsey’s being deprived of the Great Seal (and thus his office as Lord Chancellor), his estate was inventoried: first by Wolsey’s own officers and then by agents of Henry VIII. Holinshed provided a summative passage in the 1577 edition, but was more concerned with the general effect of the events and not the specific details of the investigation itself:

And further the .xvij. of Nouember the King sent the two Dukes of Norfolke and Suffolke to the Cardinalles place at Westminster, to fetche away the greate Seale of Englande, Sir William Fitz William knighte of the Garter and Treasorer of his house, and doctor Stephen Gardiner newely made Secretarie, were also sent to see that no goodes shoulde be conueyed out of his house. The Cardinall him selfe was appointed to remoue vnto Ashere, besyde Kingston, there to tary the kings pleasure, and had things necessarie deliuered vnto hym for his vse.[[373]](#footnote-373)

The 1577 account states the key points of the events, but does not provide information on how these events transpired. There is little in the way of imagery or characterization; Wolsey appears only to hand over the Great Seal and to be ordered to leave London without removing his belongings from the city. By contrast, the 1587 account is far richer in detail. It begins by recounting indirect speech between Wolsey and the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, sent by Henry VIII to deprive Wolsey of the Great Seal:

And further, the seuentéenth of Nouember the king sent the two dukes of Norffolke and Suffolke to the cardinals place at Westminster, who (went as they were commanded) and finding the cardinall there, they declared that the kings pleasure was that he should surrender vp the great seale into their hands, and to depart simplie vnto Asher, which was an house situat nigh vnto Hampton court, belonging to the bishoprike of Winchester. The cardinall demanded of them their commission that gaue them such authoritie, who answered againe, that they were sufficient commissioners, and had authoritie to doo no lesse by the kings mouth. Notwithstanding, he would in no wise agrée in that behalfe, without further knowledge of their authoritie, saieng; that the great seale was deliuered him by the kings person, to inioy the ministration thereof, with the roome of the chancellor for the terme of his life whereof for his suertie he had the kings letters patents.

This matter was greatlie debated betwéene them with manie great words, in so much that the dukes were faine to depart againe without their purpose, and rode to Windsore to the king, and made report accordinglie; but the next daie they returned againe, bringing with them the kings letters. Then the ca[r]dinall deliuered vnto them the great seale, and was content to depart simplie, taking with him nothing but onelie certeine prouision for his house: and after long talke betwéene him and the dukes, they departed with the great seale of England, and brought the same to the king.

This excerpt is essential to Fleming’s construction of Wolsey because it gives the reader what appears to be an eyewitness account (certainly an account that wishes to be taken as first- or second-hand) by virtue of the indirect speech recorded as having passed between the dukes and Wolsey. Reported speech is rare in the *Chronicles*, in either the 1577 or 1587 editions, and when it is included it lends an air of authenticity to the passage.

Enhanced by these editorial bulwarks, Fleming’s Wolsey-character stands in sharp contrast to the dukes: Wolsey rides roughshod over the demands of the two most powerful noblemen in England—who were most certainly empowered by the king to recover the Great Seal—and sends the two dukes back to Windsor to obtain a written warrant for the Great Seal. Wolsey, though a commoner, evidently had such force of personality (whether borne out of pride or an innate strength of character) that he was able to overrule the preeminent peers of the realm even as he was being deprived of his most significant office. Regardless of Fleming’s personal intentions regarding his editorialization of Wolsey’s public image, the 1587 *Chronicles* portrays Wolsey as an exceptional figure, with a personality to match his grandiose lifestyle.

It is Wolsey’s selfsame opulent life that is apparent in the next part of this anecdote. After Wolsey surrendered the Great Seal to Norfolk and Suffolk, he immediately ordered his household to account for all his belongings (assumedly to demonstrate both his financial honesty and to have a personal record of his estate to compare against the forthcoming official inventory). Fleming catalogues the result, an overwhelming display of wealth from the richest man in the kingdom:

Then the cardinall called all his officers before him, and tooke accompt of them for all such stuffe, whereof they had charge. And in his gallerie were set diuerse tables, wherevpon laie a great number of goodlie rich stuffe, as whole péeces of silke of all colours, veluet, sattin, damaske, taffata, grograine, and other things. Also, there laie a thousand peeces of fine Holland cloth.

There was laid on euerie table, bookes reporting the contents of the same, and so was there inuentaries of all things in order against the kings comming. He caused to be hanged the walles of the gallerie on the one side with cloth of gold, cloth of tissue, cloth of siluer, and rich cloth of bodken of diuerse colours. On the other side were hanged the richest sute of coapes of his owne prouision made for his colleges of Oxford and Ipswich, that euer were séene in England. Then had he two chambers adioining to the gallerie, the one most commonlie called the gilt chamber, and the other the councell chamber, wherein were set vp two broad and long tables vpon trestles, whervpon was set such a number of plate of all sorts, as was almost incredible.

In the gilt chamber were set out vpon the table nothing but gilt plate, and vpon a cupbord and in a window was set no plate but gold, verie rich: and in the councell chamber was all white and parcell gilt plate, and vnder the table in baskets was all old broken siluer plate, and bookes set by them purporting euerie kind of plate, and euerie parcell, with the contents of the ounces thereof.

As if to undercut positive associations the reader may have had following Wolsey’s self-assured conduct towards the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, Fleming includes this meticulous account of Wolsey’s officers taking inventory of the Cardinal’s possessions. The wealth displayed in these three paragraphs is enormous, particularly as it only represents the easily mobile and readily available portion of Wolsey’s estate. It does not factor in the extensive lands, benefices, rents, and other items that Wolsey drew from his plurality of bishoprics, government posts, gifts, and other sources of income. Though this list is included as a way of demonstrating the opulence of the Cardinal, the tone of the passage is not condemnatory. Wolsey’s wealth is itemized in a tone of wonder that is imparted to the reader by phrases like “ever were seen in England” (referring to the splendor of the robes Wolsey had specially made for the fellows of his college at Oxford) and “no plate but gold”. The details of the Cardinal’s cloth (“whole p[i]eces of silk of all colours, veluet, damaske, taffata, grogaine, and other things”) evoke Cavendish’s meticulous descriptions of Wolsey’s wealth in his *Life*. The reader is invited to share in Fleming’s sense of awe at the staggering wealth Wolsey has laid out with phrases like “as was almost incredible”. The anecdote finishes by recounting Wolsey’s final preparations and his ensuing removal to Asher:

Thus were all things prepared, giuing charge of all the said stuffe, with all other remaining in euerie office, to be deliuered to the king, to make answer to their charge: for the order was such, that euerie officer was charged with the receipt of the stuffe belonging to his office by indenture. To sir William Gascoigne, being his treasuror, he gaue the charge of the deliuerie of the said goods, and therwithall, with his traine of gentlemen and yeomen, he tooke his barge at the priuie staires, and so went by water vnto Putneie, where when he was arriued, he tooke his mule, & euerie man tooke their horsses, and rode streight to Asher, where he and his familie continued the space of three or foure weekes, without either beds, shéets, table cloths, or dishes to eat their meat in, or wherwith to buie anie: the cardinall was forced to borow of the bishop of Carleill, plate and dishes, &c.

The particularly interesting part of this excerpt comes right at the end; Wolsey, having been forced to remove himself and his household to Asher, arrives to find that his new home was not furnished. As a result, he was obliged to beg basic house-wares from the Bishop of Carlisle. Taken out of context, this anecdote does not appear to be particularly important. There is no strident invective holding up Wolsey’s actions as indicative of moral decay, nor are there any accusatory or demonstrative marginal comments. However, this anecdote is quite an effective one in that it subtly presents both a deeply satirical image of Wolsey and a morally instructive *de casibus* moment: the once great Cardinal, who was so accustomed to eating from the gold plate listed in the earlier portion of the episode, is now forced to live without the most basic furniture and is compelled to go begging to the Bishop of Carlisle for dishes from which to eat.

One of the primary ways in which Fleming gathered his facts was to include extracts and details from texts published by previous early modern chroniclers, both from England and continental Europe. The works of Edward Hall, John Foxe, Francesco Guiccardini, and Polydore Vergil all were all utilized extensively by Fleming and his assistants. This approach is made clear chiefly by the appearance of nearly-identical excerpts from these earlier texts which are often signaled by marginal citations. Fleming incorporates nearly *verbatim* one of the most remarkable events reported in Hall’s *Chronicle*, which also features memorably in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*: namely, the episode in which the mule train Wolsey has lent to Campeius overturns, revealing the garbage hidden in the saddlebags to create a false impression of wealth. It is noticeably absent from the 1577 edition, however. It seems likely that Holinshed felt the story was too likely to be apocryphal; alternatively, he may have felt the anecdote was too polemical. It seems less feasible that Holinshed would have been unaware of the story, since he and his team had easy access to both Foxe’s and Hall’s texts. Whatever the reason for Holinshed’s omission, Fleming included the Foxe version nearly *verbatim*.[[374]](#footnote-374) As with both Foxe and Hall, the account itself is unverified and unverifiable; however, for Fleming (as well as Foxe and Hall), documented attestations play second fiddle to the satirical effect of the anecdote. The allegorical import is plain enough: the mules, ostensibly meant as symbols of Christ-like humility, lose their humble import by virtue of their being bedecked with red cloth. Their coffers, which are meant to hold the physical treasure and symbols of power of the visiting legate instead are stuffed with garbage. The outward glory of the cardinals hides the rot within, or so Fleming (by way of Hall) alleges.

The shift in focus from the 1577 *Chronicles* to the 1587 is then perhaps indicated most clearly by episodes like the one previous: whereas the 1577 edition cast Wolsey’s actions and perceived dissimulations in a generic ‘bad advisor’ *topos*, the 1587 edition uses Wolsey in a manner more similar to the more openly polemical Foxe. There is a degree of differentiation between Fleming’s approach and Foxe’s, as evidenced most clearly in their respective accounts of Wolsey’s death. The arrest and death of Wolsey in the 1587 edition is a much more significant affair than in the 1577 edition. Like much of the 1587 edition, it features significant expansion; in this case, these two sections contain the largest textual increases relating to Wolsey. Wolsey’s arrest and death, and its subsequent editorialization balloons from a brief 22 lines in 1577 to a much more detailed 497 lines. Naturally, this massive expansion completely altered the tenor of the death of Wolsey. The 1577 edition is relatively terse, leaving most of the editorializing to Campion, as we have seen above:

The Earle according to that commaundemente, came with a conuenient number vnto the manor of Cawood, where the Cardinall as then lay, and arrested hym there in his owne chamber the fourth of Nouember, and from thence conueyd hym the sixth of Nouember vnto Shefield Castell, and there delyuered hym vnto the Earle of Shrewesbury, who kept him, till Sir William Kingston, Captayne of the gard, and Connestable of the Tower, came downe with a certayne companye of yeomen of the gard, to fetche hym to the Tower, who receyuing hym at the handes of the Earle of Shrewesbury, diseased as hee was in his body, occasioned through sorrowe and griefe of mynde, brought hym forwarde with soft and easie iourneys, til hee came to the Abbey of Leicester the seauen and twentith of Nouember, where through verye feoblenesse of nature, caused by a vehemente laske,[[375]](#footnote-375) hee dyed the seconde nyghte after, and in the Churche of the same Abbey was buryed.

Suche is the suretie of mans brittle state, vncertayne in birthe, and no lesse feoble in lyfe.[[376]](#footnote-376)

The 1577 edition relies largely on Campion’s epitaph to provide a summative commentary on Wolsey’s life, and the result is that the reader comes away with a sense of a flawed man having made a good end. By contrast, the 1587 edition was expanded enormously with a much more detailed, nominally factual recitation of the events leading to the death and with a much greater effort to provide a moral commentary on Wolsey’s life for the reader. Fleming provides a chronological summary of events, beginning with Wolsey’s removal to Asher and detailing how the Earl of Northumberland and Walter Walsh (a privy councilor) arrested Wolsey for treason, before moving on to Wolsey’s progression south, final sickness, and death at Leicester Abbey. The level of detail and lack of overt editorialization lend this passage an air of authenticity, particularly as Wolsey demonstrates his capacity for good manners:

At the last one escaped, who shewed the cardinall that the earle was in the hall. Whereat the cardinall maruelled, and would not beléeue him, but commanded a gentleman to bring him the truth, who going downe the staires, saw the earle of Northumberland, and returned, and said it was verie he. Then (quoth the cardinall) I am sorie that we haue dined, for I feare our officers be not prouided of anie store of good fish to make him some honorable chéere, let the table stand (quoth he.) With that he rose vp, and going downe the staires, he encountered the earle comming vp with all his taile. And as soone as the cardinall espied the earle, he put off his cap, and said, My lord ye be most hartilie welcome, and so imbraced each other.[[377]](#footnote-377)

Though Wolsey, conscious of his duties as host, is concerned that he cannot feed the Earl and his men, the Cardinal’s insistence on protocol strains the incident when he refuses to be arrested by the Earl unless he will show his commission to do so. As the commission apparently details information Henry did not wish Wolsey to see, the Earl refuses and the impasse is only ended when Wolsey surrenders to Walsh on the grounds that Walsh explicitly represents the King, in his role as Privy Councilor. This account of Wolsey’s death differs little from Cavendish’s and records Wolsey’s final exchanges with Sir William Kingston, which further discredits Foxe’s tale of unholy winds and midnight burials. The anecdote in the 1587 edition ends with a summary of the moral lesson to be learned:

Here is the end and fall of pride and arrogancie of men exalted by fortune to dignitie: for in his time he was the hautiest man in all his procéedings aliue, hauing more respect to the honor of his person, than he had to his spirituall profession, wherin should be shewed all meekenes, humilitie, and charitie. [An example (saith Guicciardin, who handleth this storie effectuallie, and sheweth the cause of this cardinals ruine) in our daies woorthie of memorie, touching the power which fortune and enuie hath in the courts of princes.] He died in Leicester abbeie, & in the church of the same abbeie was buried. Such is the suertie of mans brittle state, doubtfull in birth, & no lesse féeble in life, which is as vncerteine, as death most certeine, and the meanes thereof manifold, which as in number they excéed so in strangenesse they passe: all degrees of ages & diuersities of sexes being subiect to the same. In consideration whereof, it was notablie said by one that wrote a whole volume of infirmities, diseases, and passions incident to children:

A primo vitae diuersos stamine morbos

Perpetimur, diris affirmúrque malis:

Donec in occasum redeat qui vixit ab ortu,

Antea quàm discat viuere, vita cadit.[[378]](#footnote-378)

In this passage Fleming makes clear the purpose for which this additional material has been included by means of a descriptive marginal comment: “Example of pride and arrogancie.”[[379]](#footnote-379) In the text itself Fleming uses parentheses to not only tell readers how Wolsey was “An example… in our daies woorthie of memorie, touching the power which fortune and enuie hath in the courts of princes”, but also to reinforce his reasoning with a statement that Francesco Guicciardini concurs and provides a similar ‘handling’ of the story in his own 1540 *Storia d'Italia*.

The death of Wolsey in the 1577 and 1587 editions acts as a metonym for the differences between the two editions. The 1577 version was considerably briefer (approximately 1,000,000 words shorter, according to the Holinshed Project team), and while it contained an element—often a strong element—of editorialization overseen by Raphael Holinshed, the diverse views of the three main contributors necessitated a lack of contentious sectarian material.[[380]](#footnote-380) By contrast, Abraham Fleming had much more far-reaching control over the production of the 1587 edition, particularly after the sections by his colleague Francis Thynne were heavily censored by order of the Privy Council.[[381]](#footnote-381) Fleming’s methodology and intentions were extremely significant: as we have seen, there were enormous expansions on some of the most memorable anecdotes, foremost among these being Wolsey’s arrest and death in 1530. These expansions alter the content and impact of the characterizations of Wolsey so significantly that it is essential to distinguish between the two editions.

### To “frankelie and boldlie speak”: Methods and Concerns

The initial edition, though produced chiefly by Holinshed, was heavily reliant not only on the works of chroniclers who had gone before (Hall and Vergil chief among them), but also on the efforts of a substantial team of assistants, contributors, printers, and editors. With contributors ranging from fervent Protestants to futuresainted Catholic martyrs, the 1577 Chronicles provides a patchwork collection of images and editorials of Wolsey, with Holinshed’s editorial hand providing a guiding element of cohesion. These varying viewpoints are less closely aligned with a specific sectarian interest and result in a characterization of Wolsey distinct from that of previous chroniclers like Foxe or Hall. Unlike the polemics of Foxe and Bale or the inescapably Protestant writings of Hall, the 1577 edition did not seek to use Wolsey as an exegetical exercise for condemning the Roman church, but instead focuses more specifically on Wolsey’s domestic impact and personal failings. This (relative) increase in fact-based reporting of events was at odds with the general Tudor and Elizabethan trend towards Erasmian *copia* which colored virtually all English early modern writing. While writers like Philip Sidney warned fellow writers that care must be taken when using amplifying or otherwise exaggerative rhetorical figures or tropes, it was extremely rare to find historical accounts that did not employ substantial embellishment.[[382]](#footnote-382) Sidney in particular was skeptical about the ability of historians to provide objectivity in their works, with his ultimate praise reserved for poetry that uses history (or a poeticized version of history) to tell moral truths. As Knapp has noted, Sidney derided mere historians but was well aware of the confluence between the two genres.[[383]](#footnote-383) The 1577 *Chronicles* represent an attempt to provide something different from the more poetic or polemic histories: though it had obvious limitations, it did provide a multi-faceted image of Wolsey when other historiographers (for various reasons) did not.

In a similar fashion, Abraham Fleming, the chief editor responsible for the 1587 edition, made clear that he felt it essential that a responsible chronicler ought to provide a balanced view of history. In this respect, Fleming appears to have been an appropriate successor to Holinshed. Annabelle Patterson argues that Fleming’s approach was inclined towards objectivity; a position first proposed (in this context) by Bale. This objectivity, according to Patterson, is only possible after a certain amount of time had been allowed to lapse between the reporting of the events and the events themselves:

Bale’s appeal to an objectivity he was himself far from exemplifying was, I argue, all the more persuasive later in the sixteenth century, when thinking persons had had longer to meditate on the intricacy of the connections between religion and politics in the reigns of four successive Tudor monarchs. It is for this reason that Abraham Fleming restates his agenda as a compact that the historian must keep if he is to earn, with Aristippus, his reputation as a secular evangelist. The compact is to “frankelie and boldlie speake” to persons of all kinds (and status) and to bear “a mind indifferentlie free, as well from hope as feare”.[[384]](#footnote-384)

Accepting Patterson’s assessment of Fleming’s goal is tempting, as it would provide both the realization of Bale’s vision as well as retrospectively agreeing with (and confirming) Holinshed’s own edition as an earlier model of an objective history. However, a glance over the Wolsey episodes and the significant editorialization of those passages instantly reveals a potential problem with Patterson’s interpretation. Fleming’s attempt to “frankelie and boldlie speak” seems to have referred to his willingness to steer the reader towards an understanding of English history with which Fleming would agree, free from concerns about censorship or retribution. Objectivity (in a modern sense) was not achieved, and may never have been the objective at all: this stands in contrast to Holinshed’s stated purpose in attempting to write”simple truth”.[[385]](#footnote-385) Though Fleming permitted contributions which espoused other opinions (certainly Campion’s epitaph for Wolsey is notable in this respect), the overwhelming increase in pro-reformist editorials changes the tenor of the *Chronicles* significantly and brings it closer on the spectrum of early modern historiography towards works like the *Acts and Monuments*. In light of this, it might be more appropriate to say that Fleming was not attempting objectivity. Instead, he was writing to reveal the ‘truth’, a far more nebulous concept and one that does not necessarily rely on the disinterested collection and reproduction of facts that ‘objectivity’ implies.

Of course, Fleming’s opinions or goals do not necessarily dictate the reading of the 1587 edition. Fleming was certainly aware of this post-production textual life: he included an excerpt from Hall’s *Chronicle* describing how Wolsey, having misapprehended the target of a satirical play as himself imprisoned one John Roo of Gray’s Inn. Hall and Foxe made much of this over-sensitivity to a satire whose target may not even have been Wolsey. Patterson writes that for Fleming, demonstrating Wolsey’s tyrranical reaction was not the main reason for including the episode (though certainly it does not speak positively about the Cardinal either):

…the courtly entertainments Fleming inserted in the narrative were never *merely* literary, but always carried a political edge. In this case the morality play of state conveyed a barely veiled threat of popular insurrection …which might have offended more than Wolsey, and was certainly general enough to be still current in the late 1580s.[[386]](#footnote-386)

Fleming realized what Wolsey knew and that John Roo did not: the intentions of an author are largely inconsequential once a text has been loosed on the public. To the real Wolsey, Roo’s intentions were irrelevant: if members of the public interpreted Roo’s play as anti-Wolsey, then it was in fact anti-Wolsey, regardless of what Roo might or might not have meant to write. To control the reception of a text an author can only attempt to anticipate the reaction of a reader (or readers in general) and adjust the tone of the narrative accordingly. The Roo anecdote demonstrates that Fleming did exactly this.

### Looking Forward

Unable to rely on the authority of eyewitness testimony, as could Cavendish, and unwilling to commit to the full-scale polemical rhetoric of Foxe, both Holinshed and Fleming were nevertheless heavily reliant on texts like the *Acts and Monuments*. As both men personally specified that they were attempting to reveal ‘truth’, the clearly evidenced process of editorializing these sources (as well as the contributions of contemporary authors) in the Wolsey anecdotes indicates the centrality of the editorial process to the continuing evolution of Cardinal Wolsey’s public literary image. Holinshed utilized a range of Wolsey anecdotes to provide a less unilateral condemnation of Wolsey, as demonstrated particularly aptly by his use of Campion’s epitaph: however, he arranged those anecdotes so as to undercut positive details with negative ones. The resulting characterization is less hyperbolic than Foxe’s, but is still strongly negative. Nor does it follow on from Cavendish’s detail-rich narrative style; Holinshed’s edition is characterized by comparatively brief summaries of political events, rather than the acutely detailed chronology of the *Life*. Fleming, by contrast, sought to steer the reader less subtly, by significantly expanding the emphasis placed on editorial comments, both in the text and in marginalia. Though this approach is similar to Foxe’s, Fleming also revised the *Chronicles* to include significant expansions in many of the Wolsey anecdotes as part of his larger revisions of the 1577 edition.

The 1577 and 1587 *Chronicles* were not the last early modern chronicles; many followed and competed with the *Chronicles* well beyond the end of the sixteenth century. However, the popularity of these two editions in the decades immediately following publication, in part, placed the *Chronicles* in the hands of William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, and were heavily utilized throughout their *de casibus*-influenced *Henry VIII: or, All is True*. Though the *Chronicles* were not the only historiography to which Shakespeare and Fletcher had access, their use of the *Chronicles* as the basis for several key scenes is well attested, as we will see in the final chapter. This reliance on the *Chronicles* demonstrates aptly how, at the end of the sixteenth century, the images of Wolsey found within chimed with a broad audience. With such a clearly defined heritage, the Wolsey of *Henry VIII* subsequently has been interpreted exclusively in a manner which would not have seemed foreign to either of the editors of the *Chronicles*, though as we shall see, this is not the only interpretation available to the reader or audience. Though they approach ‘history’ (and thus Cardinal Wolsey) in different ways, both editions ultimately present similar images of the Cardinal which helped to cement Wolsey’s negative posthumous reputation.

## Chapter V

## ‘Griped By Meaner Persons’?:

## Wolsey in Shakespeare and Fletcher’s *Henry VIII*

After a century of various representations, the evolving literary image of Cardinal Wolsey had accumulated a wide range of features, many of which were contradictory or manifestly purely polemical. As we have seen, Wolsey has been represented in terms ranging from Skelton’s obscure Biblical jabs to Foxe’s hyperbolic editorializations, and while many of the individual features faded away, a number gained currency and were passed onto the next group of characterizations. We have seen how a number of these features (like calling Wolsey a ‘dog’, for example) originated as generalized insults and only through repetition came to acquire more specific elements which became inextricably linked with the Cardinal (calling Wolsey a ‘butcher’s dog’, if we continue with our previous example). William Shakespeare and John Fletcher’s collaborative historical drama *Henry VIII, or, All is True* provides an ideal bookend to a study of the sixteenth-century representations of the Cardinal both in a chronological sense (the play was likely finished in the first decade of the seventeenth century) and in a more nebulous and summative sense: Shakespeare and Fletcher drew on a century of evolving images of Wolsey to craft their own. We are thus given an opportunity to examine how these two master playwrights reflected upon Wolsey’s various literary incarnations and adapted those characterizations to reflect both contemporary concerns and interests. In addition, it provides us with a chance to better understand how chroniclers like Foxe and Holinshed cemented Wolsey’s negative reputation even up to the present day. Finally, this play’s title reveals a fundamental concern with representations of ‘truth’, a theme which runs throughout the heart of the corpus of this thesis.

*Henry VIII* is an often-neglected text, generally remembered for having been the play being staged when the original Globe Theater burned down in 1613.[[387]](#footnote-387) Little study has been devoted to it: Howard Felperin complained in 1966 that “that fraction of commentary on the play not worried by the academic question of who wrote it is mostly patronizing and wholly disappointing”, and little has changed in the decades since, despite the appearance of Gordon McMullan’s excellent Arden edition in 2000.[[388]](#footnote-388) The play itself is usually characterized by its often grandiose staging—taken from the stage directions in the First Folio—which, in many ways, is exemplified by Cardinal Wolsey: his masque in 1.4 and his participation in the legatine court at Blackfriars in 2.4 are often portrayed magnificently, along with Anne Boleyn’s wedding in 4.1 and Elizabeth I’s baptism in 5.4. The final feature of the play that is generally recalled is the title itself: *Henry VIII, Or, All is True.*[[389]](#footnote-389)The titling of the play is potentially problematic: in many ways, the play is not about Henry VIII at all. Rather, the subtitle “All is True” is an ironic comment on the conflict between ‘real’ history and mimetic history: this play is emphatically not a chronicle history. As we shall see, the text continually unsettles stock images of received history, and particularly those relating to Wolsey, Katherine, and Buckingham. These characterizations are drawn from historical chronicles and incorporate large sections of reported speech; as a result, the stock public understanding of many of these figures is undercut. In the play, Queen Katherine is not merely a pious and compliant wife, the great noblemen are not chivalrous and noble magnates, and Thomas Wolsey is not (exclusively) the overproud prelate so often depicted throughout the sixteenth century. Instead of constructing this text as a good/evil morality fable, with obvious villains and heroes, this play adapts features of the Tudor *de casibus* tradition and presents the main characters as possessing flaws which eventually bring about their morally instructive falls.

Though the play is ostensibly about the iconic Henry VIII and the events leading to the birth of the future Elizabeth I, it is Thomas Cardinal Wolsey who dominates the first three acts. Wolsey’s fall from power is the central structural feature of the first half of the text, on which the other characters are inextricably focused. The first scene, which features the Dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk discussing with the Lord Abergavenny the recent Field of Cloth-of-gold summit, is centered on Wolsey by line 45; the Cardinal goes on to dominate the discussion for nearly 200 lines until the scene ends. Wolsey appears in seven of the ten scenes to the end of Act 3; in two others (1.3 and 2.1) he is the topic of the dialogue but does not appear on stage. Only in 2.3 is Wolsey totally absent (excluding Acts 4 and 5, after Wolsey’s death). No other character in the play appears with such frequency: in these same scenes, Katherine appears three times and is discussed in a further four scenes; the Duke of Buckingham only appears twice and is mentioned once; the Duke of Norfolk appears four times, and Anne Boleyn participates in two scenes and is mentioned in one other. The only figure whose presence even approaches Wolsey’s is Henry himself: though he is at least discussed in all ten scenes to the end of Act 3, he only actually appears in five of these. In these three acts, Wolsey has 411 lines—the most of any character up until this point—whereas Henry only has 288: even though Wolsey does not appear in the final two acts, only Henry himself has more lines over the entire play. The impact of Wolsey’s constant presence is significant, both in a specifically textual sense and as an indicator of the relevance that Wolsey still had in early Jacobean England, nearly eighty years after his death.

Of course, the manipulation of Wolsey’s image was not an innovation by Shakespeare or Fletcher; as we have seen, as early as 1515 John Skelton was applying generic satirical insults to the Cardinal which, as the century wore on, gradually came to typify public conceptions of Wolsey. By the end of Elizabeth’s reign, the public had a firm grip on a characterization of Wolsey that was unkind, to say the least: reinforced by anti-Roman sentiment and the effects of texts like *Godly Queene Hester*, Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, and Skelton’s satires of the 1520s, the dominant public image of Wolsey was of a grotesquely obese, greedy, pompous cardinal. It was in this environment that *Henry VIII* was composed. As is true with so many aspects of Shakespeare’s works, it is difficult to state with any certainty exactly what either Shakespeare or Fletcher might have believed about Wolsey: the character can either be played as a pompous schemer repentant only once he has been caught, or as a hard-working and long-suffering agent of a capricious king. That this second interpretation—which would undercut the generally accepted and dominant sixteenth-century characterization of Wolsey—has heretofore largely been ignored both by literary critics and by directors and actors alike invites a more rigorous analysis of the Cardinal in order to promote a more nuanced understanding of *Henry VIII*.

This study will analyze the depictions of Wolsey in *Henry VIII* to understand better how this particular text engages with the evolving nature of sixteenth-century portrayals of Wolsey. It will first consider how Wolsey is constructed in the text itself, following the chronological sweep and cumulative effect of the text. Recurring images familiar from earlier texts will be highlighted, along with features unique to this text. The central discussion will focus on not just Wolsey’s character, but also on the impact of other characters on Wolsey. To highlight these interactions, this chapter has also been roughly structured by means of subcategories demonstrating the linear nature of Wolsey’s characterization. The first section deals with Buckingham and how he impugns Wolsey (and, by implication, himself). The second considers the impact of the elaborate processions for which *Henry VIII* is famous. The third section reconsiders Katherine’s relationship with Wolsey, while the fourth is devoted to an analysis of Wolsey’s self-representations at his fall. Finally, the fifth section analyzes the eulogies of Wolsey given by Katherine and Griffiths in Act 4.

Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII* represents a dynamic confluence of conflicting early modern perspectives. With his flair for the dramatic he is a prime vehicle for pageantry and elaborate speeches, and is a seemingly paradoxical combination of a humanist *homo novus* and a lofty medieval prelate. His base birth and talent for politics are causes for wonder and ridicule for many of the noblemen in the text, but these are features which could endear Wolsey to a modern audience. Yet Wolsey is routinely portrayed as an obese blusterer, as in the Globe Theatre’s 2010 production. In his otherwise extremely critical review of that production for the *Telegraph*, Charles Spencer wrote that, “Best of all is Ian McNeice’s grotesque Cardinal Wolsey, who hisses out his lines like a poisonous snake and slithers across the stage like a disgustingly plump slug. When he’s on stage, this often inert play comes alive.”[[390]](#footnote-390) Negative portrayals of Wolsey are hardly a recent phenomenon: according to Gordon McMullan, the 1628 revival was noteworthy for the then-current Duke of Buckingham—the play’s sponsor—walking out after his predecessor’s beheading, indicating his belief that “his namesake in the play died as a result of being framed”.[[391]](#footnote-391) If Buckingham has been framed in the play, then Wolsey is necessarily the author of Buckingham’s betrayal and therefore is the villain of the play. McMullan also demonstrates that the overwhelming trend of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was to place a sympathetic Katherine at the center of the play; as with Buckingham, if Katherine is to be the sympathetic focus of the text, then it is difficult—but not impossible—to dismiss her anti-Wolsey position.[[392]](#footnote-392) If Wolsey’s character is not fleshed out to include the same sympathetic textual treatment, then the Cardinal is again the villain of the play.

Historically, these two productions demonstrate the standard interpretations of this particular text. Productions both before and after the Interregnum tended to favor characterizations that linked Wolsey to rising anti-Catholic sentiments and to Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645): bluntly, these comparisons were not meant kindly to either man. Henry Harris’s Wolsey in the Duke’s Company’s 1663 revival featured a “distinctly Anglican” costume, perhaps seeking to evoke Laud in the tensions of post-Restoration England.[[393]](#footnote-393) *Henry VIII* was also performed throughout the eighteenth century as a patriotic set-piece, notably in 1727 and in 1761 to celebrate the coronations of George II and George III.[[394]](#footnote-394) The 1727 production was put on by Colley Cibber at Drury Lane, and given Cibber’s association with the Cavendishes in 1688 (and thus his antipathy towards Catholicism, as William Cavendish was one of the disaffected noblemen who invited the future William III invade England) allows a reasonable supposition that Wolsey was not presented in a positive light.[[395]](#footnote-395)

Nineteenth-century productions saw an increased importance placed on the role of spectacle, including Covent Garden revivals in 1803, 1811, and 1822, followed by Charles Kean’s 1855 production at the Princess’s Theatre.[[396]](#footnote-396) An American production in 1859 featured a female Wolsey—ostensibly to highlight the doomed relationship between Wolsey and Henry—and Samuel Phelps’s Sadler’s Wells performances in 1865 continued the trend of ever more spectacular productions.[[397]](#footnote-397) Henry Irving’s 1892 production featured a Wolsey who was “cultured and crafty”, with “majesty in his lineaments”, and notably not obese, as most interpretations have cast the Cardinal.[[398]](#footnote-398) This image of a lean Cardinal would be reflected in Sir John Gielgud’s adoption of the role in 1958.[[399]](#footnote-399)

After the grandeur of the ninteenth-century revivals, many twentieth-century productions followed Terence Grey’s 1931 minimalist production, which sought to highlight the cutthroat politics of the era by cutting away the pomp and grandeur that runs throughout the text. Greg Doran’s landmark 1996 RSC production signaled the return of the elaborate processions which typified productions of this play throughout the nineteenth century, but Doran injected satirical elements to “reclaim the fullness of spectacle at the same time as demonstrating (and in order to demonstrate) its emptiness”.[[400]](#footnote-400) Doran’s portrayal of the dichotomy of spectacle also compels the audience to view Wolsey as either fundamentally immoral or, more generously, as being seriously misguided. To further mark out Wolsey, Ian Hogg (as Wolsey) adopted a Suffolk accent, which contrasted with the more polished courtiers’ accents and immediately indicated the Cardinal was, at heart, an outsider at court.[[401]](#footnote-401) In keeping with traditional productions, Hogg portrayed “Wolsey's worldliness and appetite for fleshly pleasures” and less emphasis was placed on Wolsey’s emotional final scene with Cromwell.[[402]](#footnote-402)

As we have seen, the general interpretation of *Henry VIII* has been to cast Wolsey as the manipulative, somewhat-histrionic villain, pitting his bluster against the touchingly futile frustration of Katherine. However, this understanding relies heavily on a tacit acceptance of the anti-Wolsey prejudices that texts like *Speke, Parott* and the *Acts and Monuments* promoted. To adopt this view is to ignore the textual evidence which clearly indicates that Wolsey’s character can (and perhaps ought to) be portrayed sympathetically. Furthermore, in portraying Wolsey in a positive light, many of the inconsistencies and difficulties presented by this text are resolved. Instead of the bland assembly of simplistic figures from a bygone age whom Charles Spencer derides in his review, we are given a *de casibus* tragedy which—unusually—unsettles stock character images in order to produce more complex representations of these historical figures. This study will utilize Wolsey to indicate how—far from being “inert”—*Henry VIII, or, All is True* showcases a rich and dynamic re-working of flat, stock historical figures. In this respect, this Wolsey-character is an ideal candidate for this study precisely because he is not “inert” and is, in many ways, incomparable with any of the other Shakespearean cardinals. Though other cardinals certainly appear—notably Cardinal Beaufort in *1* and *2 Henry VI* and Cardinal Pandolf in *King John*—neither of them begin to approach the centrality to their respective plays that Wolsey achieves in four acts in *Henry VIII*. Cardinal Pandolf is a mere extension of the Pope and the Roman Church and is far from a major character. Beaufort comes significantly closer to Wolsey: indeed, with descriptors like “the haughty Cardinal” (1.1.182) and “imperious churchman” (1.3.73), Beaufort may owe something to the sixteenth century perceptions of Wolsey we have seen in previous chapters. Yet Beaufort is “more like a soldier than a man o’th’church” (1.1.183) and renowned for his blunt and coarse speech; he could not be more starkly juxtaposed with the politic and well-spoken Wolsey. Furthermore, Beaufort is the second son of John of Gaunt, and the emphatically noble Plantagenet Cardinal derived his power from his birth, in marked contrast to the distinctly humble birth of Wolsey. Thomas Cromwell is ordinarily set against Wolsey, as both were of common birth and rose to the highest circles in the Henrician government. Yet Cromwell appears too briefly in this text to enable a proper comparison, and certainly his reformist beliefs and secular alignment would speak to a lack of similarity without more specific textual evidence. However, as we shall see, Cromwell is cast in a supportive and sympathetic role in 3.2; the doctrinal and personal differences between the two men are here far from apparent, and instead the authors emphasize the emotional bond between the cardinal and the secretary. Stephen Gardiner is perhaps the closest figure to Wolsey in the play—he is also a conservative churchman—but while his stage presence outweighs Cromwell’s, he is given too little stage-time to allow much development beyond acting as a foil to Cranmer and Cromwell.

Wolsey is thus something of an anomaly in this play; he has no obvious parallels with other characters within the text, and, as we will see, is routinely misunderstood or misinterpreted by the other characters (and thus, often by the audience). As mentioned previously, there are—generally speaking—two main interpretations of Wolsey, which can be classified as either sympathetic or unsympathetic. This distinction is particularly relevant for a stage production of this play: if the director portrays Wolsey as the industrious (if somewhat self-serving) victim of a fickle monarch, then his enemies necessarily have to be depicted as untrustworthy and ignoble. If Wolsey is rendered less sympathetically, then he appears as a manipulator whose deceptions eventually catch up with him. As with so many aspects of Shakespeare’s works, this dichotomy makes his own opinions difficult to gauge, as well as increasing the difficulty of assigning passages to either Shakespeare or Fletcher. However, this ambiguity is itself revealing: while the overwhelming majority of Wolsey-related material in the sixteenth century painted a distinctly two-dimensional and negative picture of the Cardinal, the Wolsey of *Henry VIII* can easily be interpreted sympathetically. The popular image of the bloated, cunning Cardinal is undercut in this text by Wolsey’s extended and emotional speeches, set both in dialogue and monologue.

Alongside the image of the obese, pompous Wolsey is that of the bureaucratic, work-driven Lord Chancellor; the negative impact of Wolsey’s pompous displays of wealth are potentially complicated by the subtle and occasional references to his considerable work ethic. Paperwork is a recurring theme throughout the play and crucially it is only the commoners like Wolsey, Cromwell, and Gardiner who give any indication of the day-to-day workings of the state. By discussing Wolsey as he appears in the text itself—with an added emphasis on non-prejudicial interpretation—this study will demonstrate that Shakespeare and Fletcher provided for an altogether more nuanced and sympathetic portrayal of the Cardinal: a characterization which undercuts decades of negative imagery reinforced throughout the sixteenth century.

### Mirrors of Courtesy: Buckingham, Norfolk, and Wolsey

Regardless of the interpretation that one director or actor might favor over another, the overwhelming majority of elements (both within this text and in a broader corpus) contributing to any characterization of Wolsey are negative and the contributions of most of the characters in *Henry VIII* reflect this. Indeed, the first we hear of Wolsey is from the most blatant and committed anti-Wolsey character in the play: Edward Stafford, third Duke of Buckingham. As mentioned previously, Buckingham opens the play in discussion with Thomas Howard, second Duke of Norfolk, about the recent meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I of France at the Field of Cloth of Gold.[[403]](#footnote-403) As soon as Wolsey is mentioned, Buckingham clearly demonstrates himself to be a strong opponent of Wolsey:

NORFOLK:

All this was ordered by the good discretion

Of the right reverend Cardinal of York.

BUCKINGHAM:

The devil speed him! No man’s pie is freed

From his ambitious finger. What had he

To do in these fierce vanities? I wonder

That such a keech can with his very bulk

Take up the rays o’th’beneficial sun

And keep it from the earth. (1.1.50-57)

The first impression the audience receives of Wolsey is hardly positive: he is ambitious, apparently greedy, bulky, and a “keech”. The “keech” comment is a particularly apt insult, from Buckingham’s perspective: a keech is “a lump of congealed fat”, a reference to Wolsey’s father’s alleged trade as a butcher as well as Wolsey’s obesity.[[404]](#footnote-404) That Wolsey is connected in this passage with food, congealed fat, obesity, and greed (in this case, attempting to enjoy exclusively the favors of the king, or “beneficial sun”) is indicative of how Buckingham—and most of the nobility in the play—will treat Wolsey throughout the play.

This depiction sets the tone for the dominant image of Wolsey, a figuring which Buckingham reinforces at every opportunity. However, it is Buckingham who initially presents both the main themes of Wolsey’s characterization. As we have seen, he makes repeated references to Wolsey’s base heritage, often related to the Cardinal’s father’s trade as a butcher. Buckingham is also the first character to introduce the second theme: paperwork. The Duke of Buckingham first draws the audience’s awareness to Wolsey’s proclivity for paperwork with a pun:

Why the devil,

Upon this French going-out, took he upon him,

Without the privity o’th’ King, t’appoint

Who should attend on him? He makes up the file

Of all the gentry, for the most part such

To whom as great a charge, as little honour

He meant to lay upon; and his own letter—

The honourable board of Council out—

Must fetch him in he papers. (1.1.72-80)

The pun here is on “file”, meaning both a catalogue or list as well as a row or order of people.[[405]](#footnote-405) The further paper-themed connections to “letter” and “papers” in lines 78 and 80 are less clear in a grammatical sense, but certainly reinforce the paperwork trope. Buckingham gives perhaps the most succinct connection of his feelings regarding Wolsey and paperwork when he sardonically laments that “A beggar’s book / Outworths a noble’s blood” (1.1.122-123). Buckingham’s complaint is one of class resentment: his noble ancestry appears to matter little when set against Wolsey’s bureaucratic administration.[[406]](#footnote-406) His concerns are prescient as his downfall is brought about not by any on-stage action, but rather by evidence given in his trial. As Henry observes, it is the machinery of law which passes judgment on Buckingham, and even the king cannot (or will not) attempt to force an outcome: “If he may / Find mercy in the law, ’tis his; if none, / Let him not seek’t of us.” (1.2.211-213).

Buckingham’s “beggar’s book” thus introduces the audience to the second main characterization of Wolsey. Though it is perhaps more subtle than the image of the grandiose, obese Cardinal, paperwork is an essential component of Wolsey’s characterization in this play. Wolsey’s first appearance in the play is marked by paperwork, as the Folio stage directions indicate that Wolsey should walk onstage surrounded by guards and secretaries, laden with papers:

*Enter Cardinall Wolsey, the Purse borne before him, certaine of the Guard, and two Secretaries with Papers: The Cardinall in his passage, fixeth his eye on Buckham, and Buckingham on him, both full of disdaine*.[[407]](#footnote-407)

In addition, Wolsey’s first lines in the play are given to requesting papers from a secretary: “Where’s his examination?” (1.1.116). The papers are significant, as they demonstrate visually and immediately the source of Wolsey’s power. His penchant for organization and willingness to take on the mundane tasks of government were widely-acknowledged, even by his enemies. After enumerating many instances of Wolsey’s perceived meddling, John Foxe concluded that, “All thys, with much more, tooke he vpon hym, making the king beleue, that all should be to his honour”.[[408]](#footnote-408) Wolsey’s ability to take on so much of the day-to-day, inglorious work of the Henrician government was happily exploited by Henry, but resented by Wolsey’s rivals who felt that the Cardinal had maneuvered himself into a position of power over the young monarch. The papers which constantly accompany Wolsey are not mere props, however. The “examination” Wolsey calls for in 1.1. is the testimony of Buckingham’s surveyor, upon which the Duke’s trial is based and his execution justified. For Wolsey, paperwork is both the mechanism by which he exerts control over the Henrician court and the justification for his role within that court.

The audience is next exposed to one of the most frequent techniques used to characterize Wolsey in *Henry VIII*. The use of animal-based imagistic metaphors to attribute some stereotypical aspect of a particular animal to the Cardinal was a common early modern trope and certainly not unique to Wolsey in itself. However, the frequency with which particular animals became connected with Wolsey throughout the sixteenth century specifically speaks to a codification of anti-Wolsey images, and the regular appearance of these images in *Henry VIII* reinforces this argument. One of the earliest of these images comes in the opening scene of the play, where the Duke of Norfolk describes how Wolsey has thrust himself into power “spider-like / Out of his self-drawing web” (1.1.62-63). While Norfolk’s ‘spider’ image is provided in a somewhat-complimentary context (he is proposing that there must be some positive qualities in Wolsey to have allowed him to rise so high in the King’s estimation), it seems difficult to accept his words as being genuinely well-intentioned, with spiders then (as now) evoking images of darkness, craftiness, and poison. This impression becomes even more apparent as his character develops a distinct enmity towards the Cardinal.

Both Buckingham and Norfolk quickly establish themselves as leading purveyors of these animal-image insults. Immediately before his comment about the “beggar’s book”, Buckingham laments that Wolsey has overshadowed him and that he, despite his noble lineage and wealth, is impotent against the Cardinal: “This butcher’s cur is venom-mouthed, and I / Have not the power to muzzle him: therefore best / Not wake him in his slumber” (1.1.120-122). Despite this admission, Buckingham is unable to restrain himself and immediately declares that he will decry Wolsey to the king himself:

To th’ King I’ll say’t, and make my vouch as strong

As shore of rock. Attend. This holy fox,

Or wolf, or both—for he is equal ravenous

As he is subtle, and as prone to mischief

As able to perform’t—his mind and place

Infecting one another—yea, reciprocally—

Only to show his pomp as well in France

As here at home, suggests the King our master

To this last costly treaty, th’interview

That swallowed so much treasure and like a glass

Did break i’th’ rinsing. (1.1.157-167)

The “fox” reference evokes Niccolo Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (printed in 1532) and is in keeping with contemporary associations between foxes and negative character traits like cunning (as evidenced in Ben Jonson’s 1606 *Volpone*, for example). Machiavelli’s political philosophy encouraged rulers to adopt the cunning attributed to the fox and the strength of the lion. The fox is particularly important to emulate, as “a wise lord cannot, nor ought he to, keep faith when such observance may be turned against him, and when the reasons that caused him to pledge it exist no longer.”[[409]](#footnote-409) Buckingham further highlights Wolsey’s perceived animal qualities by also calling him a “wolf”, an allusion which evokes the rapaciousness of the clergy in Edmund Spenser’s *The Shepheardes Calendar* (1579). As the following excerpt from Spenser’s text indicates, the connection between unscrupulous churchmen and wolves preying on sheep was an established one for an early modern audience:

Some gan to gape for greedie governaunce,

And match them selfe with mighty potentates,

Lovers of Lordship and troublers of states:

...Tho under colour of shepheards, somewhile

There crept in Wolves, ful of fraude and guile,

That often devoured their owne sheepe,

And often the shepheards, that did hem keepe.[[410]](#footnote-410)

Spenser’s wolves are—for Buckingham—synonymous with Wolsey. Wolsey has managed to disguise his true nature through “fraude and guile” in order to deceive the king and accrue previously unheard-of secular and ecclesiastic power in England. McMullan also points out the Biblical reference to Matthew 7:15, which characterizes false prophets as wolves in sheep’s clothing.[[411]](#footnote-411) Finally, onomatopoeic puns on ‘Wolsey’ and ‘wolf’ were not unknown, as we have seen previously.[[412]](#footnote-412)

The canine imagery continues apace in the same scene, again from Buckingham. Refusing to be soothed by Norfolk, Buckingham accuses the “cunning Cardinal” (line 168) of undermining his own peace settlement with the French by attempting to manipulate Charles V to ascertain which king—Charles V or Francis I—would be better able to serve Wolsey’s interests. Immediately before Buckingham’s arrest, the Duke provides a clear (if brief) example of how Wolsey’s enemies (both in print and in life) used word-play to portray Wolsey in blunt, physical terms:

NORFOLK:

I am sorry

To hear this of him, and could wish he were

Something mistaken in’t.

BUCKINGHAM:

No, not a syllable.

I do pronounce him in that very shape

He shall appear in proof. (1.1.193-197)

Here we are given an opportunity to examine an ambiguity in Buckingham’s character. From a character like Falstaff or Lear’s Fool we would almost expect a knowing leer and a gesticulation implying Wolsey’s reputedly large ‘shape’: physical humor being a staple of Shakespeare’s and Fletcher’s work. From this bluff, soldierly Buckingham the joke seems less for comic effect than for a satirical one, particularly when we remind ourselves of the Prologue’s warning that an audience expecting ribald humor “will be deceived” (Prologue, l. 17). Buckingham refers to Wolsey as “the o’er-great Cardinal” (1.1.222) only a few lines later, to reinforce this insult. The routine insertion of these subtle (or not-so-subtle) puns by Buckingham provides a cumulatively powerful reinforcement to the popular image of the obese Cardinal.

Despite this early presentation of negative images, there are wholly positive characterizations of the Cardinal early in the play as well. In 1.3, the Lord Chamberlain, Sir Thomas Lovell (c.1449–1524), and Sir William Lord Sandys (c.1470–1540) discuss with anticipation the entertainments planned by Wolsey that evening.[[413]](#footnote-413) These three men—all noblemen—all praise Wolsey’s generosity and hold the Cardinal up as an example of liberality:

CHAMBERLAIN:

This night he makes a supper, and a great one,

To many lords and ladies. There will be

The beauty of this kingdom, I’ll assure you.

LOVELL:

That churchman bears a bounteous mind indeed,

A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us:

His dews fall everywhere.

CHAMBERLAIN:

No doubt he’s noble—

He had a black mouth that said other of him.

SANDYS:

He may, my lord; ’has wherewithal. In him

Sparing would show a worse sin than ill doctrine.

Men of his way should be most liberal:

They are set here for examples.

CHAMBERLAIN:

True, they are so,

But few now give so great ones. (1.3.52-63)

Lovell’s metonym of Wolsey’s hand is compared to England itself, using terms like “bounteous”, “fruitful”, and “dew”, which evoke nature, sustenance, and wholesomeness. The Lord Chamberlain describes the Cardinal as “noble”, meaning that Wolsey possesses the qualities normally associated with the nobility, and furthermore that there are few men as generous as the Cardinal. This comment highlights the tension in the play between the dual meanings of ‘nobility’: as a virtue, and as a descriptive term for the ancient titled families of England. ‘Nobility’ is a dominant preoccupation of this play, as represented both by the substantial usage of ‘noble’ and related terms as well as the dramatic impact of these usages. ‘Noble’ occurs forty-one times in *Henry VIII*: a figure surpassed only by *Coriolanus* (fifty-five) in Shakespeare’s corpus.[[414]](#footnote-414) ‘Nobleness’—an unusual Shakespearean usage which only appears a total of fifteen times throughout the corpus—occurs once. ‘Nobility’ appears three times in *Henry VIII* (out of a total usage of thirty-six). This markedly high usage indicates a definite authorial focus on Wolsey as a recent manifestation of the tension between *hominis novi* and the ancient nobility. The fixation of the highest-ranking nobles like Buckingham, Norfolk, and Surrey on Wolsey’s common birth stands in stark opposition to the Lord Chamberlain’s opinion and further complicates the text’s presentation of ‘nobility’. Sir Robert Dallington wrote in his 1598 *View of Fraunce* (printed in 1604) that “Vertue […] makes Nobilitie, for, there are noble Peasants, and peasantly Nobles.”[[415]](#footnote-415) The titled nobility—as represented by Buckingham, Norfolk, Surrey, and Suffolk—often fail to demonstrate the ‘noble’ qualities that their birth allegedly bestows. By contrast, Wolsey (a commoner) displays a sensitivity to status and hierarchy that often results in a far more ‘noble’ appearance. The most pointed and summative comment of this concept in this excerpt is the Lord Sandys’: that “Men of his way should be most liberal: / They are set here for examples.” (1.3.60-61). That Wolsey is held up as one of the few positive ‘examples’ of powerful men (at least, in terms of largesse) is telling. Men like Buckingham and Norfolk spend much of their time on stage speaking about nobility, but rarely is the audience given any evidence of their noble qualities in action. Wolsey is set in opposition to these men: he is of humble birth, but we are repeatedly given examples of his generosity, a trait normally associated with aristocrats.

Wolsey’s masque is where we see the Cardinal at his most benevolent and charismatic (and worldly). Upon his entrance, he welcomes his guests:

You’re welcome, my fair guests, That noble lady

Or gentleman that is not freely merry

Is not my friend. This, to confirm my welcome;

And to you all, good health! (1.4.35-38)

Wolsey’s bluff, friendly, and eminently temporal attitude is appreciated by Lord Sandys, who repeats the Lord Chamberlain’s compliment of Wolsey in 1.3.57, calling him “noble”. (1.4.39) The Cardinal’s efforts at conviviality are repeated throughout the scene:

My lord Sandys,

I am beholding to you. Cheer your neighbours.

Ladies, you are not merry. Gentlemen,

Whose fault is this? (1.4.40-42)

The pageantry of the masque is orchestrated by Wolsey, who guides the revelry with benevolence and wit, recognizing the masked King Henry and wittily offering up his place as grandee of the evening:

Pray, tell 'em thus much from me:

There should be one amongst 'em, by his person,

More worthy this place than myself; to whom,

If I but knew him, with my love and duty

I would surrender it. (1.4.770-774)

However, in the 1587 *Chronicles*, Fleming describes the same scene somewhat differently. Wolsey attempts to pick out Henry, but commits a gaffe:

Then quoth the cardinall to the lord chamberleine, I praie you (quoth he) that you would shew them, that me séemeth there should be a nobleman amongst them, who is more meet to occupie this seat and place than I am, to whome I would most gladlie surrender the same according to my dutie, if I knew him.

Then spake the lord chamberleine to them in French, and they rounding him in the eare, the lord chamberlein said to my lord cardinall: Sir (quoth he) they confesse, that among them there is such a noble personage, whome, if your grace can appoint him out from the rest, he is content to disclose himselfe, and to accept your place. With that the cardinall taking good aduisement among them, at the last (quoth he) me séemeth the gentleman with the blacke beard, should be euen be: and with that he arose out of his chaire, and offered the same to the gentleman in the blacke beard with his cap in his hand. The person to whom he offered the chaire was sir Edward Neuill, a comelie knight, that much more resembled the kings person in that maske than anie other.

The king could not forbeare laughing, but pulled downe his visar and master Neuels also, and dashed out such a pleasant countenance and théere, that all the noble estates there assembles, perceiuing the king to be there among them, reioised verie much.[[416]](#footnote-416)

In this anecdote, Wolsey misidentifies Sir Edward Nevill as the king: a mistake about which Henry VIII cannot resist teasing the Cardinal. This event apparently did take place as Holinshed recounts it, as George Cavendish mentions it in his *Life*. The effect that this mistake had on the real Wolsey/Henry relationship was apparently negligible, whereas the textual impact of the revised event—in which Wolsey successfully recognizes the king—in *Henry VIII* is much more significant. McMullan speculates that the reason for this revision is to “demonstrate the (doomed) intimacy of King and Cardinal”.[[417]](#footnote-417) While ascribing too much meaning to this event might be overly speculative, it certainly transforms a slightly embarrassing mistake into a demonstration of obvious closeness between the monarch and the Cardinal. The introduction of Henry to Anne Boleyn later in this scene foreshadows the rift that opens between Henry and Wolsey. Anne’s power over Henry is a source of surprise and dismay for the Cardinal, not least of all because he is universally suspected of orchestrating Katherine’s fall and replacement despite having no awareness of Henry’s relationship with Anne.

The merrymaking of 1.4 transitions is juxtaposed with the execution of Buckingham in 2.1. The two Gentlemen, to inform the audience of off-stage events, discuss Wolsey’s Machavellian culpability in Buckingham’s arraignment: “Certainly the Cardinal is the end of this” (2.1.39). They accuse Wolsey of sending off any potential rivals for the King’s favor, and in part due to this, the common people (and in particular, the House of Commons, as Wolsey observes in 1.2) hate the Cardinal:

All the commons

Hate him perniciously and o’my conscience,

Wish him ten fathom deep. This Duke as much

They love and dote on, call him ‘bounteous Buckingham,

The mirror of all courtesy’—(2.1.49-53)

Despite the Second Gentleman’s statement, the audience is given no first- or second-hand evidence of Buckingham’s bounty. There is a similar paucity of evidence given for Wolsey’s unpopularity: the only reason we are given for the Commons’ dislike of Wolsey is the Cardinal’s alleged role in organizing the heavy tax imposed in Act 1 as well as a more general dislike of a fellow commoner supplanting roles traditionally given to members of the nobility.

The Second Gentleman also cries up Buckingham as the “mirror of all courtesy”, but Buckingham is uniformly unable to maintain a courteous demeanor. Just prior to the excerpt above, the two Gentlemen narrate Buckingham’s arraignment:

2 GENTLEMAN:

After all this, how did he bear himself?

1 GENTLEMEN:

When he was brought out again to th’ bar to hear

His knell rung out, his judgement, he was stirred

With such an agony he sweat extremely

And something spoke in choler, ill and hasty;

But he fell to himself again, and sweetly

In all the rest showed a most noble patience. (2.1.30-36)

As in 1.1 when Buckingham’s anger overwhelms Norfolk’s attempts to soothe him, so too can we see Buckingham’s inability to submit “sweetly”. We find the same characteristic in Buckingham’s execution speech later in 2.1; though the speech is couched in terms of humility and forbearance—and is genuinely moving in places—the Duke is not always able to control his anger against his detractors:

The law I bear no malice for my death—

’T has done upon the premises but justice—

But those that sought it I could wish more Christians.

Be what they will, I heartily forgive ’em.

Yet let ‘em look they glory not in mischief

Nor build their evils on the graves of great men,

For then my guiltless blood must cry against ’em. (2.1.62-68)

The remark about “Christians” and “those that sought it” is clearly directed at the Cardinal. Admittedly, Buckingham here is making a pointed reference not just to Wolsey but also to Nicholas Hopkins, “that devil monk” (2.1.21) whose accusations against Buckingham formed the basis of his conviction for treason. Buckingham implies that two churchmen—a cardinal and a Chartreux friar—conspired between them to undo him in a manner not in keeping with their professed religious code. Although Buckingham’s accusations might well be true, it is difficult to find the duke entirely trustworthy since, as we have seen, his choleric disposition so often undermines his professed (and sometimes believed) civility. Though he might indeed be “richer than [his] base accusers” (2.1.104), comments of that sort unsettle the audience’s understanding of which characters ought to be supported.

Despite the inconsistency found in Buckingham’s speeches, he is a charismatic character and his obvious passion is not at all easy to dismiss. Previous scenes have largely undercut negative characterizations by allowing a character to make a derogatory accusation against Wolsey, which is followed by a much more substantial positive reply either by other characters or by the circumstances of the play. However, in 2.1 this pattern is somewhat altered: after Buckingham’s execution, we are again returned to the conversation between the two Gentlemen. Passing over the duke’s execution, they discuss the recent gossip that Henry is planning to separate from Katherine and accuse Wolsey of planting the seeds of this divorce in the King’s mind:

2 GENTLEMAN

But that slander, sir,

Is found a truth now, for it grows again

Fresher than e’er it was, and held for certain

The King will venture at it. Either the Cardinal

Or some about him near have, out of malice

To the good Queen, possessed him with a scruple

That will undo her. To confirm this, too,

Cardinal Campeius is arrived, and lately,

As all think, for this business.

1 GENTLEMAN

‘Tis the Cardinal;

And merely to revenge him on the Emperor

For not bestowing on him at his asking

The archbishopric of Toledo this is purposed. (2.1.153-163)

The presence of Campeius in England adds substance to what might otherwise have been a passing speculation. That we are given no evidence of Wolsey’s having been involved is largely irrelevant; the Gentlemen provide their own reasons for Wolsey’s machinations (the loss of the archbishopric of Toledo being foremost). If this dialogue had been preceded by a rebuttal of Buckingham’s accusations against Wolsey, a more positive and consistent overall image of the Cardinal would have emerged. Instead, the setting-up of Wolsey against Katherine—a clearly sympathetic character—creates a frisson of uncertainty about the Cardinal:

2 GENTLEMAN

I think you have hit the mark. But is’t not cruel

That she should feel the smart of this? The Cardinal

Will have his will and she must fall. (2.1.164-166)

While heretofore it has been relatively straightforward to categorize Wolsey as the maligned victim of the haughty nobility, the end of 2.1 creates an ambiguity about the Cardinal’s character that permits a director or actor (or audience) retroactively and proactively to recolor Wolsey as a villain. The Second Gentleman’s assertion that “The Cardinal / Will have his will and she must fall” highlights how, within the play text, assumptions about Wolsey’s involvement in the divorce lead to the Cardinal’s vilification as the author of both Katherine’s and Buckingham’s respective downfalls. However, we are given no evidence whatsoever that Wolsey did anything to encourage the divorce; indeed, Wolsey loses Henry’s favor specifically because, as we will see later, he is demonstrably against the divorce.

This excerpt succinctly demonstrates the recurring presence of accusations made against Wolsey for which the audience either is given no evidence or which are directly contradicted. These two anonymous gentlemen appear on-stage to provide Wolsey’s contemporary public image, which does not agree entirely with what we see on-stage. It is worth recalling that while this play is titled ‘All is True’, we are not told who on stage (if anyone) is the provider of these truths. Certainly the Second Gentleman’s assertions about Wolsey’s role in the divorce are manifestly untrue, which unsettles (or ought to unsettle) the audience’s faith in the claims made by any character. This undermining instead emphasizes the need for the director and actors to approach the text without importing prior conceptions of the main characters: a process which enriches the characters on stage and casts doubts on Wolsey’s role as villain.

After 2.1, we are exposed to increasingly hyperbolic rhetoric from Wolsey’s enemies and in particular from the Duke of Norfolk, who was comparatively conciliatory in 1.1. After the death of Buckingham, Norfolk maintains a clearly anti-Wolsey stance from as early in the play as 2.2, immediately following Buckingham’s execution. Though he does not mention it, it is plausible—even probable—that Norfolk’s change of heart resulted from Buckingham’s overthrow. Certainly it seems reasonable to assume that with Buckingham dead, Norfolk might well find himself in direct conflict with the Cardinal. He therefore hardens his stance against Wolsey and resolves to undermine Henry’s faith in his chancellor:

CHAMBERLAIN:

It seems the marriage with his brother’s wife

Has crept too near his conscience.

SUFFOLK:

No, his conscience

Has crept too near another lady.

NORFOLK

This is the Cardinal’s doing. The King-Cardinal,

That blind priest, like the eldest son of Fortune,

Turns what he list. The King will know him one day. (2.2.18-20)

To explain his determination to effect a split between Henry and Wolsey, Norfolk repeats the Gentlemen’s rumor that it was Wolsey who first caused the king’s unease on the issue of the consanguinity between Katherine and Henry by virtue of her first marriage to Arthur, Henry’s older brother. In 2.2, the audience is made aware for the first time that the pending divorce proceedings are a source of moral outrage for Norfolk:

[Wolsey] dives into the King’s soul and there scatters

Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,

Fears and despairs—and all these for his marriage.

And out of all these, to restore the King,

He counsels a divorce, a loss of her

That like a jewel has hung twenty years

About his neck yet never lost her lustre (2.2.25-31)

However, it is not entirely clear why Norfolk here opposes the divorce, since he is Anne Boleyn’s great-uncle. Norfolk’s words may well be genuine, but it seems more feasible that Norfolk has realized the danger posed to him by Wolsey: after all, he is only moved to such language after perhaps his only true peer in the kingdom is removed (Buckingham and Norfolk being two of the wealthiest and most powerful men in the realm, next to Wolsey). In this light, it is perhaps significant that Buckingham’s execution is an act which Norfolk does not mention (though certainly other characters in the play recite gossip that it was Wolsey who was responsible for engineering Buckingham’s downfall). Norfolk warns Charles Brandon, the newly-minted Duke of Suffolk, that they must act before Wolsey causes them to be undone as well:

We had need pray,

And heartily, for our deliverance,

Or this imperious man will work us all

From princes into pages. All men’s honors

Lie like one lump before him, to be fashioned

Into what pitch he pleases. (2.2.43-48)

This prophetic statement comes by means of a series of metaphors and similes. Norfolk casts Wolsey as a laborer who, despite his low birth, is able to manipulate the standing of the highest-ranking noblemen in the kingdom as a potter might manipulate clay. Norfolk does so by means of phrases like ‘will work’ and ‘to be fashioned’—which evoke craftsmanship and manual labor—combined with the ‘lump’ simile, which likens the nobility and their honors to malleable clay. The ‘princes into pages’ metaphor is a particularly apt one, as it evokes the ‘paperwork’ theme discussed above. Norfolk is punning on ‘page’ as meaning both a servant to a nobleman as well as a page in a book or ledger: the metaphor is constructed to state that through Wolsey’s (ab)use of bureaucracy, even the greatest noblemen in the realm could be reduced (or even killed).

Ostensibly one of the most trustworthy sources about Wolsey would be Henry: not only is he the titular character, but he is also presented throughout as a stern, chivalrous, and fair-minded monarch. It is comparatively rare in *Henry VIII* that we actually hear much from Henry about Wolsey (for example, we hear much more about Wolsey from Katherine), but we are given a brief opportunity in 2.2. Henry, anxiously waiting for Wolsey and Campeius to pass judgment on the validity of his marriage to Katherine, acts in juxtaposition to Wolsey’s detractors who previously linked Wolsey with unhealthiness (including Buckingham’s reference to Wolsey as “venom-mouth’d”):

Who’s there? My good lord Cardinal? O my Wolsey,

The quiet of my wounded conscience,

Thou art a cure fit for a king. [To Campeius] You’re welcome,

Most learned reverend sir, into our kingdom;

Use us and it. [to Wolsey] My good lord, have great care

I be not found a talker. (2.2.72-77)

As one of the most clearly charismatic characters in the play, it is difficult to dismiss Henry’s characterization of Wolsey as a “cure fit for a king”. While this snapshot of Wolsey and his master is poignant and clearly positive, the audience has only just been shown a concerted undercutting of the generally positive set of characterizations of the Cardinal. It is not clear if the audience is expected to believe Henry, or instead understand that Wolsey has manipulated the trusting King. This uncomfortable tension is reinforced by Wolsey’s response to Campeius’s inquiry about Richard Pace (an ambassador reputed to have gone mad when Wolsey repeatedly blocked favors from the King):[[418]](#footnote-418)

CAMPEIUS:

Believe me, there’s an ill opinion spread, then,

Even of yourself, lord Cardinal.

WOLSEY:

How? Of me?

CAMPEIUS:

They will not stick to say you envied [Pace],

And fearing he would rise—he was so virtuous—

Kept him a foreign man still, which so grieved him

That he ran mad and died.

WOLSEY:

Heaven’s peace be with him:

That’s Christian care enough. For living murmurers

There’s places of rebuke. He was a fool, for he would needs be virtuous.

[Gestures towards Gardiner] That good fellow,

If I command him, follows my appointment.

I will have none so near else. Learn this, brother:

We live not to be griped by meaner persons. (2.2.123-134)

McMullan describes this passage as indicative of Wolsey’s “Machiavellianism”, and it is difficult to find a more positive moral interpretation of Wolsey’s callous response to Campeius’s question.[[419]](#footnote-419) The only possible explanation is that Wolsey never learned a lesson valuable to all politicians: a civil servant might not value public opinion as much as talent, but an angry public can certainly scupper a talented career in a moment’s notice.

### Making Greatness Familiar: Ceremony and Processions in *Henry VIII*

As mentioned previously, one of the textual features which is historically remembered about *Henry VIII* is its use of grand processions, and Wolsey in particular is one of the primary providers of these spectacles. That this feature made a strong impact even when first performed is made clear in a letter from Sir Henry Wotton to Sir Edmund Bacon, dated June 29, 1613:

The King’s players had a new play, called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of Henry VIII, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage: the Knights of the Order with their Georges and garters, the guards with their embroidered coats and the like—sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous.[[420]](#footnote-420)

This quote demonstrates two things: first, that this play has consistently been performed in a grand style as early as 1613 (and the First Folio stage directions provide a level of detail which is much greater than in other plays, which confirms that early productions were likely to be consistent in this respect). Second, it shows that the effect of this elaborate staging was to make “greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous”. To an extent, this interpretation aptly demonstrates the tendency to stage this play as a spectacular *de casibus* tragedy. The staging provides continual and increasingly elaborate reminders of just how wealthy and powerful these figures were. While there certainly are comedic opportunities in the text, it is telling that Wotton (a committed anti-Romanist) found elements of the play “ridiculous”, rather than sympathetic: it is not a stretch to imagine that a heavy-handed portrayal of a villainous Wolsey getting his just deserts might have seemed satisfyingly comic to Wotton.

Certainly the opportunity for such a portrayal is present in the text: as we have seen in the masque in 1.4, one of the key ways in which both the historical Wolsey and this particular fictional Wolsey attempted to manipulate public opinion is through the use of grand—often ostentatious—events, designed to reflect the power and wealth of the Cardinal. In a similar fashion, the procession in 2.4 has often been pointed out as a visual testament to Wolsey’s pomp and overweening pride.[[421]](#footnote-421) McMullan rightly points out that the detailed stage directions are clearly taken from Holinshed’s description of Wolsey’s entering Westminster Hall (stage directions in italics and Holinshed quote following, with elements to compare in bold):

*Trumpets, sennet and cornetts. Enter two Vergers with short silver wands; next them two* Scribes *in the habit of doctors; after them, the Archbishop of Canterbury alone; after him, the* Bishops of LINCOLN*, Ely, Rochester and St Asaph; next them, with some small distance, follows a Gentleman, bearing* ***the purse with the great seal and a cardinal’s hat****; then two Priests,* ***bearing each a silver cross****; then a* ***Gentleman Usher, bare-headed****, accompanied by a Sergeant-at-arms****, bearing a silver mace****; then two Gentlemen,* ***bearing two great silver pillars****; after them, side by side, the two Cardinals; two* ***Noblemen with the sword and mace****.* (2.4)

Now of his order in going to Westminster hall dailie in the tearme. First yer he came out of his priuie chamber, he heard seruice in his closet, and there said his seruice with his chapleine; then going againe to his priuie chamber, he would demand if his seruants were in a readinesse, and furnished his chamber of presence, and waiting chamber. Being thereof then aduertised, he came out of his priuie chamber about eight of the clocke….

**Before him was borne first the broad seale of England**, and **his cardinals hat**, by a lord, or some gentleman of worship, right solemnlie: and as soone as he was once entered into his chamber of presence, **his two great crosses** were there attending to be borne before him: **then cried the gentlemen vshers, going before him bare headed**, and said: On before my lords and maisters, on before, make waie for my lords grace. Thus went he downe through the hall with a **sergeant of armes before him, bearing a great mace of siluer**, and **two gentlemen carieng two great pillers of siluer**. And when he came at the hall doore, there was his mule, being trapped all in crimsin veluet, with a saddle of the same stuffe, and gilt stirrups. Then was there attending vpon him when he was mounted, **his two crosse-bearers: and his piller-bearers** in like case vpon great horsses, trapped all in fine scarlet. Then marched he forward with a traine of noble men and gentlemen, hauing his footmen foure in number about him, **bearing ech of them a gilt piller in their hands**.[[422]](#footnote-422)

McMullan argues that the procession is meant to reflect Wolsey’s pride and cites Foakes as stating that “Wolsey’s substitution of a pair of silver pillars for the usual cardinal’s mace was already seen at the time as a particularly arrogant gesture”.[[423]](#footnote-423) Of course, there is an element of Foakes’ point that is undeniable: Wolsey was a keen cultivator of a grand public image, on the occasion of the divorce hearing and in daily business. A favorable interpretation would be that Wolsey’s image reflects the power of both the Church and his king; an unfavorable critic might (and perhaps justly) have pointed out that Wolsey’s demonstrations of wealth and status were a result of his pride. Despite this element of truth (doubtlessly Wolsey loved pageantry), the stage directions specifically do not indicate a level of spectacle above what might be expected. In fact, the procession is far from overly grandiose, considering that the two cardinals—direct representatives of the Pope—are taking disputations from the King of England and his queen on the validity of their marriage: an event which surely would have warranted a substantial display of wealth and power by the participants. As the Holinshed account above demonstrates (as well as the corresponding anecdote in Cavendish’s *Life*), Wolsey’s crosses, pillars, and mace were standard, daily fixtures on all his official business; while Wolsey was a proud man, it was not completely unreasonable for him to use these symbols. Furthermore, Foakes’ interpretation of Wolsey’s manipulation of regalia is inaccurate: the archiepiscopal crosses were taken to represent Wolsey’s archbishopric of York, the pillars his legatine status, and the mace his position as Lord Chancellor.[[424]](#footnote-424) Wolsey’s red *galero* is also carried to indicate Wolsey’s cardinalate. Though some non-legatine cardinals may have used crosses instead of pillars, it is feasible that Wolsey felt it necessary to distinguish between the marks of rank due to his cardinalate, status as *legate a latere*, and his office as Lord Chancellor. Furthermore, the inclusion of these ecclesiastic and heraldic objects does not necessarily denote personal pride; throughout the text of *Henry VIII*, Wolsey is highly sensitive to forms of address, symbols of office, and proper procedures. As we will see, his qualms about Henry’s marriage to Anne Boleyn primarily rest on her inadequate pedigree: only after he mutters about her birth does he complain about her allegedly Lutheran tendencies. For Wolsey, personal insults are vexing, but it is the insults due to his office that he finds unbearable, as we see when he is ordered to surrender the Great Seal. However, it is not only his own dignity to which he is sensitive: he repeatedly criticizes the noblemen in the play for acting in an ignoble manner, and he chides Katherine several times for her unqueenly conduct. In light of these characteristic elements, it seems clear that it is not necessarily personal pride exclusively which motivates Wolsey to conduct elaborate processions and to dismiss the nobility, but rather a keen sensitivity to office and estate.

To return briefly to Foakes’ argument concerning the evidence for Wolsey’s pride in the legatine court: as we have seen, *Holinshed’s Chronicles* and Cavendish both make clear that Wolsey’s procession in the legatine court was a part of his everyday routine and did not necessarily reveal an attempt to demonstrate personal glory, particularly in this instance. This reading is reinforced by the elaborate processions found later in *Henry VIII*, of which there are many; As Michael Woodcock points out: “episodes of spectacle and pageantry abound in the play, both represented onstage in no fewer than 12 grand entrances and evoked through descriptive reports, such as the account of the Field of the Cloth of Gold”.[[425]](#footnote-425) As an example, one of the most spectacular entrances in the play comes with Anne Boleyn’s wedding in 4.1. There are twenty-two lines of stage directions detailing the pageantry of the new Queen’s wedding procession. In these instructions, most notable is the level of detail given in regards to the symbols of office:

*A lively flourish of trumpets.*

*Then, two Judges.*

*Lord Chancellor, with purse and mace before him.*

*Choristers singing. Music.*

*Mayor of London, bearing the mace. Then* GARTER*, in his coat of arms, and on his head he wears a gilt copper crown.*

*Marquess Dorset, bearing a sceptre of gold, on his head a demi-coronal of gold. With him the* Earl of SURREY*, bearing the rod of silver with the dove, crowned with an earl’s coronet. Collars of esses.*

Duke of SUFFOLK*, in his robe of estate, his coronet on his head, bearing a long white wand, as High Steward. With him, the* Duke of NORFOLK*, with the rod of marshalship, a coronet on his head. Collars of esses.*

*A canopy, borne by four of the Cinque Ports; under it, the Queen* [Anne] *in her robe, in her hair, richly adorned with pearl; crowned. On each side her, the* Bishops of *London and* Winchester*.*

*The old Duchess of Norfolk, in a coronal of gold wrought with flowers , bearing the Queen’s train.*

*Certain Ladies or Countesses, with plain circlets of gold without flowers.*

*Exeunt, first passing over the stage in order and state,*

*And then a great flourish of trumpets.* (4.1.36.2-23)

It is indicative of the persistent nature of Wolsey’s negative public image that McMullan provides thorough commentary on this excerpt but cites Foukes’ argument that the same detail when applied to Wolsey argues for a pompous characterization. McMullan correctly identifies Holinshed as the source for this excerpt, but ignores the implications of the detail of the event: if grand processions are negative, then so too must be Anne Boleyn’s wedding. Yet this surely is not the case; in the playtext the audience is given a respectful and admiring commentary throughout the procession, and the occasional contention and controversy which dogged Anne throughout the Tudor dynasty is not explicitly mentioned. That Anne should be treated with care is no surprise, since she was the recently-deceased Elizabeth I’s mother. Indeed, Elizabeth’s baptism presents the audience with the final ceremonial procession (found in 5.3, wherein we are shown scenes of wealth and power similar to the two earlier procession), which cements the purpose of these elaborate displays. They are not intended to reflect Wolsey’s greed, but instead designed as theatrical spectacle. If there is any message about individual characters to be drawn from these scenes, it is one which underlines the power and wealth of England and its monarchs. Wolsey’s power derives from Henry’s beneficence; furthermore, Henry’s power is reflected in the presence of two papal legates sitting in judgment on his divorce. These factors, combined with the positive figuring of the later two processions indicate that calling Wolsey’s procession an example of the Cardinal’s sinful pride exclusively is not necessarily correct.

### Katherine and Wolsey: Representations in Conflict

Queen Katherine is in many ways one of the most memorable characters in the play and, as we have discussed above, generally has been portrayed as the heroine of the play. However, Katherine’s interactions with Wolsey—from the play text perspective—are more complex than a simple heroine-villain relationship. Instead, Katherine’s characterizations of Wolsey are based on a fundamental misapprehension of the Cardinal: in the play we are given no evidence that Wolsey actually is the beset queen’s enemy, but as she perceives him to be, she characterizes him as such. Her first appearance in *Henry VIII* sets the tone for her treatment of the Cardinal throughout the play. Katherine begins the scene by making Henry VIII aware of an exorbitant new tax that has been levied in his name. She accuses Wolsey of bearing responsibility for a tax requiring a sixth of the value of all private property in England, shaping her accusation into a religious and physiological report:

You [Wolsey] know no more than others, but you frame

Things that are known alike, which are not wholesome

To those which would not know them and yet must

Perforce be their acquaintance. These exactions

Whereof my sovereign would have note, they are

Most pestilent to th’ hearing, and to bear ’em

The back is sacrifice to th’ load. They say

They are devised by you, or else you suffer

Too hard an exclamation. (1.2.42-52)

By infusing her speech with health-related terms like “not wholesome” and “most pestilent”, Katherine sets up Wolsey as a contagion, of which this tax is a symptom. She then compounds the image by expounding on the impact of this tax, and the moral and political implications thereof:

The subjects’ grief

Comes through commissions which compels from each

The sixth part of his substance, to be levied

Without delay; and the pretence for this

Is named your wars in France. This makes bold mouths:

Tongues spit their duties out, and cold hearts freeze

Allegiance in them. Their curses now

Live where their prayers did, and it’s come to pass

This tractable obedience is a slave

To each incensed will. I would your highness

Would give it quick consideration, for

There is no primer baseness. (1.2.56-67)

Katherine follows on from her initial characterization of Wolsey as a disease by describing the results of this tax. She maintains pressure on Wolsey by enumerating the treasonous symptoms caused by Wolsey and associating those symptoms with a particular body part, to underline the symptom/disease metaphor.

It is in defense against Katherine’s accusations that we are given Wolsey’s first self-characterizations and images. Wolsey declares his innocence, and attempts to undermine Katherine’s anonymous “tongues” to lament the way the public misconceive him:

If I am

Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know

My faculties nor person yet will be

The chronicles of my doing, let me say

‘Tis but the fate of place and the rough brake

That virtue must go through. (1.2.71-75)

Wolsey’s first attempts at self-characterization in this play demonstrate a metatextual, prophetic awareness of his fate. Shakespeare and Fletcher provide a momentary blurring of the fourth wall in which Wolsey foretells his fall within the play as well as the manner of the posthumous characterizations of the historical Wolsey promoted in the Elizabethan chronicles by authors like Foxe and Holinshed. This concern has analogues in several of Shakespeare’s plays. In *Antony and Cleopatra*, for example, Cleopatra has a similar awareness of her own future representations:

Nay, 'tis most certain, Iras: saucy lictors

Will catch at us, like strumpets; and scald rhymers

Ballad us out o' tune: the quick comedians

Extemporally will stage us, and present

Our Alexandrian revels; Antony

Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see

Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness

I' the posture of a whore. (5.2.210-217)

Cleopatra’s prediction raises a concern about representations of historical characters that, in many ways, lies at the center of *Henry VIII* and ties it to many of the other history plays. Wolsey’s prophetic moment, like Cleopatra’s, functions on an understanding that public figures are rarely given a chance to manage their own public images. More importantly, posthumous reputations of the great men and women of history are adapted, unsettled, and disseminated by any number of characterizations, and that even the meanest ‘squeaking boy’ can portray Egypt’s most famous queen. In a similar way, so too can the butcher’s boy from Ipswich rise to unprecedented heights in the Henrician court, but he too is doomed to infamy: or worse, lampooning, as in Foxe’s anecdote of the garbage-filled saddlebags, or in Ian McNeice’s portrayal of Wolsey as a “plump slug”.

While Cleopatra’s suicide is the only way she can control the end of her story, Wolsey adopts a more defiant tone, proclaiming that unknown future slanders are the “rough brake / That virtue must go through” (1.2.74). He responds to Katherine’s accusations by carefully casting her sources as unreliable, and that he—and by extension, Henry—should not succumb to rumor or false interpretation:

We must not stint

Our necessary actions in the fear

To cope malicious censurers, which ever,

As ravenous fishes, do a vessel follow

That is new-trimmed, but benefit no further

Than vainly longing. What we oft do best,

By sick interpreters, or weak ones, is

Not ours or not allowed; what worst, as oft,

Hitting a grosser quality, is cried up

For our best act. If we shall stand still

In fear our motion will be mocked or carped at,

We should take root here where we sit,

Or sit state-statues only. (1.2.76-88)

In anonymizing and dismissing his detractors as “sick interpreters”, Wolsey reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of court politics. He ignores the “rough brake” and focuses only on the king, a mistake which leaves him utterly reliant on the king’s benevolence. Though the defensive quality to this excerpt is obvious and the appropriateness of this particular political philosophy might be debatable, Wolsey’s penchant for dramatic speech-making is clear. In lines 71-75 Wolsey uses the first-person singular pronouns to highlight his humility and sense of personal insult, but when he moves on to describe what the government ought to do, he uses the first-person plural ‘we’ and ‘our’ to deflect personal accountability and to engender a sense of inclusion and representation. Wolsey also appropriates Katherine’s public ‘illness’ trope by dismissing the ill-informed criticism of “sick” or “weak” commentators. Henry VIII brushes aside Wolsey’s speech, however, and demands the tax be rescinded. Wolsey then instructs his secretary to indicate that the revoking of the tax was the Cardinal’s doing:

WOLSEY [*apart to his Secretary*] A word with you. (1.2.102)

Let there be letters writ to every shire

Of the King’s grace and pardon. The grieved commons

Hardly conceive of me: let it be noised

That through our intercession this revokement

And pardon comes. I shall anon advise you

Further in the proceeding. (1.2.102-108)

This is a moment which reveals Wolsey’s keen awareness of his own unpopularity and the importance of shaping a political image. It is not a flattering moment, to be certain, and tinges Wolsey’s previous plea of innocence with an unsettling streak of dishonesty. It contributes to the sense of Wolsey’s Machivellianism which, as we have seen, is a point that is raised repeatedly by Wolsey’s enemies in *Henry VIII*.

Wolsey’s pride is a continual theme running throughout the sixteenth century and thus through this play, with one of the most dramatic examples coming in 2.4. Katherine, having been summoned to present her case for the legality of her marriage with Henry, accuses Wolsey of seeking her downfall and, in doing so, highlights his lack of humility and maliciousness:

WOLSEY:

Be patient yet.

KATHERINE:

I will, when you are humble—nay, before,

Or God will punish me. I do believe,

Induced by potent circumstances, that

You are mine enemy, and make my challenge

You shall not be my judge. For it is you

Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me,

Which God’s dew quench. Therefore, I say again,

I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul

Refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more

I hold my malicious foe and think not

At all a friend to truth. (2.4.71-82)

Katherine is one of the few historical figures from this period for whom modern scholars can readily claim general popularity throughout her lifetime and well beyond. Characterizations of Katherine are almost exclusively positive, and the self-affirmative nature of these characterizations have sustained this trend throughout the early modern period, complicating separation of the historical and fictional Katherines well into the modern day. As an example, Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson claim that Katherine alone in the play “shows any great creative imagination. Though all her acts and much of her language are taken from [Holinshed’s] Chronicles, the dramatist has bestowed on her a pathetic dignity which elevates her to such a pitch that in spite of her passive role she stands out as the real heroine of the play.”[[426]](#footnote-426) Hill and Neilson do not discuss how the dramatist(s) have adapted Holinshed’s Katherine to create this sense of “pathetic dignity”, but rather rely on a received characterization of Katherine built over the last five centuries. Despite this, Hill and Neilson are not wrong in identifying Katherine as an overwhelmingly sympathetic character in the play. It therefore is tempting to fall in with Katherine’s anger with Wolsey. Nonetheless, the Cardinal’s reponse focuses on Katherine’s apparent misapprehension of his reponsibility in the divorce:

I do profess

You speak not like yourself, who ever yet

Have stood to charity and displayed th’effects

Of disposition gentle and of wisdom

O’er-topping woman’s power. Madam, you do me wrong. (2.4.82-86)

Wolsey attempts to explain that he has had nothing to do with encouraging the king in the divorce (and indeed, at this point in the text he remains unaware of Henry’s interest in Anne Boleyn). Katherine’s misidentification of Wolsey as the author of her troubles demonstrates the beginnings of the realization of Wolsey’s prophetic concerns about being “traduced by ignorant tongues” (1.2.71), and her response to Wolsey highlights the themes on which anti-Wolsey characterizations had been constructed since before the historical Wolsey’s death:

My lord, my lord,

I am a simple woman, much too weak

T’oppose your cunning. You’re meek and humble-mouthed;

You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,

With meekness and humility, but your heart

Is crammed with arrogancy, spleen and pride.

You have, by fortune and his highness’ favours,

Gone slightly o’er low steps, and now are mounted

Where powers are your retainers, and your words,

Domestics to you, serve your will as’t please

Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,

You tender more your person’s honor than

Your high profession spiritual; that again

I do refuse you for my judge; and here

Before you all, appeal unto the Pope,

To bring my whole cause ‘fore His Holiness,

And to be judged by him. (2.4.103-119).

Katherine’s speech highlights all of the key complaints against Wolsey: he was dissimulative, arrogant, proud, overweening, and ignored his spiritual duties in favor of personal increase. However, it is not entirely clear if we are meant to agree with Katherine or to reject her outburst. Campeius, watching Katherine exit, seems shocked that the Queen would speak so:

The Queen is obstinate,

Stubborn to justice, apt to accuse it, and

Disdainful to be tried by’t. ‘Tis not well.

She’s going away. (2.4.119-122)

However, it is worth observing that Campeius has little to recommend him to a contemporary audience: a Papal legate, Campeius was also an Italian and thus immediately divorced from the sympathies of most audience members.

In the final section of 2.4, we are given one of the strongest examples of self-characterization within *Henry VIII* and perhaps the definitive and summative view of Wolsey in the play, which has heretofore been largely ignored. After Katherine’s dramatic exit, Wolsey, having suffered increasingly vitriolic and personal attacks, begs the King to acknowledge publicly this apparent injustice:

Most gracious sir,

In humblest manner I require your highness

That it shall please you to declare in hearing

Of all these ears—for where I am robbed and bound,

There must I be unloosed, although not there

At once and fully satisfied—whether ever I

Did broach this business to your highness, or

Laid any scruple in your way which might

Induce you to the question on’t, or ever

Have to you, but with thanks to God for such

A royal lady, spake one the least word that might

Be to the prejudice of her present state

Or touch of her royal person? (2.4140-152)

The King not only exonerates Wolsey, but also implies that Wolsey has been dragging his heels in pursuing the divorce: “You ever / Have wished the sleeping of this business, never desired / It to be stirred, but oft have hindered, oft, / The passages made toward it” (2.4.159-162). Here we see the beginnings of Henry’s dissatisfaction with Wolsey, the cause of the Cardinal’s rapid downfall. Regardless of Wolsey’s immediate prospects of disfavor, this detailed and particular dismissal of the idea that Wolsey was Katherine’s enemy in the divorce can and ought to unsettle Katherine’s assumption about Wolsey’s culpability.

This theme is returned to and expanded upon in 3.1. If Katherine is motivated by fear and anger, as seems clear, and she has identified Wolsey as the font of her troubles without any concrete evidence given to the audience, it is prudent to view her condemnation of Wolsey with some scepticism. Upon being informed that Wolsey and Campeius had come to speak with her following her departure in 2.4, Katherine’s musings about the cardinals’ purpose seems cynical, given her dramatic refusal to participate in the divorce proceedings:

What can be their business

With me, a poor weak woman, fallen from favour?

I do not like their coming. Now I think on’t,

They should be good men, their affairs as righteous—

But all hoods make not monks. (3.1.20-23)

In the transition between 2.4 and 3.1 (an indeterminate period of time, but logic presumes a short one), Katherine has transformed from the self-described queen of England and daughter of a king to a “poor weak woman” and “a housewife” (3.1.24). Katherine’s use of the ambiguously ironic ‘weak woman’ trope marks the frustration and helplessness the Queen feels in the face of events she attributes to Wolsey, as evidenced by her cynical musings about churchmen’s virtues (“but all hoods make not monks”). She highlights her necessarily limited wifeliness, and by implication, both the invalidity of Henry’s suit and the immorality of Wolsey’s alleged role in the divorce:

Your graces find me here part of a housewife:

I would be all, against the worst may happen.

What are your pleasures with me, reverend lords? (3.1.24-26)

The apparent subtext is that Wolsey (and Campeius), as the previously-accused instigator of the divorce, is responsible for taking away the missing portion of the “housewife”. In doing so, Katherine is returning to the same theme as demonstrated in her comment in 3.2.23 (“but all hoods make not monks”); she argues that even while Wolsey and Campeius possess the outward characteristics of churchmen but lack the requisite internal moral structure, they hypocritically strip her of some of the characteristics of a housewife.

Of course, Katherine is not a simple housewife; the identification of herself as such casts her in a similar role as Hester in *Godly Queene Hester*, as the humble but regal counterpoint to Aman’s rapaciousness and scheming. Her tone can be interpreted either as defensive in tenor—evoking her performance in 2.4, which provides evidence for an ironic interpretation of her mock humility—or as a genuine expression of despair. The former interpretation would fit with the broadly-accepted understanding of Katherine’s interruption of Wolsey as evidence for her refusal to remain a marginalized figure, as can be seen in 3.1.40-45. Wolsey, having first attempted to clear the room of servants (which Katherine counters), begins speaking in Latin:

WOLSEY:

*Tanta est erga te mentis integritas, Regina serenissima*—

KATHERINE:

O, good my lord, no Latin.

I am not such a truant since my coming

As not to know the language I have lived in.

A strange tongue makes my cause more strange, suspicious. (3.1.40-45)

Though this excerpt seems to demonstrate Katherine’s openness (and by contrast, Wolsey’s furtiveness), this interpretation predicates a prior assumption that Wolsey is a villain, with the Latin evoking Wolsey’s foreign allegiances (and his connection to Rome in particular, a point especially relevant to a seventeenth-century English audience). Alternatively, if we read *Henry VIII* as presenting a more nuanced interpretation of a negative public image, Wolsey here can be merely trying to uphold the dignity of Katherine’s position (or, on a practical level, the victim of a dramatic device which caters to audience-members who would not have spoken Latin). This interpretation, while far from conclusive, does fit with Wolsey’s meticulous attention to position and etiquette throughout the play (most notably in the procession of 2.4 and during his arrest in 3.2). Wolsey’s apology and Campeius’ support give weight to this alternate reading:

WOLSEY:

Noble lady,

I am sorry my integrity should breed—

And service to his majesty and you—

So deep suspicion where all faith was meant.

We come not by the way of accusation,

To taint that honour every good tongue blesses,

Nor to betray you any way to sorrow—

You have too much, good lady—but to know

How you stand minded in the weighty difference

Between the King and you, and to deliver,

Like free and honest men, our just opinions

And comforts to your cause.

CAMPEIUS:

Most honoured madam,

My lord of York, out of his noble nature,

Zeal, and obedience he still bore your grace,

Forgetting, like a good man, your late censure

Both of his truth and him—which was too far—

Offers, as I do, in a sign of peace,

His service and his counsel. (3.1.50-67)

It seems reasonable to take Campeius’ chiding of Katherine at face value, particularly as Campeius has thus far in *Henry VIII* only been figured as a ‘learned’ clergyman and ‘reverend father’. Of course, as mentioned previously, he is also a Roman cardinal, and it must be pointed out that many members of an early Jacobean audience would certainly have held this against him. Nevertheless, Katherine accepts (or appears to accept) his conciliatory gesture. Instead of attacking Wolsey directly, she returns to the “poor weak woman” trope and laments her foreignness (“Can you think, lords, / That any Englishman dare give me counsel?”) (3.1.83-84): the same foreignness which she dismissed along with Wolsey’s Latin only a few lines earlier. It is this inconsistency which encourages—even necessitates—an adjusted understanding of Katherine’s trustworthiness as Wolsey’s main detractor.

Katherine’s final outburst against the cardinals is particularly notable as it provides a summative look at the points which have already been raised. In addition, it demonstrates one of the defining dramatic organizational mechanisms of *Henry VIII*: that of the *de casibus* tragedy. Katherine begins by predicting the cardinals’ falls:

CAMPEIUS:

Your rage mistakes us.

KATHERINE:

The more shame for ye. Holy men I thought ye,

Upon my soul, two reverend cardinal virtues—

But cardinal sins and hollow hearts I fear ye.

Mend ‘em for shame, my lords. Is this your comfort?

The cordial that ye bring a wretched lady,

A woman lost among ye, laughed at, scorned?

I will not wish ye half my miseries:

I have more charity. But say I warned ye.

Take heed, for heaven’s sake take heed, lest at once

The burden of my sorrows fall upon ye. (3.1.101-111)

Campeius’s statement that “Your rage mistakes us” is difficult to position. Despite his being an unsympathetic character by virtue of his legatine status and foreign birth, as we have seen throughout the play, Campeius’s statements are often straightforward assessments of the conflict between perceptions of reputation and blame. Katherine responds by predicting their own downfalls, which in Wolsey’s case is realized in 3.2. Though she is proven correct in this respect, the rest of this excerpt is unsettling by virtue of its vehemence. In contradicting her, Wolsey’s language echoes Katherine’s own moral outrage: “Madam, this is a mere distraction. / You turn the good we offer into envy” (3.1.112-113). However, Katherine employs the same trope and proposes that the cardinals do not offer ‘good’, but rather seek to transform her from the queen of England into “nothing” (as well as refusing to allow the two legates to effect such a change):

Ye turn me into nothing. Woe upon ye,

And all such false professors! Would you have me—

If you have any justice, any pity,

If ye be anything but churchmen’s habits—

Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?

Alas, ‘has banished me his bed already;

His love, too, long ago. I am old, my lords,

And all the fellowship I hold now with him

Is only my obedience. What can happen

To me above this wretchedness? All your studies

Make me a curse, like this. (3.1. 114-124)

Katherine’s question in ll. 115-118 (“Would you have me…Put my sick cause into his hands that hates me?”) is largely rhetorical. The audience would have been aware that despite Henry’s defense of Katherine in 2.4, the King had already fallen in love with Anne Boleyn. As a result, these lines are largely received sympathetically: indeed, Katherine is perfectly right not to place her hopes in Henry’s hands. Nevertheless, Katherine does not (or cannot) distinguish between Henry’s and Wolsey’s respective approval of Anne and efforts for the divorce. Here we see a prime example of how rumor and Wolsey’s close association with Henry have predicated Katherine’s assumption that the Cardinal must have been the source of her troubles. However, of all the characters we hear from in the play, it appears that Wolsey is almost certainly the last to know about Henry’s infatuation with Anne Boleyn; as we will see, Wolsey only learns about the affair in 3.2. From an internal perspective, Wolsey has proved himself until this point to be largely honest; the audience has seen no evidence of any predisposition against Katherine beyond hearing a general rumor about ill-will towards the Emperor. Katherine’s interactions with Wolsey demonstrate the importance of perception of reputation: in Katherine’s case, her misapprehension of Wolsey as the prime mover of the divorce leads her to promote an anti-Wolsey characterization.

### Falling like Lucifer: Wolsey’s Final Appearances in Henry VIII

Wolsey’s fall from power is linked clearly with both Buckingham’s and Katherine’s. The extreme rapidity of Wolsey’s fall evokes Buckingham’s most closely: while it took the better part of two years for the historical Wolsey to be stripped of his offices and arrested, in *Henry VIII* he appears to be in high favor as late as 2.4, though by the end of the scene Henry has privately told the audience that he is suspicious of Wolsey and Campeius and their dilatoriness in presenting their judgment on the divorce. By 3.2, Wolsey’s fall has begun. While Norfolk, Surrey, Suffolk, and the Lord Chamberlain are complaining about Wolsey, Suffolk voices the generic complaint of the nobility in *Henry VIII*:

Which of the peers

Have uncontemned gone by him, or at least

Strangely neglected? When did he regard

The stamp of nobleness in any person

Out of himself? (3.2.9-13)

It is exactly this concern that frames the enmity of the nobility towards Wolsey. In addition, they fear the “honey of his language” (3.2.22) which “hath a witchcraft / Over the King in’s tongue” (3.2.18-19). But Suffolk cheers his noble audience with the news that as Wolsey’s presence in the play began amidst paperwork, so would paperwork cause his departure. Suffolk tells Norfolk and Surrey that Wolsey’s letters to the Pope wherein he requested a staying of judgment on the divorce were accidentally sent to Henry:

The Cardinal’s letters to the Pope miscarried

And came to th’eye o’th’ King, wherein was read

How that the Cardinal did entreat his holiness

To stay the judgement o’th’ divorce; for if

It did take place, ‘I do’, quoth he, ‘perceive

My King is tangled in affection to

A creature of the Queen’s, Lady Anne Bullen.’ (3.2.30-36)

Wolsey’s misplaced letter—an error simple enough to make for an overworked bureaucrat—might well have caused only a minor hitch in his relationship with Henry: after all, he had served his monarch well since Henry’s early days on the throne. Unfortunately for the Cardinal, the letter plays on Henry’s already-revealed suspicions that Wolsey was not eager to see the divorce through (at least, not while Anne was the subject of Henry’s affections). Furthermore, here Henry has been given specific evidence that Wolsey has been secretly colluding with the Pope to delay his divorce. Henry’s displeasure evokes the Reformed argument that Wolsey was an example of how a man could not serve both king and Church, and alludes to the writ of *praemunire* in which Wolsey was cast before his arrest. Finally, Wolsey’s letter refers to Anne as a “creature” who has “tangled” the King in an affair. The letter makes clear that Wolsey is certainly not Katherine’s enemy in a specific sense, but rather was attempting to satisfy Henry’s demand for a divorce when the Cardinal discovered Anne’s involvement: an inappropriate situation, as Wolsey’s letter makes obvious.

It is in the Cardinal’s learning that the King was planning to marry Anne Boleyn that we are given to understand that Wolsey had no part in the new marriage or in pushing the divorce for her sake. The letter to the Pope makes abundantly clear that Wolsey had no desire to see Anne as queen and therefore had no connection with the affair. Wolsey himself makes his views plain to the audience even before he has discovered that his letter has been mis-delivered:

Anne Bullen? No, I’ll no Anne Bullens for him:

There’s more in’t than fair visage. Bullen?

No, we’ll no Bullens. Speedily I wish

To hear from Rome. The Marchioness of Pembroke?

…

The late Queen’s gentlewoman? A knight’s daughter

To be her mistress’ mistress? The Queen’s Queen?

This candle burns not clear. ‘Tis I must snuff it;

Then out it goes. What though I know her virtuous

And well-deserving? Yet I know her for

A spleeny Lutheran, and not wholesome to

Our cause, that she should lie i’th’bosom of

Our hard-ruled King. (3.2.87-90, 94-101)

There is scope for irony, as Wolsey himself was of low birth and served the king; however, the irony is only apparent. Wolsey’s actions, both positive and negative, are focused on two goals: promoting himself and his king. While it might reflect well on Henry that he was able to recognize the talents of a nascent Wolsey, it would not reflect well on him to saddle his progeny with a less-than-elite maternal forebear. Wolsey’s scorn makes clear that he recognized the difference between his role and that of the Queen of England. Wolsey has every reason to declare himself an enemy to Katherine: she has insulted him repeatedly, in strong terms, and in the most public of circumstances. In this instance, though he believes himself to be in private, he defends her honor (if not her person) by declaring it unthinkable that Anne should be placed over Katherine. Here we see succinctly summarized Wolsey’s great respect for the dignity of authority and position: in this light, it is not personal pride which motivates Wolsey to conduct lavish parties and ceremonial processions, but rather an aggrandizement of the institutions he represents.

This more positive interpretation of the Cardinal’s motivations is, unfortunately for him, not realized within the play. Wolsey’s troubles are compounded later in the same scene when Henry himself appears with another mislaid document:

It may well be

There is a mutiny in’s mind. This morning,

Papers of state he sent me to peruse

As I required; and wot you what I found

There—on my conscience, put unwittingly?

Forsooth, an inventory, thus importing

The several parcels of his plate, his treasure,

Rich stuffs and ornaments of household, which

I find at such proud rate that it outspeaks

Possession of a subject. (3.2.119-128)

Astonished and angered by the enormous wealth the Cardinal has amassed, Henry questions Wolsey on his loyalty, the fruit of which is a remarkably sympathetic and cogent self-defense on Wolsey’s part:

KING:

Have I not made you

The prime man of the state? I pray you tell me

If what I now pronounce you have found true,

And, if you may confess it, say withal

If you are bound to us or no. What say you?

WOLSEY:

My sovereign, I confess your royal graces,

Showered on me daily, have been more than could

My studied purposes requite, which went

Beyond all man’s endeavours. My endeavours

Have ever come too short of my desires,

Yet filed with my abilities. Mine own ends

Have been mine so that evermore they pointed

To th’good of your most sacred person and

The profit of the state. For your great graces

Heaped upon me—poor undeserver—I

Can nothing render but allegiant thanks;

My prayers to heaven for you; my loyalty,

Which ever has and ever shall be growing,

Till death, that winter, kill it. (3.2.161-179).

Wolsey’s self-deprecation (“My endeavours / Have ever come too short of my desires”) can be interpreted as ironic or as genuine as the director requires. While the general interpretation has been to cast Wolsey’s apologies as ironic hyperbole (no surer sign of villainy to a modern audience, unused to Tudor rhetorical practices), there is a clear opportunity to present the Cardinal’s frantic acknowledgements of gratitude as genuine. Even without the wealth of textual evidence which argues for a more ambiguous understanding of Wolsey, it is not difficult to imagine Wolsey’s justifiable fear in the face of a capricious monarch’s mysterious anger. Henry’s enigmatic response does little to calm the Cardinal, but is an apt summation of the moral message under examination:

Fairly answered:

A loyal and obedient subject is

Therein illustrated. The honour of it

Does pay the act of it, as i’th’ contrary

The foulness is the punishment. (3.2.179-184)

Wolsey’s reputation in *Henry VIII* revolves around birth and perceived loyalty. His enemies and, as of 3.2, his king believe Wolsey’s loyalty is to himself (and perhaps Rome, if pressed). The final interactions between Wolsey and Henry instead reveal the Cardinal struggling to demonstrate his loyalty to Henry: that he fails is due to the matters discussed in the mislaid papers in Henry’s hand. The documents signal Wolsey’s undoing, a fact recognized immediately by the Cardinal:

I must read this paper—

I fear, the story of his anger. ‘Tis so:

This paper has undone me. ‘This th’account

Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together

For mine own ends—indeed to gain the popedom

And fee my friends in Rome. O, negligence,

Fir for a fool to fall by! What cross devil

Made me put this main secret in the packet I sent the King?

Is there no way to cure this?

No new device to beat this from his brains?

I know ‘twill stir him strongly. Yet I know

A way, if it take right, in spite of fortune

Will bring me off again. What’s this? ‘To th’ Pope?’

The letter, as I live, with all the business

I writ to’s Holiness. Nay then, farewell.

I have touched the highest point of all my greatness,

And from that full meridian of my glory

I haste now to my setting. I shall fall

Like a bright exhalation in the evening,

And no man see me more. (3.2.209-227)

The moral point being raised in this exchange is that a man cannot serve two masters, as Wolsey was demonstrably trying to do. A quintessentially Reformation argument against the spiritual supremacy of the Papacy over a king in his own kingdom, this Biblical injunction featured heavily in the polemical literature of the Tudor period. For example, in Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* this argument is voiced many times, most notably in Nicholas Latimer’s self-defense at his arraignment:

Then M. Latimer making his protestation, that notwithstanding these his aunswers it should not be taken that thereby he would acknowledge any authority of the Bishop of Rome, saying that he was the King and Queene their Maiesties subiect and not the Popes, neither coulde serue two masters at one tyme, except hee should first renounce one of them: required the Notaries so to take his protestation, that what soeuer he should say or do, it should not be taken as though hee did thereby agree to any authority that came from the Bishop of Rome.[[427]](#footnote-427)

The reference is to the argument made throughout both the Old and New Testaments against worshipping the God of Israel as well as idols or other deities:

Nemo potest duobus dominis servire

Aut enim unum odio habebit et alterum diliget

Aut unum sustinebit et alterum contemnet

Non potestis Deo servire et mamonae[.][[428]](#footnote-428)

[Translation by Miles Coverdale in his 1535 Bible:]

No man can serue two masters. For ether he shall hate the one and loue the other: or els he shall leane to the one, and despise the other: Ye can not serue God and mammon.[[429]](#footnote-429)

Reformers like Latimer and Foxe utilized this argument for supporting the supremacy of the monarch as head of both church and state, identifying God with the anointed monarch and taking the secular power and wealth of the Pope as a connection to Mammon. This quotation is particularly apt for Wolsey, as it also could be taken as a warning to the Cardinal that striving for personal gain and service to the king are incompatible. The allusion to this largely Reformed concern reinforces the attribution of portions of this scene to Fletcher (son of the Reformed Bishop of London and the grandson of Richard Fletcher, close friend of Foxe).[[430]](#footnote-430) Most attribution studies divide the authorial responsibilities for this scene at line 202, with Shakespeare allegedly having written the first section and Fletcher the second. However, as McMullan observes, the authorship question is rendered moot by the source material: “That a ‘Fletcher’ section and a ‘Shakespeare’ section demonstrate knowledge of the same page [in Holinshed] underlines the closeness of the collaboration (or the irrelevance of authorial attribution).”[[431]](#footnote-431) The thematic continuity of this section of the scene speaks to the same ‘closeness of collaboration’ (or irrelevancy of attribution).

In addition to featuring the ‘two masters’ theme, this excerpt also aptly demonstrates the ‘paperwork’ theme that this study has proposed. Wolsey does not blame Henry for his imminent downfall (immediately after this speech, Wolsey is arrested by Norfolk, Suffolk, Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain), nor does he blame his enemies or even himself. Instead, it is the paper that is the “story” of Henry’s anger, and it is the paper that has “undone” him. As he receives the King’s orders, in a final effort to buy himself some time in which he might change Henry’s mind, Wolsey clings to technicalities:

NORFOLK:

Hear the King’s pleasure, Cardinal, who commands you

To render up the great seal presently

Into our hands, and to confine yourself

To Esher House, my lord of Winchester’s,

Till you hear further from his highness.

WOLSEY:

Stay.

Where’s your commission, lords? Words cannot carry

Authority so weighty.

SUFFOLK:

Who dare cross ‘em,

Bearing the King’s will from his mouth expressly?

WOLSEY:

Till I find more than will or words to do it—

I mean your malice—know, officious lords,

I dare, and must, deny it. (3.2.228-238)

It is only the written word of the king, duly processed and authorized, which is for Wolsey the appropriate vehicle for depriving him of his offices. The mere verbal communication brought to him by his enemies is not an authority he recognizes: “Words cannot carry / Authority so weighty” (3.2.233-234). There is an essential difference in attitude towards authority between Wolsey and his noble-born antagonists: his is a mind ordered, tabulated, and processed, where documents provide an impersonal basis for rule. For his enemies, it is their heritage which dictates their right to command. For Wolsey, the bureaucratic effort and talent that paperwork represents is the source of his position.

The beginning of 3.2 offers a wealth of evocative rhetorical figures about and by Wolsey which highlight the quickness Cardinal’s incisive and political mind. When Wolsey refuses to relinquish the Great Seal to the earl of Surrey (Thomas Howard, son of the second Duke of Norfolk), Wolsey appropriates and reverses the earl’s insults:

SURREY:

Thou art a proud traitor, priest.

WOLSEY:

Proud lord, thou liest. (3.2.252)

Yet Wolsey’s enemies also are capable of using rich language to fight back: Surrey in particular uses visual metaphors to great effect in this scene. Surrey reveals his personal vendetta against the Cardinal couched in a variety of these figures:

Thy ambition,

Thou scarlet sin, robbed this bewailing land

Of noble Buckingham, my father-in-law.

The heads of all thy brother cardinals,

With thee and all thy best parts bound together,

Weighed not a hair of his. Plague of your policy!

You sent me Deputy for Ireland,

Far from his succour, from the King, from all

That might have mercy on the fault thou gavest him,

Whilst your great goodness, out of holy pity,

Absolved him with an axe. (3.2.254-264)

Surrey alleges that Wolsey engineered an elaborate scheme to rid Buckingham of domestic support before moving against the Duke, and does so by means of vivid metanyms like “scarlet sin”. He carefully portrays Wolsey not merely as an arch-Romanist (allied with his “brother cardinals”) but also as an enemy to England (as he has “robbed this bewailing land” of a noble man). Wolsey combats this depiction by undermining Surrey’s credibility while reinforcing his own;

This, and all else

This talking lord can lay upon my credit,

I answer, is most false. The Duke by law

Found his deserts. How innocent I was

From any private malice in his end,

His noble jury and foul cause can witness.

If I loved many words, lord, I should tell you

You have as little honesty as honour,

That in the way of loyalty and truth

Toward the King, my ever royal master,

Dare mate a sounder man than Surrey can be,

And all that love his follies. (3.2.264-275)

By describing himself with words like “innocent” in juxtaposition to Surrey, who is “false”, full of “malice”, and has “as little honesty as honour”, Wolsey again makes unclear exactly who it is that the audience is meant to trust. As with Buckingham, Surrey is provoked not only by Wolsey’s words, but also by his intrinsic baseness:

By my soul,

Your long coat, priest, protects you; thou shouldst feel

My sword i’th’lifeblood of thee else. My lords,

Can ye endure to hear this arrogance?

And from this fellow? If we live thus tamely,

To be thus jaded by a piece of scarlet,

Farewell nobility; let his grace go forward

And dare us with his cap, like larks. (3.2.275-82)

Surrey here alludes to the practice of catching larks by mesmerizing them with a piece of red cloth (here a metonym representing the Cardinal and his scarlet robes and hat); larks are ground-nesting birds, and when distracted with red cloth they could be easily caught and eaten. If the nobility submit to Wolsey’s authority, they will be undone by the Cardinal. It is also worth considering “jaded” in 3.2.280: though many editors take “jaded” here as a simple verb meaning to “befool” (which agrees with a usage found in *Twelfth Night*), it seems more likely that the author is also using “jade” as an image of the nobility reduced like an overworked horse; after all, the nobility is generally more commonly associated with palfreys and destriers than with worn-out old nags.[[432]](#footnote-432) Shakespeare does use various forms of “jade” throughout his canon in several related senses: he uses it as a verb in this sense in *Antony and Cleopatra* (3.1.34), though admittedly as part of a more obvious horse-pun. The adjective “jaded” is used in *2 Henry VI* (4.1.53) as a term of contempt which may well have overtones intimating a general worthlessness. He also uses ‘jade’ as a noun in *Much Ado About Nothing* (1.2.49) in a similar sense. The importance of this pun is not to be underestimated, as it forms a key part of Wolsey’s enemies’ attempts to cast him not only as a common craftsman (or laborer), but as an incompetent one: Wolsey (accused of ruining the nobility) here is set up as a poor horse-groom who ruins his horses through inappropriate labor.

Use of the ‘paperwork’ and ‘medicine’ tropes, as well as further examples of *repetitio* are turned to great effect in Act 3. As Wolsey’s fall gains momentum, many of these tropes are aligned against him. When he tells Surrey that “All goodness / Is poison to thy stomach” (3.2.283-284), Surrey adroitly adopts Wolsey’s metaphor and uses it against him to great effect:

Yes, that ‘goodness’

Of gleaning all the land’s wealth into one,

Into your own hands, Cardinal, by extortion;

The ‘goodness’ of your intercepted packets

You writ to th’Pope against the King—your ‘goodness’,

Since you provoke me, shall be most notorious. (3.2.284-288

Surrey’s inversion of Wolsey’s ‘goodness’ is here used to reflect how Wolsey’s own words were what caused his downfall: a fact which the noblemen are quick to point out in detail. The itemization of Wolsey’s offenses is a powerful rhetorical device and presents a strongly negative image of the Cardinal. Surrey recognizes this and requests that Norfolk read out the articles of Wolsey’s arrest, brought directly from Henry:

My lord of Norfolk, as you are truly noble,

As you respect the common good, the state

Of our despised nobility, out issues—

Who, if he live, will scarce be gentlemen—

Produce the grand sum of his sins, the articles

Collected from his life. I’ll startle you

Worse than the sacring-bell when the brown wench

Lay kissing in your arms, lord Cardinal. (3.2.289-296)

Before Norfolk can begin, we are given an aside by Wolsey which helps to counteract the convincing negative features which are so dominant in this scene: “How much, methinks, I could despise this man, / But that I am bound in charity against it” (3.2.297-298). It is not specified if Wolsey is meant to speak directly to the audience or to the other noblemen, but given the lack of reaction from the other characters it seems clear he is speaking to the audience. Here we are given a straightforward moment with Wolsey in which we clearly see his struggle to maintain his duty-bound persona when beset by antagonists: the other characters cannot hear him, and cannot react to his contention that he is “bound by charity”. The audience is given an insight into the private mind of the Cardinal, shorn of any need for public posturing or image manipulation (but not his sense of irony, as McMullan rightly points out).[[433]](#footnote-433) It is therefore in a sympathetic light that Wolsey can—and perhaps ought—to be understood throughout this scene. Though the crimes Wolsey has allegedly committed are “foul ones” (3.2.300), the Cardinal stresses his “innocence” (3.2.301): accurately, Surrey interjects that “This [his innocence] cannot save you” (3.2.302). Nevertheless, Wolsey confronts his accusers in full command of himself: “If I blush / It is to see a nobleman want manners” (3.2.307-308). This section evokes the earlier confrontation between Katherine, Wolsey, and Campeius: however, where Wolsey and Campeius were polite and dignified, the noblemen here are spiteful and mocking. Katherine provides the strongest parallel to Wolsey; both of these two proud characters found themselves beset by enemies (or perceived enemies) and both react tactically.

Wolsey’s crimes, as enumerated by Suffolk, Surrey, and Norfolk, are far from “odious” (3.2.331), as Surrey claims. Indeed, the noblemen have been markedly selective in the articles they give: of the forty-three articles laid against Wolsey in Parliament, only six are mentioned here: that Wolsey wrote “*ego et meus rex*”, treating Henry like a servant to the Cardinal; that he carried the Great Seal to Flanders; that he conducted an alliance between England and Ferrara without informing Henry; that he stamped his cardinal’s hat on coins minted at York; and that he used government funds to attempt to benefit the Pope and to gain honors for himself. While an argument can be made for truncating the articles for dramatic purposes, many of the crimes Wolsey was accused of were graver than those repeated by the noblemen. By way of example, let us consider the fifth article, mentioned by Suffolk: “That out of mere ambition you have caused / Your holy hat to be stamped on the King’s coin” (3.2.324-325). In the parliamentary articles of his arrest, more information is given: “For stamping the Cardinal’s hat under the King’s arms on the coin of groats made at York.”[[434]](#footnote-434) Despite this being recited by Surrey as one of only six crimes alleged against Wolsey in *Henry VIII*, it is the fortieth given against him in Parliament, with the previous thirty-nine generally being of decreasing magnitude (article 39 details how Wolsey ordered the King’s clerk of the market to take down the King’s seal on a document detailing market prices and replace it with Wolsey’s seal). That Surrey brings up this particular crime speaks to either Surrey’s selectivity or the authors’: in either case, it contributes specifically to the general public image of Wolsey as over-proud.

Though several of these articles were fabrications and others are far from serious, they are sufficient to cement Wolsey’s fall and to evoke pity in the Lord Chamberlain:

O my lord,

Press not a falling man too far. ’Tis virtue.

His faults lie open to the laws: let them,

Not you, correct him. My heart weeps to see him

So little of his great self. (3.2.332-336)

This brief extract acts as a summative moral statement about Wolsey throughout the play: that he had faults is clear to the audience, but the vulturine glee of his noble enemies is not commendable or inspiring.

The departure of the noblemen signals a structural change in Wolsey’s stage-presence. Previously Wolsey usually was seen on stage with other characters, usually being attacked by them and usually on the defensive. In the final section of 3.2, Wolsey is largely left alone, or attended only by Thomas Cromwell. Wolsey’s speeches shift from brief retorts to extended monologues, heavily weighted with moral lessons and ruminations on the fickle nature of fate:

Farewell? A long farewell to all my greatness.

This is the state of man. Today he puts forth

The tender leaves of hopes; tomorrow blossoms,

And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;

The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,

And when he thinks, good easy man, full surely

His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,

And then he falls, as I do. (3.2.350-358)

Wolsey progresses from one imagistic metaphor to another throughout this monologue, providing summative ruminations on the nature of fate, the evils of pride, and the fickleness of princes. The overarching theme is the ‘fall of great men’, which we have already seen both with Katherine and Buckingham:

I have ventured,

Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,

This many summers in a sea of glory,

But far beyond my depth. My high-blown pride

At length broke under me and now has left me,

Weary and old with service, to the mercy

Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!

I feel my heart new opened. O, how wretched

Is that poor man that hangs on princes’ favors!

There is betwixt that smile we would aspire to,

That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin

More pangs and fears than wars or women have;

And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,

Never to hope again. (3.2.358-372)

Wolsey is careful not to blame Henry for his misfortunes, but instead muses more generally on the variable nature of “princes’ favors”. He highlights his long and diligent service (“weary and old with service”) and contrasts that “vain pomp and glory” with the less tangible benefits upon which he feels he ought to have focused his life. The dialogue is marked not by Wolsey’s anger, but by his sorrow:

CROMWELL:

How does your grace?

WOLSEY:

Why, well.

Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.

I know myself now, and I feel within me

A peace above all earthly dignities,

A still and quiet conscience. The King has cured me,

I humbly thank his grace, and from these shoulders,

These ruined pillars, out of pity, taken

A load would sink a navy—too much honour.

O, ‘tis a burden, Cromwell, ‘tis a burden

Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven.

CROMWELL:

I am glad your grace has made that right use of it.

WOLSEY:

I hope I have. I am able now, methinks,

Out of a fortitude of soul I feel,

To endure more miseries and greater far

Than my weak-hearted enemies dare offer. (3.2.376-390)

In this passage, we see how Wolsey employs recurring tropes (like ‘medicine’) to provide Cromwell and the audience with a moral lesson based on his fall. Of course, Wolsey is being somewhat disingenuous and certainly hyperbolic. That Wolsey attempts to convert his anger and disappointment into spiritual currency is commendable, even if it is not entirely plausible. This approach reflects the Wolsey found in Cavendish’s *Metrical Visions*: as we saw in Chapter II, the Wolsey found in *Le Historye* is able to reflect on a misdirected life because he has been separated from it. As Cavendish himself explained in his introduction to the *Life*, distance enables a new perspective; the Wolsey in *Henry VIII* makes the same realization in 3.2, claiming that “I know myself now” as a result of his forcible separation from power (3.2.78). Yet Wolsey states that he is glad to have had his burdens taken from his “ruined pillers”, evoking his own marked use of ceremonial pillers in his progressions.

Wolsey’s self-realization is key to contrasting him with the other characters in the play and demonstrating the value of a sympathetic reading of his character. Buckingham, for example, never admits or repents for his treason. Katherine never realizes that she has mistakenly identified Wolsey as the author of the divorce. By contrast, Wolsey’s statement that he “knows [him]self” indicates that we should understand him as a victim of both circumstance and his own ambition, rather than a more typical machinating villain. He expands on this repentance with Cromwell, revealing a caring element to his character which is not always apparent elsewhere in the play text:

[WOLSEY:]

Go get thee from me, Cromwell:

I am a poor fallen man, unworthy now

To be thy lord and master. Seek the King—

That sun I pray may never set. I have told him

What, and how true, thou art. He will advance thee:

Some little memory of me will stir him—

I know his noble nature—not to let

Thy hopeful service perish too. Good Cromwell,

Neglect him not. Make use now, and provide

For thine own future safety.

CROMWELL:

O my lord,

Must I then leave you? Must I needs forgo

So good, so noble and so true a master?

Bear witness, all that have not hearts of iron,

With what a sorrow Cromwell leaves his lord.

The King shall have my service, but my prayers

For ever and for ever shall be yours. (3.2.412-427)

Cromwell’s request that the audience witness his sorrow is both touching and further undermines the grasping, self-serving image of the Cardinal that the noblemen promote. Coming from a generally laconic man, Cromwell’s praise of Wolsey and obvious distress is surprising, and certainly move Wolsey:

Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear

In all my miseries, but thou hast forced me,

Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.

Let’s dry our eyes, and thus far hear me, Cromwell,

And when I am forgotten, as I shall be,

And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention

Of me more must be heard of, say I taught thee.

Say Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory

And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,

Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in,

A sure and safe one, though thy master missed it. (3.2.428-438)

The poignancy of the scene is heightened by the audience’s sure knowledge that Cromwell too would fall, in much the same way as Wolsey (though with a more violent end). Though this is a conversation between these two men, it has a clear revisionist element. Buckingham, for example, makes a final speech in which standard phrases of rhetorical phrases are interrupted by his own anger against his enemies. By contrast, Wolsey’s final speech is appreciative (of Cromwell, at least), repentant, and didactic. Wolsey’s final lines are morally instructive and provide something of a *speculum principis*: not necessarily for Cromwell, but rather for the audience:

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition.

By that sin fell the angels. How can man then,

The image of his maker, hope to win by it?

Love thyself last; cherish those hearts that hate thee.

Corruption wins not more than honesty.

Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace

To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not.

Let all the ends thou aimest at be thy country’s,

Thy God’s, and truth’s. Then if thou fallest, O Cromwell,

Thou fallest a blessed martyr.

Serve the King. And prithee lead me in:

There take an inventory of all I have.

To the last penny, ‘tis the King’s. My robe

And my integrity to heaven is all

I dare now call mine own. O Cromwell, Cromwell,

Had I but served my God with half the zeal

I served my King, he would not in mine age

Have left me naked to mine enemies. (3.2.440-457)

This passage is saturated with Biblical references: “image of his maker” (Genesis 1:26), “love thyself last” (Philippians 2:3), and the final lines reference Psalms 18 and 71, as McMullan points out.[[435]](#footnote-435) The strong morally instructive element, given in an ostensibly private conversation and devoid of any duplicity, speaks clearly to a level of ambiguity in regards to the authors’ intended image of Wolsey. In his final lines, he is far from the pompous, vain, and manipulative politician that his enemies portray him as; instead, the Cardinal is humble, self-effacing, repentant, and generous.

### Eulogizing and Summarizing Cardinal Wolsey in *Henry VIII*

The death of Wolsey is no less significant in this play than in the other posthumous Wolsey texts in this thesis. Katherine and her gentleman-usher provide a point-counterpoint eulogy of the Cardinal in order to provide the audience with a summative understanding of Wolsey in the play. The audience first is given an account of his death by Katherine’s gentleman-usher Griffith, whereupon the two discuss the Cardinal’s life and death. Katherine gives an unkind eulogy:

So may he rest: his faults lie gently on him.

Yet thus far, Griffith, give me leave to speak him,

And yet with charity. He was a man of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking

Himself with princes; one that by suggestion

Tied all the kingdom. Simony was fair play.

His own opinion was his law. I’th’presence

He would say untruths, and be ever double

Both in his words and meaning. He was never,

But where he meant to ruin, pitiful.

His promises were as he then was, mighty;

But his performance, as he is now, nothing.

Of his own body he was ill, and gave

The clergy ill example. (4.2.31-44)

Katherine’s speech acts as a summary of Wolsey’s general public image throughout the sixteenth century. She references his meeting with Charles V and embracing him as an equal, his strong-arm tactics in acquiring multiple rich benefices, and his personal involvement in Chancery and Star Chamber. She picks up on images that have run throughout this corpus: illness, obesity, and the Machiavellian advisor.

Her castigation of Wolsey is largely undercut at every opportunity, as we have seen above, and this instance is no exception. Griffith begs an opportunity to “speak [Wolsey’s] good” (4.2.47), observing that “Men’s evil manners live in brass, their virtues / We write in water.” (4.2.45-46):

This Cardinal,

Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly

Was fashioned to much honour. From his cradle

He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one,

Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading;

Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,

But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.

And though he were unsatisfied in getting—

Which is a sin—yet in bestowing, madam,

He was most princely: ever witness for him

Those twins of learning that he raised in you

Ipswich and Oxford—one of which fell with him,

Unwilling to outlive the good that did it;

The other, though unfinished, yet so famous,

So excellent in art, and still so rising,

That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue.

His overthrow heaped happiness upon him,

For then, and not till then, he felt himself,

And found the blessedness of being little.

And, to add greater honours to his age

Than man could give him, he died fearing God. (4.2.448-68)

The double epitaph provided by Griffiths and Katherine evokes the summative commentaries about Wolsey’s life found in Holinshed’s *Chronicle*, and Griffiths’ may owe something to the epitaph of Wolsey written by Thomas Campion which appears in that text:

This cardinall (as **Edmund Campian** in his historie of Ireland describeth him) was a man vndoubtedly borne to honor. I thinke (saith he) some princes bastard, no butchers sonne, excéeding wise, faire spo|ken, high minded, full of reuenge, vitious of his bodie, loftie to his enimies, were they neuer so big, to those that accepted and sought his fréendship woonderfull courteous, a ripe schooleman, thrall to affections, brought a bed with flatterie, insatiable to get, and more princelie in bestowing, as appeareth by his two colleges at Ipswich and Oxenford, the one ouerthrowne with his fall, the other vnfinished, and yet as it lieth for an house of students, considering all the appurtenances incomparable thorough Christendome, whereof Henrie the eight is now called founder, bicause he let it stand. He held and inioied at once the bishopriks of Yorke, Duresme, & Winchester, the dignities of lord cardinall, legat, & chancellor, the abbeie of saint Albons, diuerse priories, sundrie fat benefices **In commendam**, a great preferrer of his seruants, an aduancer of learning, stout in euerie quarell, neuer happie till this his ouerthrow. Wherein he shewed such moderation, and ended so perfectlie, that the houre of his death did him more honor, than all the pompe of his life passed.[[436]](#footnote-436)

In providing these two oppositional viewpoints, the audience is presented with the central conflict surrounding Wolsey in this play: are we to take Wolsey as the villain or the victim of circumstance? Katherine herself admits the “honest[y]” (4.2.72) of Griffith’s account and, in doing so, serves as the confirmation for the manner in which we must be meant to view Wolsey. The Cardinal is a difficult character to place, and while he has often been cast as the villain of the text, he shares little in common with traditional Shakespearean villains (from any genre) like Richard III or Iago. We are given no evidence that Wolsey has done any wrong, but the audience is continually given mixed images: a popular queen attacks Wolsey, but as we are given no evidence for her accusations (however emotionally justified), it seems clear that she has misidentified Wolsey as her enemy. The noblemen—the flower of English chivalry—are, by and large, jealous and distinctly ignoble in their scheming. By contrast, Wolsey is shown to be generous and touchingly human to his secretary Thomas Cromwell, who is portrayed as the Cardinal’s devoted servant despite the theological differences between the two men. We are told that Buckingham is the “mirror of all courtesy” (2.1.49-53), but the man himself is pompous, self-righteous, and unable to control his anger. In contrast, Wolsey defends himself—broadly speaking—with grace and courtesy, and counteracts almost all of the negative imagery made about him. The negative portrayal of the Cardinal is summarized most conclusively by Katherine in 4.2, but even she agrees with the far more complimentary eulogy given by Griffiths immediately afterwards. As a result, Shakespeare and Fletcher’s Wolsey does not sit comfortably with Wolsey’s overwhelmingly negative public image: it portrays the Cardinal as a much-maligned, hard-working politician who was unable to serve both Henry and Rome and, despite his best efforts, was undone by the fickle nature of his prince and his own ambition, rather than his villainy. Though this textual interpretation has heretofore been overlooked, *Henry VIII* returns to Wolsey an element of redress which Cavendish largely failed to do in 1554, as the polemical power of the reformist chroniclers was too much for the gentleman-usher. Yet pro-Wolsey extracts survived in parts of texts like Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, and it is that undercurrent of generous treatments on which *Henry VIII* drew.

## Conclusion

## Traduced by Ignorant Tongues?

The aim of this thesis was to provide an overview of the Tudor literary characterizations of Cardinal Wolsey, and how these images evolved across the sixteenth century in response to the social, political, and religious events of that period. We have seen how early critics of Wolsey began a process of adopting generalized negative imagery to criticising the Cardinal (beginning with the general insult ‘dog’ before moving on to calling Wolsey a ‘butcher’s dog’, for example). As the century wore on, these images were refined and reapplied to Wolsey so that they came to crystallize around the Cardinal and, despite their initially nonspecific applicability, increasingly were utilized and understood to represent Wolsey alone (‘that butcher’s cur’). What is so fascinating about Wolsey and these Wolsey-texts is this process of adaptation. Any Romanist cardinal could have been represented by the scarlet *galero*, and there were several English cardinals throughout the sixteenth century who were well-known during their respective careers: certainly William Cardinal Allen’s efforts to undermine Elizabeth I would have earned him a high level of domestic interest, for example.[[437]](#footnote-437) However, whatever their contemporary or subsequent relevance, no English prelate has ever managed to capture the public imagination quite like Wolsey. His own aggressive self-promotion, evidenced through the reporting of events like the elaborately contrived reception of his *galero* in London, was an overwhelming success. Indeed, his efforts appear to have been so effective that they eventually came to represent his lack of godly humility. Equally, Wolsey’s apparent efforts to seek out and punish those he felt were undermining his reputation (as when he punished John Roo of Grey’s Inn for his libellous play) demonstrated the Cardinal’s keen awareness of the importance of self-representation.[[438]](#footnote-438) In part by the careful manipulation of his public image, Wolsey managed to place himself squarely at the center of the European political stage.

Unsurprisingly, this high level of visibility attracted the attentions of numerous critics, who both adapted Wolsey’s self-images as well as employing their own to appropriate and twist Wolsey’s carefully crafted public relations framework. These images were powerful enough that they continued to be utilized and adapted by authors writing far after Wolsey’s death and burial in Leicester Abbey. While initially these characterizations were used to attack the Cardinal and his policies, subsequently they were taken as a rhetorical trope, able to be adapted to serve contemporary purposes long after they ceased to be directly relevant to Wolsey. The literary Wolsey came to represent far more than just the man himself: rather, he became a vehicle for transmitting anti-clerical, anti-Romanist, and anti-foreigner sentiments, and was thus employed as a propagandist weapon in the Reformation. He was a target for anger from Romanists as well, since Wolsey was often represented as having betrayed the principles of the Church that he had sworn to serve. The resulting characterizations, after a century of adoption, adaptation, and transmission, gelled around Wolsey to such an extent that modern scholars and the public alike still routinely mistake mimetic and poetic history for fact.

This ongoing misapprehension of Wolsey’s life and career is perhaps best exemplified by the final text in this study: at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Shakespeare and Fletcher undercut the stock image of Wolsey as a typical scheming cardinal by adding subtle reminders that Wolsey was not merely a melodramatic villain, but rather an imperfect person whose ambitions led to his catastrophic fall. Though Shakespeare’s authorial intentions or opinions are famously opaque, it seems feasible that if we read Wolsey as the victim and not the villain, then Shakespeare and Fletcher have taken the dominant stock image of Wolsey as a bloated and nefarious prelate and undercut it by portraying a more human, multilayered character. This reading is confirmed by comparing other characters’ actions against their perceived reputations: for example, Buckingham is referred to as the “mirror of all courtesy” (2.1.53), though he is markedly discourteous and unable to control his temper. By following this methodology we are given a play markedly different—and considerably more nuanced—from the standard reading, one which demonstrates how previous directors, actors, scholars, and audiences have allowed the stock images of Wolsey bequeathed to them by writers like Skelton and Foxe (as well as pictorial representations of an obese Wolsey, despite the fact that none were taken during Wolsey’s lifetime) to color their interpretation of Shakespeare and Fletcher’s text.

That Shakespeare’s sympathetic characterization of the Cardinal is the final incarnation of Wolsey discussed in this thesis is not just a happy coincidence, nor is this text merely used as a chronological bookend to round off the Tudor period; it provides an ideal summative example of a text which plays with the ambiguity of authorial trustworthiness in representations of mimetic and/or poetic history. This play poses readers and audiences with an abstract philosophical question with historiographical and literary implications. Was Wolsey ‘traduced by ignorant tongues’, as his character in *Henry VIII* feared? Jerome Barlowe and William Roy defended themselves by beginning their *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe* with an address to Wolsey and any potential detractors: “Rede me and be nott wrothe/ For I saye no thynge but trothe.”[[439]](#footnote-439) This concern with the protective, instructive, even salvatory nature of truth is central to this thesis, and its varying uses—or misuses—in the texts discussed highlights the problem with an anachronistic acceptance of written accounts as purveyors of ‘historical fact’. Texts like George Cavendish’s *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* and John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* have long proved popular with modern readers searching for a window into the past. The scenes viewed through those windows have often been tacitly accepted as being accurate representations of what Tudor England must have been like. In using Wolsey as a case study, we can see that this approach is fundamentally flawed, as it relies on an unacceptably anachronistic misunderstanding of the evolving nature of Tudor conceptions of history and truth. Abraham Fleming’s self-professed goal to “frankelie and boldlie speake” was made specifically to advertise his edition of the *Chronicles* as being a more ‘truthful’ portrayal of English history; as we have seen, this claim was largely based on Fleming’s inclusion of a large number of editorials to guide the reader’s understanding of particular events.[[440]](#footnote-440) It highlights that while there was an increasing emphasis being placed on accuracy, the objective reporting of facts was not the priority. Rather, as this corpus demonstrates, the goal was to provide the reader (or audience) with a convincing analytical tool to understand people and events: an interpretation that dispelled the artifices of the opposition. This is, of course, not a new discovery, and the problems associated with it certainly reach back to Wolsey’s era and earlier. Yet the image of Wolsey as a morally corrupt Machiavellian villain that is still so overwhelmingly dominant in both scholarship and popular culture—the existence of which is so largely due to historiographical authors like Foxe—confirms that we have a great deal of work to do in unpicking the means and motivations which produced characterizations like this. There are innumerable opportunities to discover how these features applied to the real Wolsey, and how these same literary mechanisms reveal not just Wolsey but the authors, publishers, and editors that utilized them (to say nothing of the audiences and readers that received them). Too little analysis of ‘historical’ texts has been undertaken, fruitful as it may prove: to understand these texts, we must first understand how and why they were created. We care about these texts because they provide glimpses of the past: by approaching them from a literary perspective as well as a historiographical one, we gain a far more nuanced understanding of not just the structures and objects of this period, but the people and ideas that shaped them.

## Appendix One: Wolsey Episodes in John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Approximate Date/Summary of Episode** | **1563 Edition:** (25 total marginal comments: 5 editorial, 3 citations) | **1570 Edition:** (160 total marginal comments: 48 editorial, 10 citations) | **1576 Edition:** (133 total marginal comments: 45 editorial, 6 citations) | **1583 Edition:** (168 total marginal comments: 44 editorial, 9 citations). |
| 1. 1515: W. manipulates H8 and the courts to free three clergymen accused of murdering Richard Hunne. | 1. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 1. p. 936, 14 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by the inquest clearing Richard Hunne of suicide and convicting the three clergymen of murder, followed by H8's letter clearing Hunne of suicide. | 1. p. 775 (orig. p. 785), 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by the inquest clearing Hunne of suicide and convicting three clergyment of his murder, followed by H8's letter clearing Hunne of suicide. | 1. p. 811, 14 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 editorial). Reiterated p. 813, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the inquest clearing Hunne of suicide and convicting three clergyment of his murder, followed by H8's letter clearing Hunne of suicide. |
|  2. Sept. 1515: W. arranges for a elaborate reception for his cardinal's hat; having received the hat informally, he sends the messenger back to Dover and arranged for a large procession to accompany it to London, where he compelled the nobility to 'make courtesy' to it. | 2. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 39. p. 966, 4 lines, 2 marginal comments (one descriptive, one editorial). Preceded by a description of the degeneracy of the contemporary Church, followed by an argument for the necessity of reform. | 39. p. 804 (orig. p. 814), 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a description of the degeneracy of the Roman Church, followed by an argument for the necessity of reform. | 39. p. 840, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a description of the degeneracy of the Roman Church, followed by an argument for the necessity of reform. |
| 3. Spring/Summer 1517: Campeius's arrival in England delayed by W. so that W. could petition Pope Leo X to make him co-equal legate with Campeius | 41. p. 417, 10 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a summary of the activities of Luther, followed by Pope Leo X's plans to send Campeius to England to drum up support for a war against the Turks. | 41. p. 1120, 19 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by table of persecuted English Protestants in H8's reign, followed by Campeius's 1517 arrival in England.  | 41. p. 959, 37 lines (columnated), 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by table of persecuted English Protestants in H8's reign, followed by Campeius's 1517 arrival in England.  | 41. p. 986, 16 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by table of persecuted English Protestants in H8's reign, followed by Campeius's 1517 arrival in England.  |
| 4. July 29 1517: Campeius given mules/saddlebags by W. to bulk out his procession to London, with the accidental spilling of the rubbish-filled saddlebags. | 3. p. 418, 10 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by Pope Leo X's plans to make war against the Turks, followed by Campeius's procession into London. | 3. p. 1120, 12 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 editorial, 1 descriptive). Preceded by Foxe's editorial introduction to section on W., followed by Campeius's procession to London. | 3. p. 959, 26 lines (columnated), two marginal comments (one editorial, one descriptive). Preceded by Foxe's editorial introduction to section on W., followed by Campeius's procession to London. | 3. p. 986, 15 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by Foxe's editorial introduction to section on W., followed by Campeius's procession to London. |
| 5. 1517: W. sets up a legatine court to discuss ecclesiastic matters; instead of reform, he uses his legatine powers to display his vanity and strengthen his hold over the Church and nobility.  | 5. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 4. pp. 1120-1121, 30 lines, 5 marginal comments (two editorial, two descriptive, one citation). Preceded by Campeius's delayed arrival in England, followed by an editorial passage about W.'s proud and sinful behavior in regards to his legatine court. | 4. pp. 959-960, 60 lines (columnated), 5 marginal comments (two editorial, two descriptive, one citation). Preceded by Campeius's delayed arrival in England, followed by an editorial passage about W.'s proud and sinful behavior in regards to his legatine court. | 4. p. 986, 29 lines, 5 marginal comments (two editorial, two descriptive, one citation). Preceded by Campeius's delayed arrival in England, followed by an editorial passage about W.'s proud and sinful behavior in regards to his legatine court. |
| 6. c.1517: A ‘comic’ tale about a supposed fire in St. Mary’s in Oxford; described as worthy of “great reproche and derysion euen of chyldren”, just as W. and Campeius were as well. | 4. p. 418, 32 lines, 2 marginal comments (one editorial, one citation). Preceded by Campeius's arrival in England, followed by a catalogue of English Protestant abjurations in H8’s reign. | 6. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 6. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 6. This episode does not appear in this edition. |
| 7. 1521: W. arranges for a magnificent reception and Mass when the Pope sends a bull conferring on H8 the title ‘defender of the faith’, which W. sought for H8 in the first place. | 17. p. 435, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceeded by anecdote about the burning of Protestant martyrs in Germany, followed by a recounting of W.’s reorganization of H8’s household. | 5. p. 1121, 9 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Campeius's procession to London (and the mule incident), followed by W. bringing the Great Seal to Brussels for a treaty conference. | 5. p. 960, 17 lines (columnated), 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Campeius's procession to London (and the mule incident), followed by W. bringing the Great Seal to Brussels for a treaty conference. | 5. pp. 986-987, 12 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Campeius's procession to London (and the mule incident), followed by W. bringing the Great Seal to Brussels for a treaty conference. |
| 8. 1525: W. orders the suppression of small monasteries. | 8. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 40. p. 1121, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s treaty conference in Brussels, followed by W.'s taking English money to help free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor. | 40. p. 960, 8 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s treaty conference in Brussels, followed by W.'s taking English money to help free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor. | 44. p. 987, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation). Preceded by W.'s legatine court abuses, followed by an editorial passage on W.'s warmongering. |
| 9. c.1525: Cromwell employed by W. | 9. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 20. p. 1121, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by editorial on W.'s manipulation of H8, followed by editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries. | 20. p. 960, 7 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by editorial on W.'s manipulation of H8, followed by editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries. | 40. p. 987, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s treaty conference in Brussels, followed by W.'s taking English money to help free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor. |
| 10. 1525: The founding of Cardinal's College, Oxford: W. spares nothing to obtain the best faculty and furnishings for it. | 18. p. 435-36, 8 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceeded by W. implementing the 1/6th tax in Norfolk and Suffolk, followed by W's swapping of Hampton Court to H8 in return for Richmond Palace. | 43. p. 1121, 18 lines, 4 marginal comments (one editorial, one descriptive, two citations). Preceded by W.'s using English money to pay the French to free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor, followed by W.'s ordering of the 1/6th tax. | 10. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 20. p. 987, 9 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by editorial on W.'s manipulation of H8, followed by editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries. |
| 11. 1525: W. manipulates Richard Pacie, H8's ambassador in Venice to such an extent that he goes mad. | 11. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 17. p. 1121, 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries, followed by W.'s reorganization of H8's household. | 43. p. 960, 32 lines (columnated), 4 marginal comments (one editorial, one descriptive, two citations). Preceded by W.'s using English money to pay the French to free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor, followed by W.'s ordering of the 1/6th tax. | 43. p. 987, 13 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 citation). Preceded by W.'s using English money to pay the French to free the Pope from the Holy Roman Emperor, followed by W.'s ordering of the 1/6th tax. |
| 12. Feb. 6 1526: W. persecutes Fr. Barnes and two merchants for heresy. | 15. p. 436, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.’s reorganization of H8’s household, followed by W.’s judgment of Fr. Barnes and two merchants. | 18. pp. 1121-1122, 9 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by W.'s implementation of the 1/6th tax, followed by W. trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor.  | 17. p. 960, 10 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (citation). Preceded by an editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries, followed by W.'s reorganization of H8's household. | 17. p. 987, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation). Preceded by an editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries, followed by W.'s reorganization of H8's household. |
| 13. Feb. 11 1526: W. hears the arguments of Barnes, wherein Barnes describes the pompousness of W. W. then orders the punishment of Barnes et al. | 12. p. 436, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W. accepting Richmond from H8, followed by an account of Tyndale beginning his translation of the Bible and of the death of Ludovic of Hungary. | 13. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 18. p. 960, 9 lines (columnated), 0 marginal comments. Preceded by W.'s implementation of the 1/6th tax, followed by W. trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor.  | 13. This episode does not appear in this edition. |
| 14. Shrovetide 1526: Testimony of a witness that Garret was arrested by order of W. for possession of Protestant books. | 20. pp. 439-440, 30 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Clement VII's capture by Charles V, followed by the account of a Jew murdered in Constantinople for converting to Christianity. | 15. p. 1122, 7 lines, one marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reorganization of H8's household, followed by W.'s 1524-1526 involvement in the Holy Roman Emperor's wars against France.  | 15. p. 960, 14 lines (columnated), one marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reorganization of H8's household, followed by W.'s 1524-1526 involvement in the Holy Roman Emperor's wars against France.  | 18. p. 987, 9 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by W.'s implementation of the 1/6th tax, followed by W. trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor.  |
| 15. 1526: W. gives Hampton Court to H8 in exchange for Richmond Manor. | 14. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 16. p. 1122, 17 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor, followed by the 1527 capture of the Pope by the Holy Roman Emperor. | 16. pp. 960-961, 34 lines (columnated), 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor, followed by the 1527 capture of the Pope by the Holy Roman Emperor. | 15. p. 987, 7 lines, one marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reorganization of H8's household, followed by W.'s 1524-1526 involvement in the Holy Roman Emperor's wars against France.  |
| 16. 1526: W.'s political machinations during the Holy Roman Emperor's war against France. | 26. p. 440, 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the martyrdom of the converted Jew in Constantinople by the Turks, followed by W. stirring up trouble with the Emperor in order to be made Pope. | 20. pp. 1123-1124, 41 lines, 3 marginal comments (two descriptive, one editorial). Episode revisited. Preceded by W.'s political dealings during HRE's 1524-1526 war against France, followed by W.'s threats against HRE in an effort to be made Pope. | 20. pp. 961-962, 82 lines (columnated), 3 marginal comments (two descriptive, one editorial). Episode revisited. Preceded by W.'s political dealings during HRE's 1524-1526 war against France, followed by W.'s threats against HRE in an effort to be made Pope. | 16. p. 987, 24 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s trading Hampton Court to H8 for Richmond Manor, followed by the 1527 capture of the Pope by the Holy Roman Emperor. |
| 17. 1526: W. implements the 1/6th tax in Norfolk and Suffolk. | 16. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 25. p. 1124, 16 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s efforts to free Pope Clement VII, followed by W.'s efforts to get the Pope to name H8 'defender of the faith'.  | 25. p. 962, 32 lines (columnated), 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s efforts to free Pope Clement VII, followed by W.'s efforts to get the Pope to name H8 'defender of the faith'.  | 20. p. 988, 23 lines, 5 marginal comments (descriptive). Episode revisited. Preceded by W.'s political dealings during HRE's 1524-1526 war against France, followed by W.'s threats against HRE in an effort to be made Pope. |
| 18. 1526: W. reorganizes H8’s household. | 25. pp. 440-41, 31 lines, 3 marginal comments (two editorial, one descriptive). Preceded by the martyrdoms of Arture et. al, followed by the account of W. organizing the reception of the Papal title ‘defender of the faith’ for H8. | 7. p. 1124, 26 lines, 3 marginal comments (two descriptive, one editorial). Preceded by W.'s attempts to be made Pope, followed by the reception of W.'s hat when it first was sent from Rome. | 7. p. 962, 52 lines (columnated), 3 marginal comments (two descriptive, one editorial). Preceded by W.'s attempts to be made Pope, followed by the reception of W.'s hat when it first was sent from Rome. | 25. p. 988, 16 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s efforts to free Pope Clement VII, followed by W.'s efforts to get the Pope to name H8 'defender of the faith'.  |
| 19. 1527: Simon Fyshe, a Grey’s Inn lawyer, plays a role in a satirical anti-Wolsey play by John Roo. | 7. p. 441, 24 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by W.’s threats against the Emperor, followed by W.’s reception of his cardinal’s hat. | 2. p. 1124, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s organization of the reception of H8's papal title 'defender of the faith', followed by W.'s mistreating of Richard Pacie. | 19. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 7. p. 988, 26 lines, 3 marginal comments (two descriptive, one editorial). Preceded by W.'s attempts to be made Pope, followed by the reception of W.'s hat when it first was sent from Rome. |
| 20. 1527: W. attempts to stir H8 to fight the Holy Roman Emperor to free the captive Clement VII.[2] When he is unable to do so, W. secures £24,000 for the purpose of waging war alongside the French to help free the Pope and spends the money on the French army. | 19. pp. 448-449, 44 lines, one marginal comment (citation, possibly a typographical error as it provides no source text). Preceded by the publishing of Fyshe’s book (which stirred up the English clergy against him), followed by Cuthbert Tunstall’s order for the collection and burning of English New Testaments. | 11. pp. 1124-1125, 81 lines, 16 marginal comments (4 editorial, 12 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reception of his cardinal's hat, followed by a letter of W.'s to Gardiner regarding W.'s efforts to be made Pope. | 2. p. 962, 10 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s organization of the reception of H8's papal title 'defender of the faith', followed by W.'s mistreating of Richard Pacie. | 2. p. 989, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s organization of the reception of H8's papal title 'defender of the faith', followed by W.'s mistreating of Richard Pacie. |
| 21. Sept. 8, 1527: Sir Richard Bayfield decries W.'s pride and symbols of power. | 21. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 21. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 21. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 11. pp. 988-989, 85 lines, 16 marginal comments (4 editorial, 12 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reception of his cardinal's hat, followed by a letter of W.'s to Gardiner regarding W.'s efforts to be made Pope. |
| 22. Late 1527: W. orders and presides over the trial of Arthur and Bilney. | 28. pp. 457-458, 39 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by H8’s speech to the legatine court, followed by H8’s response to Katherine’s testimony. | 45. pp. 1125-1126 (orig. p. 1226), 59 lines, 8 marginal comments (5 editorial, 3 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s driving Pacie to madness, followed by a letter from H8 to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope. | 22. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 45. p. 990, 33 lines, 5 marginal comments (4 editorial, 1 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s driving Pacie to madness, followed by a letter from H8 to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope. |
| 23. Dec. 1527: W. condemns Bilney and promises to reform the Church, but does not. | 27. pp. 458-459, 46 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by H8’s response to Katherine’s testimony, followed by an account of Sir Thomas More’s 1531 address to the House of Commons on the divorce. | 47. pp. 1126-1129, 291 lines, 35 marginal comments (22 editorial, 13 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s letter to Gardiner regarding W.'s bid for the Papacy, followed by W.'s condemnation of Fr. Barnes. | 11. pp. 962-963, 162 lines (columnated), 16 marginal comments (4 editorial, 12 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s reception of his cardinal's hat, followed by a letter of W.'s to Gardiner regarding W.'s efforts to be made Pope. | 47. pp. 990-993, 291 lines, 35 marginal comments (22 editorial, 13 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s letter to Gardiner regarding W.'s bid for the Papacy, followed by W.'s condemnation of Fr. Barnes. |
| 24. 1527: W. suppresses Fishe's Supplication of Beggars. | 24. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 12. p. 1129, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's letter to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope, followed by the abjuration of Bilney et al. | 24. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 12. pp. 993-994 (orig. p. 966), 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's letter to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope, followed by the abjuration of Bilney et al. |
| 25. 1528: W. threatens to stir up war in Europe if the Emperor will not support his efforts to be made Pope. | 22. pp. 461-462, 48 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the martyrdom of Thomas Hytten, followed by the examination of Bilney. | 23. p. 1129, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Date changed from 1527 to 1528. Preceded by persecution of Barnes and two merchants, followed by Campeius's 1529 arrival in England for the divorce. | 45. pp. 963-964, 118 lines (columnated), 8 marginal comments (5 editorial, 3 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s driving Pacie to madness, followed by a letter from H8 to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope. | 23. p. 994 (orig. p. 966), 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Date retained from 1570 edition as 1528. Preceded by persecution of Barnes and two merchants, followed by Campeius's 1529 arrival in England for the divorce. |
| 26. Nov. 1528: W. summons senior clergymen to Westminster to discuss Church reforms, but nothing is done aside from condemning Arture, Bilney, Loome, and Garret to death for heresy. | 23. p. 480, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the trial of Bilney, followed by the articles under which Bilney was condemned. | 30. pp. 1129-1130, 17 lines, 4 marginal comments (3 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by the trial of Bilney et al., followed by W. cast in the praemunire. | 26. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 30. p. 994 (orig. p. 966), 15 lines, 4 marginal comments (3 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by the trial of Bilney et al., followed by W. cast in the praemunire. |
| 27. May 28 1529: W. and Campeius defer a decision on the divorce to Rome. | 10. p. 501 (original page number 497), 26 lines, 5 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by an account of three martyrs in Dovercourt, followed by the reasons for Frith’s martyrdom. | 29. p. 1130, 38 lines, 8 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the cardinals' deferral of the decision on H8's divorce, followed by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor. | 47. pp. 964-967, 582 lines (columnated), 35 marginal comments (22 editorial, 13 descriptive). Preceded by W.'s letter to Gardiner regarding W.'s bid for the Papacy, followed by W.'s condemnation of Fr. Barnes. | 29. p. 994 (orig. p. 966), 39 lines, 8 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the cardinals' deferral of the decision on H8's divorce, followed by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor. |
| 28. May 28 1529: Katherine’s response to H8’s divorce proceedings in W. and Campeius’s legatine court, wherein she accuses W. of pushing forward the divorce in retribution for Charles V not making W. Pope. | 13. pp. 605 (orig.p. 601)-607 (orig. p. 603), 99 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Barnes’s activities prior to his arrest, followed by Barnes’s attempts to escape and his subsequent imprisonment. | 31. p. 1130, 13 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation, 1 descriptive). Preceded by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor, followed by the Nov. 1530 Parliament's concerns about the abuses of the clergy. | 28. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 28. This episode does not appear in this edition. |
| 29. Oct. 1 1529: A council of nobles informs H8 that W. is cast in the praemunire. W. deprived of the Great Seal and dismissed from London. | 29. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 32. p. 1132, 20 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a debate in Parliament about clergymen holding pluralities, followed by W.'s journey to York. | 12. p. 967, 12 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's letter to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to help W. become Pope, followed by the abjuration of Bilney et al. | 31. p. 994 (orig. p. 966), 13 lines 2 marginal comments (1 citation, 1 descriptive). Preceded by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor, followed by the Nov. 1530 Parliament's concerns about the abuses of the clergy. |
| 30. Nov. 1529: Campeius returns to England to decide with W. on H8's divorce. The cardinals defer the decision to Rome. | 30. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 34. p. 1132, 16 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by selected articles of W.'s arrest, followed by W.'s arrest for treason. | 23. p. 967, 8 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (citation). Preceded by W.'s persecution of Barnes and two merchants, followed by H8's divorce. | 32. p. 996, 20 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a debate in Parliament about clergymen holding pluralities, followed by W.'s journey to York. |
| 31. 1530: Letter from Erasmus to John Vergera in which he describes W.'s fall from power. | 31. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 35. pp. 1132-1133, 40 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s journey north to York, followed by W.'s death. | 30. p. 967, 28 lines (columnated), 4 marginal comments (3 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by the trial of Bilney et al., followed by W. cast in the praemunire. | 34. p. 996, 19 lines, 2 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by selected articles of W.'s arrest, followed by W.'s arrest for treason. |
| 32. Nov. 1530: articles of W.'s arrest brought into Parliament. | 32. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 36. p. 1133, 14 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s arrest for treason, followed by the imprisonment of Protestants in Cardinal College. | 29. pp. 967-968, 64 lines (columnated), 8 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the cardinals' deferral of the decision on H8's divorce, followed by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor. | 35. p. 996, 36 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s journey north to York, followed by W.'s death. |
| 33. Late 1530: Humphrey  Monmouth (alternatively Humfrey Mummouth) compelled to write to W. answering charges of heresy. | 6. p. 625 (orig. p.621), 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Foxe’s reasons for providing the ‘comic’ tale about the supposed St. Mary’s fire in Oxford, followed by the account of the fire. | 10. p. 1133, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the death of W., followed by W.'s persecution of Humphrey Monmouth. | 33. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 36. pp. 996-997, 20 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s arrest for treason, followed by the imprisonment of Protestants in Cardinal College. |
| 34. Late 1530: W. journeys north to York at the request of H8. | 34. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 33. pp. 1133-1134, 69 lines, 9 marginal comments (7 descriptive, 2 citations). Preceded by the persecution of Frith and others, followed by the story of Thomas Hytten. | 31. p. 968, 26 lines (columnated), 2 marginal comments (1 citation, 1 descriptive). Preceded by Thomas More's appointment as Chancellor, followed by the Nov. 1530 Parliament's concerns about the abuses of the clergy. | 10. p. 997, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the death of W., followed by W.'s persecution of Humphrey Monmouth. |
| 35. October/November 1530: W. arrested for treason on account of his having written to the Pope complaining about his treatment by H8, including W.'s apparent antagonism towards the divorce. | 35. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 22. pp. 1134-1135, 200 lines (columnated), 7 marginal comments (5 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by the story of Thomas Hytten, followed by the articles laid against Bilney and Arthur. | 32. p. 969, 40 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a debate in Parliament about clergymen holding pluralities, followed by W.'s journey to York. | 33. pp. 997, 69 lines, 9 marginal comments (7 descriptive, 2 citations). Preceded by the persecution of Frith and others, followed by the story of Thomas Hytten. |
| 36. Nov. 29, 1530: The death of W., in which horrible signs of his sinfulness could be seen. | 36. This episode does not appear in this edition. Note: only reference to W.'s death is in 38. (p. 1754, orig. p. 1738) in the account of Gardiner's death. | 23. p. 1135, 27 lines (columnated), 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by an introduction to the story of Thomas Hitten, followed by the trial of Bilney. | 34. p. 969-970, 32 lines (columnated), 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by selected articles of W.'s arrest, followed by W.'s arrest for treason. | 22. pp. 998-999, 95 lines (46 columnated), 7 marginal comments (5 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by the story of Thomas Hytten, followed by the articles laid against Bilney and Arthur. |
| 37. July 1540: Cromwell compares Cranmer favorably against W. | 37. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 19. pp. 1152-1153, 32 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the death of Stafford, reader in divinity in Cambridge, followed by the persecution of Fishe and his wife by Thomas More. | 35. p. 970, 80 lines (columnated), 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s journey north to York, followed by W.'s death. | 19. pp. 1013-1014, 35 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the death of Stafford, reader in divinity in Cambridge, followed by the persecution of Fishe and his wife by Thomas More. |
| 38. 1555: Death of Stephen Gardiner, in which Foxe wonders if Gardiner stunk before he died, as Wolsey allegedly did. | 38. p. 1383, 1 line, 1 marginal comment (citation). Preceded by the death of Gardiner, followed by a warning to Dr. Boner. | 10. p. 1174, 18 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Edited to focus more on the College. Preceded by an introduction to the story of John Frith, followed by an account of the imprisonment of Frith in Cardinal's College, Oxford. | 36. p. 970, 14 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by W.'s arrest for treason, followed by the imprisonment of Protestants in Cardinal College. | 24. p. 1017, 12 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Fishe's arguments against the clergy in the Supplication of Beggars followed by a letter from Tunstall to his archdeacons banning Protestant books. |
| 39. Editorial: Foxe asks the reader to read Chaucer's 'The Plowman's Tale' as an allegory of the vices of the degenerate Church, if Foxe's examples of Wolsey are not convincing enough. | 39. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 24. p. 1157, 12 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Fishe's arguments against the clergy in the Supplication of Beggars followed by a letter from Tunstall to his archdeacons banning Protestant books. | 23. pp. 971-972, 24 lines (columnated), 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by an introduction to the story of Thomas Hitten, followed by the trial of Bilney. | 10. pp. 1031-1032, 47 lines, 2 marginal comment (descriptive). Episode revisited: provides more information about W.'s college. Preceded by an introduction to the story of John Frith, followed by an account of the imprisonment of Frith in Cardinal's College, Oxford. |
| 40. Editorial: W. manipulated H8, so that while H8 'bore the sword, W. gave the stroke' and was more like a prince than a priest, and was a warmonger.  | 40. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 28. pp. 1193-1194, 31 lines, 4 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 editorial, 1 citation). Preceded by H8's testimony to the legatine court, followed by the cardinals' deferral of the decision on the divorce. | 9. p. 1150, 14 lines, 4 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Cromwell's early career, followed by W.'s suppression of small monasteries. | 21. p. 1048, 48 lines, 5 marginal comments (1 citation, 2 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by Peerson's accusations against Bayfield, followed by the execution of ten Anabaptists. |
| 41. Editoral: As the Spartans showed drunks to their children as a means of combatting drunkenness, Foxe introduces a section on W. as an example of the corrupt nature of the Roman Church. | 33. p. 1754 (orig. p. 1738), 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). | 27. pp. 1194-1195, 7 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by Katherine's defense in the legatine court, followed by the Pope's unwillingness to make a decision regarding the divorce. | 8. p. 1150, 13 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Cromwell's employment by W., followed by some initial conflicts between Cromwell and H8. | 30. pp. 1049-1050, 31 lines, 5 marginal comments (descriptive). Episode revisited. Preceded by H8's initial decision to pursure the divorce, followed by H8's speech to the legatine court. |
| 42. Editorial: Foxe includes W. amongst a list of treacherous English clergymen. | 42. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 42. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 37. p. 1160, 18 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by conflicts between Gardiner and Cromwell, followed by the 1541 Parliament. | 42. This episode does not appear in this edition. |
| 43. Editorial on W.'s suppression of monasteries c. 1528. | 43. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 46. p. 1195, 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Reference to 47. Preceded by the Pope's unwillingness to allow the divorce, followed by H8's resolution to break from the Roman Church. | 42. p. 1161, 17 lines, 2 marginal comments (editorial). Preceded by an editorial defense of Cromwell, followed by an account of H8's divorce from Anne of Cleves. | 27. p. 1051, 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by arguments in the legatine court, followed by Clement VII's delay in making a decision regarding the divorce. |
| 44. W. brings the Great Seal to Brussels for a treaty conference, displaying it and compelling many English noblemen to kneel to him, to impress the Germans. | 44. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 44. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 44. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 46. p. 1051, 16 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 editorial, 1 citation). Preceded by Clement VII's delays in making a decision on the divorce, followed by H8's placing trade embargoes on Roman goods.  |
| 45. Letter from W. to Gardiner, requesting Gardiner's assistance in regards to W.'s bid to be made Pope. | 45. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 9. p. 1347, 14 lines, 4 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Cromwell's career prior to his employment by W., followed by Cromwell's role in W.'s suppression of monasteries. | 13. p. 1164, 38 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 editorial, 1 descriptive). Preceded by the arrest of Barnes, followed by the examination of Barnes. | 9. p. 1179, 15 lines, 4 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Cromwell's career prior to his employment by W., followed by Cromwell's role in W.'s suppression of monasteries. |
| 46. Editorial reference to W.'s efforts to be made Pope, as seen in 47. | 46. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 8. p. 1347, 13 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the details of Cromwell's initial employment by W., followed by Cromwell's career after W.'s downfall. | 46. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 8. p. 1179, 9 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the details of Cromwell's initial employment by W., followed by Cromwell's career after W.'s downfall. |
| 47. Letter from H8 to his Roman ambassadors instructing them to assist W.'s bid to become Pope. | 47. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 37. p. 1360, 18 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by conflicts between Gardiner and Cromwell, followed by the 1541 Parliament. | 12. p. 1165, 18 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the imprisonment of Barnes, followed by Barnes' escape from prison. | 37. p. 1189, 18 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by conflicts between Gardiner and Cromwell, followed by the 1541 Parliament. |
|  |  | 26. p. 1364, 23 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by the arrest of Barnes, followed by the examination of Barnes by Gardiner. | 14. p. 1166, 9 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Garret's bringing Protestant books into England, followed by Dalaber's account of Garret's persecution. | 26. pp. 1192-1193, 23 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by the arrest of Barnes, followed by the examination of Barnes by Gardiner. |
|  |  | 14. p. 1366, 27 lines, 4 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Garret's bringing Protestant books into England, followed by Dalaber's account of Garret's persecution. | 38. p. 1680, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Gardiner's antagonism towards Elizabeth, followed by an exhortation to Boner to learn from Gardiner's mistakes. | 14. p. 1194, 27 lines, 4 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Garret's bringing Protestant books into England, followed by Dalaber's account of Garret's persecution. |
|  |  | 38. p. 1952, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Gardiner's antagonism towards Elizabeth, followed by an exhortation to Boner to learn from Gardiner's mistakes. | 27. p. 1753, 11 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Cranmer's early career, followed by Cranmer's position on H8's divorce of Anne Boleyn. | 38. p. 1787, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Gardiner's antagonism towards Elizabeth, followed by an exhortation to Boner to learn from Gardiner's mistakes. |
|  |  |  |  | 30. p. 1860, 12 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Episode revisited. Preceded by Cranmer's early career, followed by Cranmer's arguments in favor of the divorce. |

## Appendix Two: Wolsey Episodes in Holinshed’s *Chronicle*

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| **Date/Summary of Episode** | **1577 Edition:**109 total marginal notes, 5 editorial marginal notes (4.6% of total) | **1587 Edition:**256 total marginal notes, 25 editorial marginal notes (9.8% of total) |
| 1. Summer 1513: Wolsey participates in H8's victory at the Battle of the Spurs. | 1. p. 1479, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a description of H8's army, followed by a description of H8's victory at Thérouanne. | 1. p. 818, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a description of H8's army, followed by a description of H8's victory at Thérouanne. |
| 2. September 29 1513: Wolsey summons the 80,000 citizens of Tournai to swear loyalty to H8. | 2. p. 1487, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8 taking possession of Tournai, followed by H8's triumphal entry into Tournai. | 2. p. 824, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8 taking possession of Tournai, followed by H8's triumphal entry into Tournai. |
| 3. March 1514: Wolsey appointed Bishop of Lincoln. | 3. p. 1494, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's ennobling several men, including Charles Brandon as Duke of Suffolk, followed by H8's intention to marry his daughter Mary to Charles V. | 3. p. 829, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's ennobling several men, including Charles Brandon as Duke of Suffolk, followed by H8's intention to marry his daughter Mary to Charles V. |
| 4. June 1514: H8, relying on Wolsey's counsel, agrees to marry his sister Mary to Louis XII of France. | 4. p. 1495, 3 lines, 2 marginal comments (illegible). Preceded by the marriage negotiations, followed by Mary's journey to France.  | 4. p. 832, 3 lines, 2 marginal comments (illegible). Preceded by the marriage negotiations, followed by Mary's journey to France.  |
| 5. 1514: Wolsey appointed Archbishop of York, who "bare all the rule about the king". | 5. p. 1496, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the death of Cardinal Bainbridge, followed by the death of Louis XII. | 5. p. 835, 5 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the death of Cardinal Bainbridge, followed by the death of Louis XII. |
| 6. September 1515: Wolsey elected Cardinal. | 6. p. 1497, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the marriage of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, and Mary Tudor, the French queen. Followed by the November 1515 Parliament. | 6. p. 836, 9 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the marriage of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk, and Mary Tudor, the French queen. Followed by the November 1515 Parliament. |
| 7. November 1516: Wolsey appointed Lord Chancellor, after his predecessor Archbishop Warham retires due to Wolsey's alleged meddling. | 7. p. 1497, 16 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the November 1515 Parliament, followed by the reception of Wolsey's hat. | 7. p. 837, 12 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the November 1515 Parliament, followed by Wolsey's persecuting Simon Fitz Richard for unclear reasons. |
| 8. November 1516: Wolsey takes a jacket and several brooches from Simon Fitz Richard and causes others to take his example (namely, the Mayor of Rochester).  | 8. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 8. p. 837, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Hall]). Preceded by Wolsey's appointment as Lord Chancellor, followed by the reception of Wolsey's hat. |
| 9. November 1516: Wolsey compels the gentry of Kent to receive his cardinal's hat and bring it to London, where he receives it with great pomp in Westminster. | 9. pp. 1497-1498, 10 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's appointment as Lord Chancellor, followed by Sir William Blunt (Lord Mountjoy)'s appointment as Governor of Tournai.  | 9. p. 837, 46 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 citation). Preceded by Wolsey's persecution of Simon Fitz Richard, followed by Sir William Blunt (Lord Mountjoy)'s appointment as Governor of Tournai.  |
| 10. Spring 1517: Wolsey orders a reckoning of expenses and accounts that he enforces with brutal efficiency, causing many nobles to be punished. | 10. p. 1498, 7 lines, 2 marginal comments (2 descriptive). Preceded by H8's initiating the construction of a castle at Tournai, followed by an editoriaized account of Wolsey's setting up new civil courts. | 10. p. 838, 13 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8's initiating the construction of a castle at Tournai, followed by Wolsey's setting up new civil courts. |
| 11. Summer 1517: Wolsey sets up new civil courts. | 12. p. 1498, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Wolsey's reckoning of accounts in H8's name, followed by Wolsey's setting up new civil courts. | 11. pp. 838-839, 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's reckoning of accounts in H8's name, followed by an editorialized account of Wolsey's administration of the realm. |
| 12. Summer 1517: Editorialized account of Wolsey's earnest (if misguided and arrogant) attempts to administer the realm, and the nobility's resulting complaints to H8 that 'the servant should not exceed the master'.  | 11. pp. 1498-1499, 18 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 2 illegible). Preceded by Wolsey's setting up new civil courts, followed by Wolsey's refusing to allow Charles Brandon's debts to the king to be forgiven. | 12. p. 839, 18 lines, 4 marginal comments (3 citations, 1 illegible [likely descriptive]). Preceded by Wolsey's setting up new civil courts, followed by Wolsey's refusing to allow Charles Brandon's debts to the king to be forgiven. |
| 13. Late summer 1517: Wolsey refuses to allow Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, to forgo repaying loans given to him by H8. | 13. p. 1499, 5 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an editorialized account of Wolsey's administration of the realm, followed by Wolsey's conflicts with King Francis of France over the bishopric of Tournai. | 13. p. 839, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by an editorialized account of Wolsey's administration of the realm, followed by Wolsey's conflicts with King Francis of France over the bishopric of Tournai. |
| 14. October 1517: Wolsey comes into conflict with King Francis of France over the revenues from the bishopric of Tournai, which H8 had granted him. As a result, Wolsey causes H8 to send Richard Pace into Germany, to pay for a war between France and the Holy Roman Empire. | 14. p. 1499, 15 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 illegible, 1 descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's refusal of Charles Brandon's pleas for forgiveness of loans from H8, followed by an account of xenophobic riots in London sparked by one Dr. Bele's sermon. | 14. p. 839, 14 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 editorial). Preceded by Wolsey's refusal of Charles Brandon's pleas for forgiveness of loans from H8, followed by a description of H8's Christmas celebrations. |
| 15. May 1518: Wolsey orders the Lord Mayor of London to impose a curfew to control the London riots in the king's absence. | 15. p. 1500, 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the early stages of the rioting, followed by the Lord Mayor of London implementing the curfew. | 15. p. 841, 12 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the early stages of the rioting, followed by the Lord Mayor of London implementing the curfew. |
| 16. May 1518: Wolsey, realizing the extent of the rioting, reinforces his house and sends Sir Thomas Parre to inform the king at Richmond. | 16. p. 1501, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of the riots, followed by the arrests of 3,000 rioters and the subsequence court proceedings. | 16. p. 842, 5 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of the riots, followed by the arrests of 3,000 rioters and the subsequent court proceedings. |
| 17. May 22 1518: Wolsey reprimands 4,000 rioters being pardoned by H8 at Westminster. | 17. p. 1503, 8 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the king's pardoning several ringleaders of the riots, followed by Margaret Tudor's return to Scotland. | 17. p. 844, 10 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the direct speech of the king's pardon, followed by Margaret Tudor's return to Scotland. |
| 18. 1518: Wolsey named papal legate a latere. | 18. p. 1504, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Cardinal Campeius' arrival in England, followed by Wolsey's attempts to secure the bishopric of Bath for himself. | 18. p. 845, 5 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 citation [Hall]). Preceded by Cardinal Campeius' arrival in England, followed by Wolsey's attempts to secure the bishopric of Bath for himself.  |
| 19. 1518: Wolsey attempts to secure the bishopric of Bath for himself. | 19. p. 1504, 10 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey being named papal legate, followed by Campeius's task of obtaining money from H8 for a war against the Turks. | 19. p. 845, 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 citation [Hall]). Preceded by Wolsey's being named papal legate, followed by Campeius's arrival in England from Calais. |
| 20. 1518: Wolsey sends red cloth to improve the appearance of Campeius' men for his entry into England. He also gives Campeius several mules loaded with richly-decorated coffers to make his baggage train appear more impressive. | 20. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 21. p. 845, 16 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by Wolsey's efforts to secure the bishopric of Bath for himself.  |
| 21. 1518: Campeius' dealings in England. Wolsey and H8 give rich rewards to Campeius for his efforts to obtain funds for a war against the Turks, though he allegedly left his fundraising unfinished. | 21. p. 1504, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by Wolsey's attempts to secure the bishopric of Bath for himself, followed by Wolsey's setting up a legatine court. | 20. p. 845, 26 lines, 3 marginal comment (1 editorial, 1 citation [Guicciardini], 1 descriptive). Preceded by Campeius' embarrassing entry into London, followed by an account of Wolsey's legatine court. |
| 22. 1519: Wolsey obtains permission from H8 and the Pope to set up a legatine court to preside over all ecclesiastic legal concerns in England. | 22. pp. 1504-1505, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Campeius' departure from England, followed by an editorial on Wolsey's pride. | 22. p. 845, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Campeius' departure from England, followed by an editorial on Wolsey's pride. |
| 23. 1519: Editorial on how Wolsey's pride and greed caused large-scale corruption and moral degeneracy in H8's court. | 23. p. 1505, 7 lines, 1 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's setting up a legatine court, followed by an editorial on how Wolsey forced dukes and earls to serve him while he sang Mass. | 23. p. 845, 8 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 editorial, 1 citation [Gu. Ha.?]). Preceded by Wolsey's setting up a legatine court, followed by Pope Leo X's attempts to declare a crusade against the Turks. |
| 24. 1519: Editorial on how Wolsey forced the highest peers in the realm to serve him while he sang Mass. | 24. p. 1505, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by an editorial on Wolsey's greed and pride corrupting H8's court, followed by Wolsey's overproud reaction to an imagined insult by Archbishop Warham. | 24. p. 847, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by the marriage of H8's nephew, followed by Wolsey's overproud reaction to an imagined insult by Archbishop Warham. |
| 25. 1519: Wolsey overreacts to an imagined insult when Archbishop Warham calls him "brother" in a letter. | 25. p. 1505, 9 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an editorial on how Wolsey's pride and greed caused large-scale corruption and moral degeneracy in H8's court, followed by Wolsey's efforts for peace on behalf of King Francis of France. | 25. pp. 847-848, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by an editorial on how Wolsey forced high-ranking peers to serve him at Mass, followed by Wolsey's efforts for peace on behalf of King Francis of France. |
| 26. 1519: Wolsey, having been bribed by the king of France, sets up a peace conference to settle the ownership of Tournai. | 26. p. 1505, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's reaction to an imagined insult by Archbishop Warham, followed by an account of the peace conference. | 26. p. 848, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's reaction to an imagined insult by Archbishop Warham, followed by an account of the peace conference. |
| 27. 1519: Wolsey sings Mass for the French ambassadors in a 'most pompous manner'. | 27. pp. 1505-1506, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the peace conference regarding Tournai, followed by the departure of the French ambassadors. | 27. p.848, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the peace conference regarding Tournai, followed by the departure of the French ambassadors. |
| 28. 1519: Wolsey sets up the Field of Cloth-of-gold conference near Guisnes. | 28. pp. 1507-1508, 8 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of legal proceedings against certain knights, followed by some of the preparations near Guisnes. | 28. p. 853, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by an account of legal proceedings against certain knights, followed by some of the preparations near Guisnes. |
| 29. March 12 1519: Wolsey's letter to the English noblility, commanding them (on behalf of H8) to travel to Guisnes for the Field of Cloth-of-gold conference. | 29. p. 1508, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Francis and H8 agreeing to travel to Guisnes for the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by an account of the conflicts between the Duke of Buckingham and Wolsey. | 29. pp. 853-855, 88 lines, 11 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 10 descriptive). Preceded by Francis and H8 agreeing to travel to Guisnes for the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by an account of the conflicts between the Duke of Buckingham and Wolsey. |
| 30. March 1519: Conflicts between the Duke of Buckingham and Wolsey. | 30. p. 1508, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Francis and H8 ordering their noblemen to travel to Guisnes for the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by an account of the conflicts between the Earl of Surrey and Wolsey. | 30. p. 855, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the text of Wolsey's letter commanding the nobility to travel to Guisnes, followed by an account of the conflicts between the Earl of Surrey and Wolsey. |
| 31. March 1519: Wolsey connives to get the Earl of Surrey appointed Deputy of Ireland, an effective banishment. | 31. p. 1508, 14 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of Wolsey's conflicts with the Duke of Buckingham, followed by the Earl of Surrey's subjugation of rebels in Ireland.  | 31. p. 855, 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the conflicts between Wolsey and the Duke of Buckingham, followed by the Earl of Surrey's subjugation of rebels in Ireland. |
| 32. April 1519: Wolsey imprisons the Earl of Northumberland for refusing to relinquish wards allegedly belonging to H8. | 32. p. 1508, 5 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by the Earl of Surrey's subjugation of rebels in Ireland, followed by Wolsey's efforts to bring the Duke of Buckingham into disfavor with H8. | 32. p. 856, 5 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by the Earl of Surrey's subjugation of rebels in Ireland, followed by Wolsey's efforts to bring the Duke of Buckingham into disfavor with H8. |
| 33. May 26, 1519: Wolsey greets Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, upon his arrival in Kent and conducts him to Dover Castle. | 33. p. 1509, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the landing of Charles V in Kent, followed by H8's welcoming Charles V in Dover. | 33. p. 856, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the landing of Charles V in Kent, followed by H8's welcoming Charles V in Dover. |
| 34. May 1519: Charles V, hoping to prevent an alliance between England and France, showers Wolsey with riches to win his favor. | 34. p. 1509, 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of Charles V's activities in England, followed by Charles V's departure from England. | 34. p. 856, 8 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by an account of Charles V's activities in England, followed by Charles V's departure from England. |
| 35. June 1519: Wolsey's arrival at the Field of Cloth-of-gold and his embassy to Francis. | 35. p. 1510, 11 lines, 2 marginal comments (editorial). Preceded by H8's arrival in Calais, followed by the ceremonial meeting of Francis I and H8. | 35. p. 858, 10 lines, 2 marginal comments (editorial). Preceded by a description of the royal palaces constructed for the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by the ceremonial meeting of Francis I and H8. |
| 36. June 23, 1519: Wolsey sings Mass in front of H8 and Francis. | 36. p. 1511, 2 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of the jousting at the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by the kings demonstrating their martial prowess on foot. | 36. p. 861, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of the jousting at the Field of Cloth-of-gold, followed by the kings demonstrating their martial prowess on foot. |
| 37. January 1521: Having been bribed to do so, Wolsey scuppers 'good' anti-enclosure laws.  | 37. p. 1501, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a description of the anti-enclosure ordinances, followed by an account of the disappointment of those who expected financial redress for income lost as a result of the enclosures. | 37. p. 862, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by a description of the anti-enclosure ordinances, followed by an account of the disappointment of those who expected financial redress for income lost as a result of the enclosures. |
| 38. April 1521: Wolsey contrives to have the Duke of Buckingham accused of and convicted for treason. | 38. p. 1513, 20 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the peoples' resentment generated by Wolsey's blocking of the anti-enclosure legislation, followed by an account of the arrest and trial of the Duke of Buckingham. | 38. pp. 862-863, 18 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 illegible). Preceded by the peoples' resentment generated by Wolsey's blocking of the anti-enclosure legislation, followed by an account of the arrest and trial of the Duke of Buckingham. |
| 39. April 1521: Charles Knivet's testimony against the Duke of Buckingham, alleging that the Duke stated he would execute Wolsey if he came to the throne. | 39. p. 1515, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Knivet's testimony that the Duke had been boasting that his blood should prefer him to the throne, followed by Knivet's testimony that the Duke had openly spoken of his right to the throne to him and others. | 39. p. 864, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by Knivet's testimony that the Duke had been boasting that his blood should prefer him to the throne, followed by Knivet's testimony that the Duke had openly spoken of his right to the throne to him and others. |
| 40. April 1521: An editorial on Wolsey's role as chief instigator of the Duke of Buckingham's downfall. | 40. pp. 1515-1516, 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Knivet's testimony that the Duke had openly spoken of his right to the throne to him and others, followed by an account of the Duke's trial. | 40. pp. 864-865, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an editorial aside citing Hall and Vergil for the material on the trial, followed by an account of the Duke's trial. |
| 41. May 1521: Wolsey sent into France to act as peace negotiator between France and the Holy Roman Empire, and to act as ambassador between England, France, the Holy Roman Empire, and the Pope. He brings the Great Seal with him. | 41. pp. 1516-1517, 39 lines, 5 marginal comments (4 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by the execution and burial of the Duke of Buckingham, followed by the renewal of the war between France and the Holy Roman Empire. | 41. pp. 870-871, 48 lines, 6 marginal comments (4 descriptive, 2 citations [Hall; Vergil]). Preceded by an essay concerning the High Constables of England, followed by the renewal of the war between France and the Holy Roman Empire. |
| 42. 1522?: Richard Pace is sent to Rome to lobby for Wolsey's election as Pope, but Adrian VI is elected before he arrives. 1577 edition alleges Wolsey had Pace sent so that he would not have as much contact time with H8 (and thus eliminate Pace as a potential rival). | 42. p. 1518, 7 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by a battle near Tournai between French and Imperial armies, followed by Tunstall's being appointed Bishop of London. | 42. p. 871, 2 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by the death of Pope Leo X, followed by a description of Adrian VI and an account of his election as Pope. |
| 43. February 2, 1522: H8 is named Defender of the Faith by Pope Adrian VI: Wolsey sings Mass to commemorate the honor. | 43. p. 1518, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of English shipping being attacked by French ships, followed by war between England and France. | 43. p. 872, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of English shipping being attacked by French ships, followed by the reasons for H8's 'Defender of the Faith' title. |
| 44. Lent 1522: Wolsey proclaims that all are permitted to eat eggs and dairy products during Lent, but the news is received scornfully by the public. | 44. p. 1519, 9 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by aggressive acts by Francis I of France, followed by the French ambassador being made to answer for his master's aggression. | 44. p. 872, 9 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by aggressive acts by Francis I of France, followed by the French ambassador being made to answer for his master's aggression. |
| 45. 1522: Wolsey and the Council rebuke the French ambassador for his king's aggression towards English merchants. | 45. p. 1519, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's easing of dietary restrictions during Lent, followed by the French ambassador's response to the Council. | 45. pp. 872-873, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's easing of dietary restrictions during Lent, followed by the French ambassador's response to the Council. |
| 46. May 20, 1522: Wolsey rides through London with a massive retinue to prepare to meet Charles V at Dover. | 46. p. 1520, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by H8's ordering the Marquess of Dorset and Wolsey to receive Charles V in Calais and Dover respectively, followed by the Marquess of Dorset's travelling to Calais. | 46. p. 873, 4 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by H8's ordering the Marquess of Dorset and Wolsey to receive Charles V in Calais and Dover respectively, followed by the Marquess of Dorset's travelling to Calais. |
| 47. May 26, 1522: Wolsey welcomes Charles V to Dover with an ostentatious display of power. | 47. p. 1520, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Charles V's departure from Calais, followed by the reception of Charles V by H8. | 47. p. 873, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Charles V's departure from Calais, followed by the reception of Charles V by H8. |
| 48. June 8, 1522: Wolsey sings Mass before H8 and Charles V. | 48. p. 1520, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by a description of various entertainments held for Charles V, followed by further details of Charles V's visit. | 48. p. 873, 4 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 editorial). Preceded by a description of various entertainments held for Charles V, followed by further details of Charles V's visit. |
| 49. July 1522: Wolsey issues orders to assess the value of all Englishmen and for a tenth part to go to H8 to fund his war against France. | 49. p. 1522, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by preparations for war against the Duke of Albany, followed by the continuation of H8's war in France. | 49. pp. 874-875, 7 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by preparations for war against the Duke of Albany, followed by the continuation of H8's war in France. |
| 50. 1523: Wolsey resigns as Bishop of Bath and Wells in exchange for the bishopric of Durham.  | 50. p. 1524, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by brief summaries of significant events of 1523, followed by the death of the Bishop of Chester. | 51. p. 876, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Hall]). Preceded by an account of the war in Scotland, followed by a speech by Bishop Tunstall to the Parliament. |
| 51. April 1523: Wolsey sits at H8's feet at the beginning of the April 1523 Parliament. | 51. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 50. p. 877, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the loss of Rhodes to the Turks, followed by new court appointments. |
| 52. April 1523: Wolsey overuses his legatine powers and falls into danger of falling under a writ of praemunire, particularly regarding a subsidy he tried to levy from all the clergy of England. | 52. p. 1524, 13 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Vergil]). Preceded by the death of the Bishop of Chester, followed by Wolsey's raising of a new tax in Parliament. | 52. p. 877, 14 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the death of the Bishop of Chester, followed by Wolsey's raising of a new tax in Parliament. |
| 53. April 29, 1523: Wolsey announces a new tax of 20% of every man's worth, to be paid in coins. Parliament debates the tax and passes a compromise tax after Wolsey is rebuked by H8. | 53. pp. 1524-1525, 35 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's nearly being served a writ of praemunire, followed by Wolsey's dissolving of the convocation at St. Paul's. | 53. p. 877, 37 lines, 7 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 5 descriptive, 2 editorial). Preceded by Wolsey's nearly being served a writ of praemunire, followed by Wolsey's dissolving of the convocation at St. Paul's. |
| 54. June 1523: Wolsey dissolves the convocation at St. Paul's using his legatine authority. | 54. p. 1525, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the proroguing of the June 1523 Parliament, followed by the resumption of Parliament. | 54. p. 878, 5 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 descriptive). Preceded by public displeasure regarding taxes, followed by the resumption of Parliament. |
| 55. June 1523: The Earl of Kildare, having regained the support of Wolsey, returns to Ireland as H8's deputy. | 55. p. 1525, 4 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by the departure from England of the King of Denmark, followed by an account of the continuing wars between England/France and England/Scotland. | 55. p. 878, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 1 descriptive). Preceded by the departure from England of the King of Denmark, followed by an account of the continuing wars between England/France and England/Scotland. |
| 56. Summer 1523: Wolsey contrives to have Sir William Compton sent to the Scottish war in order to lessen Compton's influence with H8, but is unsuccessful.  | 56. pp. 1525-1526, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Vergil]). Preceded by an account of Scottish towns/cities sacked by the English, followed by a French attack on Calais. | 56. p. 878, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Vergil]). Preceded by an account of Scottish towns/cities sacked by the English, followed by a French attack on Calais. |
| 57. November 1523: Wolsey creates a new tax called an 'anticipation', which is widely unpopular. | 57. p. 1530, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Queen Margaret of Scotland requesting peace with England, followed by a minor rebellion in Coventry. | 57. p. 882, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by gifts from Charles V to H8, followed by a minor rebellion in Coventry. |
| 58. January 1525: Wolsey plans to assess the estates of the Observant Franciscan friars, but they would not allow him to do so; this draws Wolsey's ire. This episode features Friar Forest (see Foxe table). | 58. p. 1533, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of H8's Christmas entertainments, followed by an account of a slip-up in Wolsey's spy network. | 58. pp. 883-884, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of H8's Christmas entertainments, followed by an account of a slip-up in Wolsey's spy network. |
| 59. 1525: Charles V discovers to his dismay and anger that one of Wolsey's agents has been secretly conducting peace negotiations between Francis I and Wolsey. | 59. p. 1533, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's conflicts with the Observant Franciscans, followed by the President of Roan visiting London. | 59. p. 884, 5 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Wolsey's conflicts with the Observant Franciscans, followed by embassies from Charles V. |
| 60. 1525: Wolsey seeks to restrain H8 from his intended pursual of war against France. | 60. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 60. p. 886, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (editorial). Preceded by French ambassadors arriving in England, followed by H8's unwillingness to seek peace with France. |
| 61. 1525: Due in part to Wolsey's perceived meddling, Charles V develops a coldness towards H8. | 61. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 61. p. 887, 10 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Charles V planning to marry a Portugese princess, followed by Francis I's being transferred to a different prison. |
| 62. 1525: Wolsey founds two new colleges, at Oxford and Ipswich.  | 62. pp. 1533-1534, 7 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by the capture of Francis I, followed by Tunstall and Wingfield's embassy to Spain. | 62. p. 891, 7 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by the marriage of Charles V to Isabella of Portugal, followed by Tunstall and Wingfield's embassy to Spain.  |
| 63. March 1525: Wolsey is commanded to institute new taxes of 20% to fund H8's war against France. | 63. p. 1534, 9 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded byTunstall and Wingfield's embassy to Spain, followed by the departure of Charles V's ambassador. | 63. p. 891, 9 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Tunstall and Wingfield's embassy to Spain, followed by the departure of Charles V's ambassador. |
| 64. March 1525: Facing popular resistance to the new 20% tax, Wolsey attempts to coerce and/or force the issue, which contributes to rebellions in Suffolk and Essex. | 64. pp 1534-1535, 12 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the death of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, followed by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk's efforts to suppress the tax rebellions. | 64. p. 891, 12 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the death of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, followed by Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk's efforts to suppress the tax rebellions. |
| 65. March 1525: H8 assembles his Council at York Place to ask who was responsible for the 20% tax. Wolsey defends himself. When H8 orders the tax abolished, Wolsey annouces it as if it were his doing. | 65. p. 1535, 11 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk suppressing rebellions, followed by the pardoning of rebels. | 65. pp. 891-892, 11 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk suppressing rebellions, followed by the pardoning of rebels. |
| 66. Spring/Summer 1525: Wolsey commissions assessments of religious houses. | 66. p. 1535-1526 (erroneous pagination, read 1536), 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of the increase in rural robberies, followed by H8 creating several titles. | 66. p. 892, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by an account of the increase in rural robberies, followed by H8 creating several titles. |
| 67. January 1526: Wolsey devises the Statutes of Eltham, which reorganized H8's household. | 67. p. 1526 (erroneous pagination, read 1536), 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by a truce being declared between England and Scotland, followed by jousting at Greenwich. | 67. p. 892, 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by a truce being declared between England and Scotland, followed by jousting at Greenwich. |
| 68. February 11, 1526: Wolsey sits in St. Paul's and hears heresy cases, including that of Dr. Barnes. | 68. p. 1526 (erroneous pagination, read 1536), 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by jousting at Greenwich, followed by peace negotiations between H8, Charles V, and Francis I. | 68. p. 892, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by jousting at Greenwich, followed by Charles V's abortive plans to marry H8's daughter Mary. |
| 69. April 29, 1526: Wolsey sings Mass to celebrate the new peace declared between H8 and Francis I. | 69. p. 1537, 4 lines, 1 marginal note (descriptive). Preceded by Charles V's abortive plans to marry H8's daughter Mary, followed by a secret alliance forged between the Pope and several Italian city-states. | 69. p. 893, 4 lines, 1 marginal note (descriptive). Preceded by Charles V's abortive plans to marry H8's daughter Mary, followed by a secret alliance forged between the Pope and several Italian city-states. |
| 70: 1527: Certain English merchants, being opposed to war with Charles V, refuse to keep their marts in Calais (in the event of war) as commanded by Wolsey. | 70. p. 1539, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (illegible, prob. descriptive). Preceded by negotiations for post-war spoils between H8 and Charles V, followed by Charles V's capture of Pope Clement VII.  | 72. p. 893, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Hall]). Preceded by an account of plague in the castle where Pope Clement VII was being kept prisoner, followed by xenophobic trouble in London. |
| 71. 1527: Wolsey urges H8 to free Clement VII, who has been captured by Charles V.  | 71. p. 1539, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's unpopularity among English merchants, followed by Wolsey's ordinances against gambling. | 73. p. 894, 10 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 2 editorial). Preceded by negotiations for marrying the duke of Orléans to H8's daughter Mary. |
| 72. May 1527: Unpopular ordinances against gambling are brought into effect and are largely seen as Wolsey's fault. | 72. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 74. p. 895, 11 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 descriptive, 1 editorial). Preceded by destructive rains in England, followed by the arrival of French ambassadors in Greenwich. |
| 73. March 1527: Wolsey overreacts to an alleged insult done to a retainer of a French ambassador. | 73. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 70. p. 895, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by negotiations for post-war spoils between H8 and Charles V, followed by Charles V's capture of Pope Clement VII. |
| 74. April 1527: A bill is delivered to Wolsey in which Wolsey is accused of treason (by virtue of his negotiations with France) by an anonymous writer. He searches for the author, but is unsuccessful. | 74. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 71. p. 897, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the sack of Rome by Charles V, followed by concerns raised about the validity of H8's marriage to Katherine of Aragon. |
| 75. June/July 1527: Wolsey is sent into France with £240,000 and 7,000 horsemen to assist the French in rescuing Pope Clement VII from Charles V.  | 75. pp. 1539-1548 (erroneous pagination, read 1540), 24 lines, 6 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8 suppressing anti-Wolsey rumors, followed by further details about the English/French army sent to free Clement VII. | 75. p. 897, 24 lines, 6 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by concerns about the validity of H8's marriage to Katherine of Aragon, followed by further details about the English/French army sent to free Clement VII. |
| 76. Summer 1527: Wolsey and Francis I determine the conditions required of Charles V to avoid war. Upon successful completion, Wolsey is rewarded richly and returns to England. | 76. p. 1548 (erroneous pagination, read 1540), 22 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the dealings of the English ambassadors in Spain, followed by French ambassadors arriving in England.  | 76. p. 898, 18 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by the dealings of the English ambassadors in Spain, followed by French ambassadors arriving in England.  |
| 77. November 1, 1527: Wolsey sings Mass at St. Paul's before H8 and the French ambassadors. | 77. p. 1541, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the arrival of the French ambassadors, followed by H8's appointment as a Knight of St. Michael and Francis I's appointment as Knight of the Garter. | 77. p. 898, 3 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the arrival of the French ambassadors, followed by H8's appointment as a Knight of St. Michael and Francis I's appointment as Knight of the Garter. |
| 78.November 1527: Wolsey abjures Bilney, Lome, and Garrett for speaking against the Pope. | 78. p. 1541, 2 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the departure of the French ambassadors, followed by famine in London. | 78. p. 898, 2 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the departure of the French ambassadors, followed by famine in London. |
| 79. January 1528: Wolsey manipulates H8 to keep him disposed against Charles V and more positively towards Francis I. | 79. p. 1541, 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the return of English ambassafors from Spain, followed by embassies from the English and French to the court of Charles V. | 79. p. 898, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the return of English ambassafors from Spain, followed by embassies from the English and French to the court of Charles V. |
| 80. March/April 1528 (1529?): Wolsey urges H8 to make war on Charles V with Francis I, but H8 does not. | 80. p. 1273 (erroneous pagination, read 1550), 6 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a truce with Charles V, followed by H8 elevating Sir Piers Butler to the peerage. | 80. p. 905, 8 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by a truce with Charles V, followed by H8 elevating Sir Piers Butler to the peerage. |
| 81. 1528/1529(?): Doubts are raised about the validity of H8's marriage to Katherine of Aragon. Wolsey is popularly seen as the chief instigator of the divorce due in part to his animosity towards Charles V. | 81. pp. 1273-1551 (erroneous pagination, read 1550-1551), 10 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 descriptive, 1 illegible). Preceded by deaths in London from the sweating sickness, followed by H8's efforts to satisfy the question of the divorce. | 81. p. 906, 9 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 citation [Vergil]). Preceded by deaths in London from the sweating sickness, followed by H8's efforts to satisfy the question of the divorce. |
| 82. October 1529: Campeius is sent by Rome to adjudicate in the matter of the divorce. He is joined in commission by Wolsey. | 82. p. 1551, 9 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8's efforts to satisfy the question of the divorce, followed by details of Katherine's defense team. | 82. p. 906, 8 lines, 3 marginal comments (2 descriptive, 1 citation [Hall]). Preceded by H8's efforts to satisfy the question of the divorce, followed by details of Katherine's defense team. |
| 83. c.1529: Wolsey, having long nutured a grudge against Richard Pace, manipulates the ambassador such that he is driven mad. | 83. p. 1551, 4 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 2 descriptive) Preceded by the appointment of Sir James Spencer as Mayor of London, followed by the proceedings of the legatine court on the divorce. | 83. p. 907, 4 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Vergil], 2 descriptive). Preceded by the appointment of Sir James Spencer as Mayor of London, followed by the determining of the date and setting in which to hold the legatine court on the divorce. |
| 84. May 28 1529: The legatine court is convened at Blackfriars to hear the cases of H8 and Katherine in regards to the divorce. Katherine accuses Wolsey of being the prime mover of this matter because of his hatred of Charles V. | 84. pp. 1551-1552, 20 lines, 6 marginal comments (2 citations [Hall, Vergil], 4 descriptive). Preceded by the madness of Richard Pace, followed by Wolsey's machinations to prevent H8's involvement with Anne Boleyn. | 84. pp. 907-908, 98 lines, 18 marginal comments (2 citations [Hall, Abr. Fl.], 16 descriptive). Preceded by the madness of Richard Pace, followed by Wolsey's machinations to prevent H8's involvement with Anne Boleyn. |
| 85. Summer 1530: Wolsey, being made aware of H8's growing attachment to Anne Boleyn, seeks to prevent their relationship. | 85. p. 1552, 5 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by the proceedings of the legatine court, followed by H8's anger upon discovering Wolsey had been secretly contacting Pope Clement VII to request a delay in the referred decision on the divorce. | 85. pp. 908-909, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the proceedings of the legatine court, followed by H8's anger upon discovering Wolsey had been secretly contacting Pope Clement VII to request a delay in the referred decision on the divorce. |
| 86. Summer 1529: H8 discovers that Wolsey has been secretly asking Pope Clement VII to delay his decision on the divorce until such time as Wolsey could sabotage H8's relationship with Anne Boleyn. | 86. p. 1552, 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's displeasure with H8's developing relationship with Anne Boleyn, followed by a group of disaffected nobles presenting H8 with articles for Wolsey's arrest. | 86. p. 909, 6 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's displeasure with H8's developing relationship with Anne Boleyn, followed by a group of disaffected nobles presenting H8 with articles for Wolsey's arrest. |
| 87. Autumn 1529: A group of disaffected nobles secretly present H8 with a series of articles for Wolsey's arrest. H8 determines to keep silent for the moment. | 87. p. 1552, 6 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Hall]). Preceded by H8's anger upon discovering Wolsey had been secretly contacting Pope Clement VII to request a delay in the referred decision on the divorce, followed by the calling of Parliament for Nov. 3 1530. | 87. p. 909, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (citation [Hall]). Preceded by H8's anger upon discovering Wolsey had been secretly contacting Pope Clement VII to request a delay in the referred decision on the divorce, followed by the calling of Parliament for Nov. 3 1530. |
| 88. November 1529: Wolsey is served with a writ of praemunire by H8's lawyer. | 88. p. 1552, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the calling of Parliament for Nov. 3 1530, followed by Wolsey's being stripped of his office as Lord Chancellor and dismissed from London. | 88p. 909, 3 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by the calling of Parliament for Nov. 3 1530, followed by Wolsey's being stripped of his office as Lord Chancellor and dismissed from London. |
| 89. November 17, 1529: The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk are sent by H8 to deprive Wolsey of the Great Seal; Stephen Gardiner is sent to assess Wolsey's household; Wolsey is informed that he must leave London. | 89. p. 1552, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's being served a writ of praemunire, followed by Wolsey's being found guilty on two counts of having fallen into praemunire.  | 89. p. 909, 30 lines, 5 marginal comments (1 citation [Ab. Fl.], 1 editorial, 3 descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's being served a writ of praemunire, followed by Wolsey's being found guilty on two counts of having fallen into praemunire.  |
| 90. November 1529: Wolsey is found guilty in the King's Bench of having fallen into praemunire. His titles and estate are confiscated, but H8 allows Wolsey to keep his archbishopric and the bishopric of Winchester. | 90. p. 1552, 4 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's being stripped of his office as Lord Chancellor and dismissed from London, followed by the reallocation of ecclesiastic titles confiscated from Wolsey. | 90. p. 909, 4 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's being stripped of his office as Lord Chancellor and dismissed from London, followed by the reallocation of ecclesiastic titles confiscated from Wolsey. |
| 91. November 1529: Articles for Wolsey's arrest are read out in the House of Commons, as well as a letter from Wolsey in which he forfeited all his estate to H8. | 91. p. 1553, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of financial bills debated in Parliament, followed by H8's creation of several new titles. | 91. p. 912, 16 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of heated debates in Parliament regarding the rights and powers of the clergy, followed by H8's creation of several new titles. |
| 92. Lent 1530: H8 orders Wolsey to travel to York and not to return to London unless sodirected. | 92. p. 1554, 2 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by messengers sent to European universities to ask for opinions on the validity of H8's marriage, followed by Thomas Cromwell's being taken into H8's service. | 92. p. 913, 5 lines, 2 marginal comments (1 citation [Hall], 1 descriptive). Preceded by messengers sent to European universities to ask for opinions on the validity of H8's marriage, followed by Thomas Cromwell's being taken into H8's service. |
| 93: Lent 1530: Wolsey journeys north and remains at Southwell in Yorkshire. | 93. p. 1554, 1 line, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Thomas Cromwell's being taken into H8's service, followed by the dissolution of Ipswich College and the refounding of Cardinal's College, Oxford as King's College (Christ Church). | 93. p. 913, 2 lines, 0 marginal comments. Preceded by Thomas Cromwell's being taken into H8's service, followed by the dissolution of Ipswich College and the refounding of Cardinal's College, Oxford as King's College (Christ Church). |
| 94: Lent 1530: H8 dissolves Ipswich College and rededicates Cardinal's College, Oxford as King's College (Christ Church). | 94. p. 1554, 4 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's journey north to Southwell, followed by Charles V giving Malta to the Hospitallers. | 94. p. 913, 5 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's journey north to Southwell, followed by Charles V giving Malta to the Hospitallers. |
| 95. September 19, 1530: A proclamation is made forbidding anyone to seek papal bulls without H8's permission. Widely seen as directed primarily at Wolsey. | 95. p. 1555, 11 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by H8 ordering a new English translation of the Bible, followed by Wolsey's grandiose and long-delayed instalment as Archbishop of York. | 95. pp. 914-915, 17 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by an account of disasterous weather in England, followed by Wolsey's grandiose and long-delayed instalment as Archbishop of York. |
| 96. October 1530: Wolsey's grandiose instalment as Archbishop of York as well as his pretensions of grandeur when saying Mass anger H8, who subsequently orders Wolsey to be arrested. | 96. p. 1555, 11 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8's proclamation forbidding anyone to seek papal bulls, followed by Wolsey's arrest and death. | 96. p. 915, 14 lines, 3 marginal comments (1 citation [Abr. Fl.], 2 descriptive). Preceded by H8's proclamation forbidding anyone to seek papal bulls, followed by an ill omen in Wolsey's house.  |
| 97. November 1, 1530: Stephen Gardiner suffers a blow to the head by a falling cross in Wolsey's house; Wolsey construes it as a bad omen. | 97. This episode does not appear in this edition. | 97. p. 915, 13 lines, 3 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8's ordering Wolsey to be arrested, followed by Wolsey's arrest and death. |
| 98. November 4, 1530: The Earl of Northumberland arrests Wolsey at Cawood and conducts him south. While en route he sickens and dies at Leicester Abbey on Nov. 29th.  | 98. p. 1555, 8 lines, 2 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8's ordering Wolsey to be arrested, followed by an editorial on Wolsey's various deeds, flaws, and qualities. | 98. pp. 915-917, 99 lines, 15 marginal comments (descriptive). Preceded by H8's ordering Wolsey to be arrested, followed by an editorial on Wolsey's various deeds, flaws, and qualities. |
| 99. November 1530: Editorial on Wolsey's various deeds, flaws, and qualities. The 1587 edition includes a substantive biography of Wolsey composed of smaller sections written by Campion, Stow, and Hall. | 99. pp. 1555-1556, 10 lines, 1 marginal comment (descriptive). Preceded by Wolsey's arrest and death, followed by the clergy of England nearly falling under a writ of praemunire for having supported Wolsey. | 99. pp. 917-923, 298 lines, 69 marginal comments (52 descriptive, 6 editorial, 11 citations [1 Guicciardini, 1 Campion, 1 Stow, 1 Hall, 2 Abr. Fl., 3 self-references, 1 Leland). Preceded by Wolsey's arrest, followed by H8 and Katherine celebrating Christmas at York Place (renamed 'The King's Manor of Westminster'). |

As mentioned previously, Henry’s gradual cooling towards his chancellor had begun years previously and may not have had anything to do with the cardinal’s successes or failures. However, Wolsey’s position was entirely dependent on his ability to please the king: with the failure of the divorce, Henry was singularly displeased and unwilling to protect his Lord Chancellor from the disaffected noblemen who Wolsey had alienated through years of power consolidation. Wolsey’s fall from power began with a charge of *praemunire* being served against him in Chancery on 7 October, 1529, and he was officially deprived of the chancellorship on 1 November, receiving a secret pardon on the same day from the king.[[441]](#footnote-441) When it came to light, Henry’s secret pardon must have caused consternation throughout the camp of Wolsey’s enemies, as the potential for the cardinal to stage a dramatic return (and exact revenge on his detractors) was still very high. A number of lords signed a petition to the king, detailing Wolsey’s alleged crimes, but its effect is unclear.[[442]](#footnote-442) Nevertheless, Wolsey was commanded to remove himself to his house at Esher to await the king’s pleasure, in the mean time losing all his English offices (though not his cardinalate, which came from Rome and not Henry). Suffering from continued ill health, Wolsey recovered enough that by February 1530 he was deemed fit to receive a general pardon and the return of his archbishopric, and underwent an assessment of his personal wealth.[[443]](#footnote-443) He was then instructed to travel north to York (his archiepiscopal seat), which he had never yet visited. He did so slowly, so that when his enemies had persuaded the king to order Wolsey’s arrest for treason, the agents bearing the warrant found Wolsey at Cawood Castle in Yorkshire on 4 November. From there, Wolsey proceeded south before being struck with an unknown stomach complaint. His captors led him to Leicester Abbey on 26 November, where he laid for three days before dying on the morning of 29 November, 1530.

## Appendix Three:

## An Honest Poor Man’s Son: A Brief Biography of Thomas Wolsey

This thesis has been concerned with images of Wolsey, not Wolsey himself; there are many excellent biographies and biographical studies of Wolsey, of which Peter Gwyn’s *The King’s Cardinal* and Stella Fletcher’s *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* deserve particular mention. While it seemed distracting and misleading to provide my own biography of Wolsey within this thesis, a brief overview of Wolsey’s life (insofar as we can agree on such an overview) might be useful for readers not familiar with the Cardinal. While a more concise table or timeline would allow for greater ease in locating particular dates or events, I felt that Wolsey’s life required a limited degree of editorializing in order to better demonstrate the nuances of his foreign policy and relationship with Henry; the irony of this approach is not lost on me, but I have tried to minimize this by providing a survey of the work of the many eminent scholars who have researched the historical Wolsey and hope to profit from their diligence. Finally, I must add the caveat that this is, of course, only a simplified glance at one of England’s many complicated figures who dominated this period.

Despite his popular image, it seems unlikely that Wolsey actually deserved many of the complaints which contributed so strongly to these negative characterizations: many of them were rumors or inventions propagated by Protestant polemicists, and they cannot be confirmed by reference to resources like the *Letters and Papers*. However, it is extremely difficult to ascertain what Wolsey might have deserved, since the surviving characterizations of the Cardinal rely so heavily on these poetic or mimetic (or otherwise suspect) interpretations of history. This reliance means that little is known for certain about Wolsey, as exemplified by the lack of evidence which might provide his date of birth. It is unclear when Wolsey was born: George Cavendish (upon whose *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* most modern biographers rely) attests that Wolsey was fifteen when he took his BA degree at Magdalen College (which Peter Gwyn believes took place in 1488), which would argue for a birth date in 1472/1473.[[444]](#footnote-444) This does not quite concur with Cavendish’s later assertion that Wolsey was 59 in 1530, as he “wasshed wyped and kyssed” the feet of 59 poor men on Maudy Thursday.[[445]](#footnote-445) As a result of these discrepancies, Wolsey scholars and biographers have been largely unable to agree on a specific birth year: Sybil Jack begins as early as 1470; Mandell Creighton, 1471; and A.F. Pollard, Jasper Ridley, and Peter Gwyn agree on late 1472 to early 1473.[[446]](#footnote-446) This confusion provides us with a timely reminder that however powerful Wolsey became, he was of common birth and thus his early life went largely unrecorded (as was the norm for any Englishman outside of the aristocracy).

The confusion about Wolsey’s early life extends considerably beyond his birth date: his father, Robert Wolsey (or Wulcy) of Ipswich has variously been described as a publican/innkeeper and (somewhat nonspecifically) a “honest poore man”, but for the Cardinal’s detractors, Robert Wolsey was most famously a butcher (though he was also a grazer and tanner).[[447]](#footnote-447) It seems that Wolsey’s origins were not as humble as Cavendish would have his readers believe, for the Wolseys (and the Daundys, Wolsey’s maternal forebears) were prominent in east Suffolk.[[448]](#footnote-448) In either case, the young Wolsey was first educated in Ipswich before attending Magdalen College School and Magdalen College, Oxford, in succession.[[449]](#footnote-449) He was named a fellow of Magdalen in 1497, ordained in 1498, and was made bursar of Magdalen in the same year, during which time he oversaw the construction of Magdalen’s tower.[[450]](#footnote-450) It was alleged that he was investigated for misappropriating funds for the tower, though John Guy is almost certainly correct in describing this story as apocryphal.[[451]](#footnote-451) Wolsey was subsequently named dean of divinity and master of the college school in 1500, though he only held these posts for a short time before resigning them to accept a rectorship.[[452]](#footnote-452)

The young Wolsey was given his first benefice—Limington in Somerset—on 10 October 1500 by the marquess of Dorset, whose sons had been taught by Wolsey at the college school.[[453]](#footnote-453) This early act of patronage marked the beginning of a series of increasingly prestigious appointments and associations: Wolsey became chaplain first to Henry Deane, Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, and subsequently to Sir Richard Nanfan, governor of Calais (in 1501 and 1503 respectively).[[454]](#footnote-454) As Stella Fletcher rightly points out, the ambitious young Ipswich chaplain was remarkably astute in choosing patrons: Dorset was the only marquess in England and behind only the Duke of Buckingham in non-royal precedence, and so a young priest could hardly have done better in winning such a first patron. In particular, Wolsey’s attachment to the short-lived Deane was particularly useful, as Wolsey would have had an excellent opportunity to observe firsthand how the archbishop wielded both primacy of the English Church as well as the Lord Chancellorship (a model after which Wolsey may well have patterned his own career in later life).

After Nanfan’s death in 1507, Wolsey first entered royal service as a chaplain to Henry VII. Though he had secured a position at court which involved personal contact with the monarch, Wolsey attached himself to two councilors who he must have identified as able to further his interests: Richard Fox, bishop of Winchester, and Sir Thomas Lovell. Both men were prominent advisors to Henry VII and specialized in a range of government activities which Wolsey would later come to dominate: Lovell exercised considerable control over the royal finances, and Fox had extensive diplomatic and domestic political experience (as well as acting as one of the foremost English ecclesiastics), overseeing marriage negotiations for all of Henry’s children.[[455]](#footnote-455)

Wolsey’s political career under Henry VII was promising, but limited. He gained the king’s commendations for his rapid and efficient handling of an embassy to Maximilian I, the Holy Roman Emperor, which (according to Cavendish) took him less than five days.[[456]](#footnote-456) Having thus earned Henry’s approval, Wolsey was sent on several high-profile diplomatic missions to Scotland and the Low Countries in 1508, and he was made a canon of Hereford Cathedral in the same year, followed by the deanery of Lincoln in early 1509.[[457]](#footnote-457) It has long been the subject of debate how Wolsey transitioned from the service of Henry VII to Henry VIII, but both Gwyn and Fletcher concur that Wolsey might have been named the young king’s almoner as early as September 1509.[[458]](#footnote-458) The almonership carried with it entry to the king’s council, which afforded Wolsey with extended access to the young king.

The removal of several of Henry VII’s unpopular councilors combined with a young (even jejune) monarch signaled an unparalleled opportunity for Wolsey, who seized the moment and clearly made himself indispensible to Henry VIII. In 1510 he was appointed registrar of the Order of the Garter, which was followed by a number of offices ranging in importance from a canonship of St George’s Chapel, Windsor in 1511 to the deanery of York in 1513.[[459]](#footnote-459) During this period, Wolsey sought to win Henry’s approval by supporting the young king’s marital ambitions: though he was blamed for logistical breakdowns during the mutinous Anglo-Spanish campaign of 1512, he also was credited with coordinating Henry’s successful actions against the French in the summer of 1513, resulting in the capture of Tournai and Thérouanne.[[460]](#footnote-460) After this campaign, Wolsey laid claim to the bishopric of Tournai, but was never able to claim the revenues from the office due to French opposition. He also took a prominent role in negotiating the subsequent peace treaty between Henry and Louis XII in early 1514, boasting that he had been the ‘author of the peace’.[[461]](#footnote-461) It was during this period that Wolsey rapidly exchanged his first domestic bishopric (Lincoln) for the archbishopric of York: in the space of a few months, the king’s almoner had risen from a handful of non-resident deanships and canonships to the second-highest office in the English Church hierarchy. Fletcher indicates Wolsey’s pride in his achievement by citing the new archbishop’s propensity for insisting on his metropolitical cross being borne before him on the smallest of pretexts, when tradition held that he should do so only his diocesan province (as the archbishop of Canterbury came before York in precedence). Wolsey’s intense respect for (and focus on) symbols of power and privilege would come to typify his time in power, as we shall see.

That Wolsey refused to surrender precedence to the archbishopric of Canterbury was, as Fletcher notes somewhat drily, “annoying” to incumbent William Warham.[[462]](#footnote-462) Warham had cause to feel aggrieved: despite his new colleague’s youth (Wolsey had been one of the youngest bishops in England as bishop of Lincoln), almost exactly a year after his appointment as archbishop of York, Pope Leo X named Wolsey cardinal after several months of lobbying from Henry himself (as well as Wolsey, through royal and personal agents in Rome).[[463]](#footnote-463) Wolsey’s appointment marked the beginning of a prolonged period of battles for precedence between the two prelates: though Canterbury came before York in England, Wolsey clearly felt that his cardinalate placed him before Warham in the Church’s hierarchy. His successful outmaneuvering of Warham relied both on Wolsey’s personal intransigence as well as his political isolation of Warham. Scholars have traditionally blamed Wolsey for Warham’s retirement as Lord Chancellor in December 1515, though a more prosaic interpretation of the aged Warham’s decision to remove himself from the secular government seems more likely.[[464]](#footnote-464) In either case, Wolsey quickly snapped up the chancellorship, swearing his oath to Henry at Eltham Palace on Christmas Eve, 1515.[[465]](#footnote-465) In the space of a year, Wolsey rose from a (relatively) humble position as a junior councilor to the foremost ecclesiastic and secular offices in the Tudor government.

The following years saw Wolsey begin to exercise his newly acquired authority by conducting a two-pronged campaign of personal and professional development. First, Wolsey began to acquire and improve a number of properties throughout southeastern England as part of a larger bid to cultivate a grand public image. Most enduring of these projects was Hampton Court Palace, which still features some of Wolsey’s extensive renovations (including portions of the Great Hall).[[466]](#footnote-466) The purpose of these building projects was to act both as an ostentatious statement of the Cardinal’s wealth and power, as well as providing a suitable country estate convenient to the royal palace of Richmond (which Henry VIII would trade to Wolsey in 1525 in return for Hampton Court). As we shall see, that Wolsey succeeded in the former is made clear by the famous rhetorical question posed in John Skelton’s 1522 satire, *Why come ye nat to courte?*:

Why come ye nat to courte?

To whyche court?

To the kynges courte?

Or to Hampton Court?[[467]](#footnote-467)

In order to cultivate a grand image, in addition to his massive building projects Wolsey also used public events to showcase his wealth and power (and presumably his monarch’s by extension). Cavendish provides a highly detailed description of Wolsey’s progressions from his private chambers to Westminster to sit in Chancery or the Star Chamber (in term time), to Greenwich to attend upon Henry, or to other governmental offices. He meticulously describes Wolsey’s rich clothing, elaborate processional items (metropolitical and legatine crosses, pillars, mace, and hat), and provides a similar level of detail about Wolsey’s enormous retinue.

Having thus repositioned himself in the public eye, Wolsey embarked on a program of domestic legal reform, a foreign policy based largely on diplomacy, and a careful accumulation of responsibilities designed to position himself at the very heart of the Henrician government. He sought to please the young Henry in all things, which often brought him into conflict with both temporal lords and his fellow bishops.[[468]](#footnote-468) Wolsey’s legal reforms were, by and large, more popular amongst the commons: his chancellorship saw a massive expansion in the use of Star Chamber, with a nearly 1000% rise in the number of cases heard.[[469]](#footnote-469) Many of these Wolsey presided over himself and, in particular, he sat on cases that concerned the nobility. In a speech given in Star Chamber in May 1516, Wolsey outlined a new policy of calling the nobility to task for legal violations that previously had been overlooked, as well as providing for a new and more efficient court for complaints about perversions of justice (usually brought by the poor).[[470]](#footnote-470) To underline his point, he prosecuted Henry Algernon Percy (fifth earl of Northumberland) in a dispute about wardships, sending the earl to the Fleet.[[471]](#footnote-471) This was only one of a series of noble prosecutions which did little to endear Wolsey to the nobility. Though this policy should have delighted the commons, the subsequent inundation of cases coincided with diplomatic distractions and, in later years, the divorce. An overworked Wolsey was unable to finish his reforms, thus leaving behind a half-formed system deeply mired in bureaucratic mismanagement (a criticism leveled at Wolsey in Holinshed’s *Chronicles*).

In 1515 through 1521, Wolsey consolidated his power at home. By stages, he reformed the king’s privy chamber, enacted anti-enclosure land reforms, and cracked down on merchant speculators (largely considered the sources of food shortages in the capital in 1517-1518).[[472]](#footnote-472) He also found creative ways to raise funds to support Henry’s foreign campaigns and subsidies, though these measures proved to be extremely unpopular in Parliament. Though these reforms varied in success, they are largely eclipsed by Wolsey’s contentions with the nobility during this period. The downfall of Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham, has historically been laid at Wolsey’s feet, though it seems more likely that the ebullient duke had given Henry VIII the excuse he had been looking for when in early 1521 Buckingham applied for a license to visit his Welsh lands at the head of four hundred armed men.[[473]](#footnote-473) Buckingham’s arrest and execution for treason had been a long time coming, as he had been agitating at court about perceived injuries to his hereditary rights as early as 1510.[[474]](#footnote-474) In any case, Wolsey’s role in his arrest is largely immaterial: as John Guy rightly points out, “this was among the few state trials of the reign in which the victim was almost certainly guilty of the basic offence with which he was charged.”[[475]](#footnote-475) Despite this, Wolsey was broadly blamed for Buckingham’s death. In addition, he was also generally supposed to have sent Thomas Howard, then earl of Surrey (and later third duke of Norfolk), to Ireland as lord deputy, ostensibly to distance him from the court. This seems unlikely, however, as there is little evidence to suggest tension between the Howards and Wolsey.[[476]](#footnote-476)

Though Wolsey’s domestic duties required a great deal of the new Lord Chancellor’s attention, Wolsey also was committed to repositioning England on the European stage. It was his leading role in the negotiations to prevent Francis I of France and the Holy Roman Emperor from declaring peace that led to his being given a cardinalate by Pope Leo X, and Wolsey—proud of his achievement—redoubled his efforts after receiving the honor.[[477]](#footnote-477) Yet as A. F. Pollard has noted, immediately afterward Wolsey changed tactics and began seeking a universal peace in Europe.[[478]](#footnote-478) He recognized that England was not powerful enough to contend on an equal footing with France and the Holy Roman Empire (as well as many of the various Italian states), and so he attempted to set England in the center as an arbitrator of peace. His opportunity arose in 1518 when Leo X sent Laurentius Cardinal Campeius[[479]](#footnote-479) to England as *legate a latere* to drum up funds for a crusade against the Turks*.*[[480]](#footnote-480) Henry refused to allow Campeius to land in England, relenting only when Leo X—under considerable pressure from English agents in Rome—agreed that Wolsey would be given authority as co-legate (with Campeius’s arrival dramatized by John Foxe, as we shall see in Chapter III). Wolsey knew that Henry was unwilling to commit to a lengthy and expensive crusade, so the Cardinal deftly used the crusade as a springboard from which he could organize a ‘Universal Peace’. As Fletcher has observed, the scale of this treaty was utterly without precedent: it annulled all previous treaties and set out a framework of collective security and mutual cooperation uniting Christendom, binding the Emperor and all Christian princes to support each other against the Turks.[[481]](#footnote-481) Signed in October 1518, it failed to secure a lasting peace, but the sheer scale of its ambitions positioned Wolsey in the center of the European political scene.

Following his success (albeit short lived) at the Treaty of London signing, Wolsey recognized that his legatine authority would expire when Campeius returned to Rome. Unwilling to give up the delegated authority of the Pope, Wolsey petitioned Leo X for an extension to enable Wolsey to enact monastic reforms. The Pope confirmed Wolsey’s ongoing appointment as *legate a latere*, but resisted pressure to make this a lifetime position (though this would be awarded in 1524).[[482]](#footnote-482)

Having achieved an archbishopric, cardinalate, the Lord Chancellorship and secured his legatine status, Wolsey redoubled his efforts to place his king in a position of power on the European stage. Rumors that Wolsey sought the papacy during the early 1520s have colored the Cardinal’s reputation for centuries (repeated by no less than John Skelton in *Speke, Parott*), but it seems extremely unlikely that Wolsey himself sought that office.[[483]](#footnote-483) Indeed, it is difficult to understand why Wolsey would have wanted the papacy; if he had become the first English pope since Adrian IV in the twelfth century, Wolsey would have been surrounded by a largely Italianate conclave dominated by the young Charles V (who had been elected Holy Roman Emperor upon the death of Maximilian I in 1519), who had no desire to see a strong non-imperial pope on the throne of St. Peter.[[484]](#footnote-484) Whatever Wolsey’s reasons, he remained focused on diplomatic efforts to advance England. Certainly in 1520 he had enough on his temporal plate to set aside spiritual matters: Charles V arrived in Dover in May of 1520 as part of a brief reminder to Henry (and Wolsey) of the importance of imperial friendship prior to one of the most spectacular diplomatic events of the early modern period. Managed by Wolsey’s meticulous hand, Henry and Francis I of France met in a field near Guînes on 7 July 1520 at an event called ‘the Field of Cloth-of-gold’, which was heralded as one of the greatest chivalric moments in European history.[[485]](#footnote-485) To house the proceedings, Wolsey organized the construction of a vast temporary palace, a full 328 feet long and complete with courtyard, gatehouse, and lodgings for some of the thousands of English noblemen and ecclesiastics who attended the summit.[[486]](#footnote-486) It was the focal point of two weeks of jousting, feasting, and formal declarations of peace.

Much like the Treaty of London, the Field of Cloth-of-gold was largely symbolic and achieved little in the way of a lasting peace: it was almost immediately followed by separate meetings with Charles V, which were designed by Wolsey to maintain a semblance of English control over the balance of power in Europe. As Wolsey advised Henry himself,

In this controversy betwixt these two princes it shall be a marvellous great praise and honour to your grace so by your high wisdom and authority to pass between and stay them both, that you be not by their contention and variance brought in to the war.[[487]](#footnote-487)

To this end, Wolsey embarked on a policy of shuttle diplomacy, travelling to Calais in August 1521 and from there to Bruges at the emperor’s request. He was greeted by Charles V himself, and as no less than an equal, with the two men embracing from horseback.[[488]](#footnote-488) Though these negotiations would eventually lead to England abandoning the Treaty of London by declaring war on France in 1522, it certainly appeared that Wolsey expended a great deal of effort to delay, if not prevent, the resumption of war (as well as the level of England’s active participation in that conflict).[[489]](#footnote-489)

During this period (which roughly covers 1521-1523), Wolsey was stretched considerably by cross-border tensions with Scotland, the emergence of an opposition amongst the nobility, and Henry’s desire to see Wolsey elected as pope. In addition, during this period Wolsey expanded his numerous building projects on a massive scale. The Scottish problem was settled by the earl of Surrey’s victory over the duke of Albany at Wark Castle in 1523, but Wolsey’s domestic troubles were not so easily dispatched. Much has been made of the earl of Surrey’s apparent hatred for Wolsey, though as Greg Walker has demonstrated in *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s*, the Cardinal’s relationship with the Howard family is far from clear. More troubling were the lingering difficulties resulting from the death of the duke of Buckingham. Though Buckingham had been executed in 1521 and his son marginalized, his former friends at court persisted in circulating rumors that it was Wolsey who had been responsible for his downfall. That alone was not necessarily a problem for the apparently indomitable Lord Chancellor: however, he also managed to anger Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk and Henry’s close friend. This was perhaps somewhat unfair, as Suffolk blamed Wolsey for the failure of the 1523 campaign against the French. While Wolsey’s tendency to micromanage may well have played a part in Suffolk’s difficulties, the half-hearted efforts of his allies (Charles V and Charles III, duke of Bourbon and constable of France) almost certainly doomed the invasion from the start. Whatever the reasons, by 1523 Wolsey had earned himself a powerful enemy close to the king. The emergence of a public opposition to Wolsey’s dominance provided a nucleus around which anti-Wolsey resentment would crystallize in later years. For the moment, however, Wolsey seemed to turn from strength to strength. Though it appears his ambitions did not extend to the triple crown, he was raised as a candidate in the conclaves of 1521/1522 and 1523 and enjoyed some imperial support from Charles V and Margaret of Austria.[[490]](#footnote-490) Despite the extreme unlikelihood of either conclave choosing a non-Italianate candidate *in absentia*, it doubtlessly flattered Wolsey (and, perhaps more importantly, Henry) that he was considered a potential contender at all.

While managing Henry’s papal ambitions, Wolsey managed to secure the title *Defensor fidei* for Henry as a direct result of the growing religious tensions stirred by Martin Luther. Previously refused in 1516, this title was finally granted in 1521 as an expression of papal thanks for Henry’s *Assertio*. That Wolsey was utterly committed to his position in England is evidenced not only by his long-term efforts in this respect, but also by his attempts to reorganize and regulate the English clergy. This was a theme which ran throughout Wolsey’s career; he had to walk a fine line between fulfilling Henry’s wishes and supporting the English Church and its clergy. The centuries-old concern with the exercise of a foreign jurisdiction in England (*praemunire*) had been a source of tension between Church leaders and monarchs since Thomas Becket (and presumably before that as well). The significant wealth of the English monasteries, combined with increasing calls for the urgent necessity of religious reform provided Wolsey with an excellent opportunity to please reformists and Henry, as well as providing funding for his own projects. Wolsey’s legatine status—confirmed for life in 1524, an extraordinary honor—enabled him to enact a series of visitations of monasteries, ostensibly in order to assess if the monasteries were complying with church law. The monasteries that fell short (or were deemed too small to be cost-effective) were suppressed, with their lands and revenues reallocated.

One of the chief recipients of this redistributed wealth was the newly formed Cardinal College, Oxford, which was founded in 1523 and housed in the suppressed Augustinian St Frideswide Priory from 1524.[[491]](#footnote-491) In doing so Wolsey was following the precedent set by John Alcock, bishop of Ely, who used funds from the suppressed St Radegund’s Priory to establish Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1496.[[492]](#footnote-492) He then used the London lawyer Thomas Cromwell (later Henry VIII’s chief minister) to suppress a further twenty-nine monasteries to provide the college with an endowment sufficient to making it one of the wealthiest in England.[[493]](#footnote-493) Wolsey’s commitment to humanist reformation of English clerical education is obvious by examining Wolsey’s clients, protégés, and other appointments to Cardinal College and his former university more broadly. As early as 1518 Wolsey was funding Erasmian scholars like John Clement to lecture at Oxford with an eye towards a slow reformation of the English clergy along humanist lines. This would be achieved through education of clerics, not by funding monasteries: Gwyn has demonstrated that Wolsey subscribed more closely to Thomas Starkey’s vision of monastic life as a simple retreat from the secular world, juxtaposed with ministers’ essential engagement with the lay community.[[494]](#footnote-494) By 1525, Cardinal College had its first dean (John Hygdon, former president of Magdalen) and construction had started on its magnificent buildings.[[495]](#footnote-495) In addition, Wolsey also founded Cardinal College, Ipswich, designed to act as a feeder school for his Oxford college.

Money was a perennial concern for Wolsey’s administration, and his ingenuity for discovering extra-parliamentary sources of income was nearly limitless. In 1525, however, Wolsey’s well appeared to run dry. The expensive French campaigns and related subsidies of 1522 and 1523 meant that the royal coffers were desperately empty even after Wolsey had secured massive loans and subsidies through Parliament, which were not repaid when they came due. Tensions were thus understandably high throughout the early and mid-1520s in respect to taxation, and it was in the spring of 1525 that Wolsey made a serious error. He had been asked by Henry to finance a new French invasion; to finance this expedition, he sent out tax agents to collect anywhere from 1*s* in the pound to 3*s* 4*d* from the laity and up to 33% of revenues from the clergy.[[496]](#footnote-496) This ‘Amicable Grant’ was anything but, as it sparked rebellions across the country. The dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk were eventually ordered to put down the rebellions in East Anglia, which they managed to do through negotiation. Nevertheless, the seriousness of these rebellions cannot be understated: it was felt that there was a very real chance of Yorkist agitators using the trouble in Suffolk as a springboard form which they could launch attempts to remove the Tudor monarch from power.[[497]](#footnote-497) Richard de la Pole had identified this region as being the most receptive to fostering regime change, and both Henry and Wolsey knew that they could not risk handing over one of the wealthiest regions of England to de la Pole.[[498]](#footnote-498) As a result, the Amicable Grant was called off as a grand show of magnanimity, with Wolsey providing a benevolent pardon for the rebels. The utter failure of the Amicable Grant would color Wolsey’s remaining years in power and forever lost him the support of the commons.

While Wolsey was busy founding his colleges and desperately trying to find money for Henry, the Lutheran question was becoming more and more pressing. Cambridge was struggling with an influx of reformist preachers despite the efforts of John Fisher as chancellor and Nicholas West as diocesan bishop, with Hugh Latimer being most prominent amongst these new reformists. Beyond the universities, the line between Lutheranism and anti-clericalism (and more broad demands for reform) was blurred, and Wolsey was called upon numerous times to hear appeals in the legatine court against losses of preaching licenses and accusations of heresy, as well as organizing book-burnings and other anti-heretical measures.[[499]](#footnote-499) However, religious reform was a difficult issue, and Wolsey was awkwardly placed to deal with it. While he was empowered as *legate a latere* to conduct monastic visitations and deal with lay and clerical heresy, he had no clear target. Monasteries were, by and large, extremely popular throughout Henry’s reign, with one of the most obvious expressions of this popularity being the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536. Yet monasteries—which were generally exempted from diocesan interference—could very well fall short of their society’s standards, as with the Cistercian house at Tharne, which Wolsey visited in 1526.[[500]](#footnote-500) Wolsey’s efforts to promote reform through education seemed to have necessarily taken precedence over support for monasteries. This is further supported by Wolsey’s plans to redraw diocesan boundaries at the expense of monastic houses. This process was an ongoing one, and monastic reform took a substantial amount of Wolsey’s time well into 1529.

However, from 1526 Wolsey’s relationship with his monarch was beginning to change. After the failure of the Amicable Grant, Henry appears to have made some attempts to branch out and seek counsel from other court figures. As we have seen, Wolsey had managed to anger the duke of Suffolk and the former friends of the duke of Buckingham, and his relationship with the earl of Surrey (and from 1524, the third duke of Norfolk) is difficult to ascertain. Henry’s own psychology is uncertain and the monarch’s transition into adulthood may well have played a role in his growing interest in diversifying his council. However, there is one event that certainly played a leading role in Wolsey’s downfall, and managing the resulting diplomatic crises, religious upheaval, and the vast cast of characters grew to dominate Wolsey’s final years in power. What initially motivated Henry to express uncertainty over the validity of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon is unclear, but whatever the source, Wolsey certainly struggled to satisfy his king while attempting to juggle the powerful interests of the queen’s nephew (Charles V) and the pope. Despite the common interpretations of popular culture, Henry’s unbridled lust for Anne Boleyn probably was not the initial motivator for the divorce. Doubts about the validity of the marriage had been circulated from well before Henry’s marriage to Katherine, and may well have come to a head during the Anglo-French negotiations in 1527 in settling the Treaty of Westminster, as Francis I and his ambassadors raised concerns about the legitimacy of Princess Mary’s birth (and thus, the marriage more broadly).[[501]](#footnote-501) Wolsey’s first recorded involvement in the divorce was in May 1527, when he and Warham sat in a secret tribunal to begin preliminary hearings about the validity of the marriage. Wolsey was apparently unaware of the king’s intentions to marry Anne Boleyn until September 1527 (as his character complains in *Henry VIII*); by this point, Henry had himself already informed Katherine that he considered their marriage invalid, and he had sent envoys to the embattled pope to wring a dispensation for Henry to marry someone related to him in the first degree.[[502]](#footnote-502) This was, of course, Anne Boleyn, who was related to Henry by virtue of his earlier affair with her sister Mary.

Thanks in part to Henry’s sidestepping of his cardinal, papal involvement meant that eventually Wolsey was obliged to accept the return of Cardinal Campeius (his co-legate from Leo X’s abortive crusade appeal), empowered once again as co-legate, to determine the validity of the marriage. Campeius arrived in the summer of 1528, after a lengthy journey made longer by a severe attack of gout. Once ensconced in the legatine court, however, Campeius—in his role as the representative of the pope—was entirely unwilling to commit his master to a course of action that might anger Charles V, and Wolsey himself was stymied by his obligations to Rome and, perhaps more practically, his inability to steer Henry towards a more diplomatically useful second marriage.[[503]](#footnote-503) Furthermore, the very public nature of the king’s concerns caused substantial problems for the king and two cardinals: to effect the divorce, they would have to prove the invalidity of the marriage in excruciating detail to all of Christendom. Though Wolsey managed to win to Henry the support of a great deal of universities (both in England and on the European mainland), Spanish and imperial resistance caused a great deal of delay. The ‘Spanish Brief’ is one of the more substantive of these roadblocks: a document prepared for Isabella of Castile, it was a dispensation for Katherine’s marriage to Henry and dated from 1504. The existence of this document rendered all technical questions about the form of the English copy of the dispensation moot, since the Spanish brief provided the same information.[[504]](#footnote-504) The legatine court stumbled along, hampered by a wide variety of competing interests, with the net result being Henry’s loss of faith in the ability of his cardinal to effect the divorce at all.

In many ways, the king’s ‘Great Matter’ could not have come at a worse time for Wolsey. By 1527, reformist firebrands were igniting the Low Countries, prompting burnings of Lutheran texts in England as early as 1521.[[505]](#footnote-505) Indeed, a Lutheran cell was operating at Cardinal College, Oxford, from 1526 (though it would not be discovered until 1528), and Wolsey himself was called out to sit on heresy trials numerous times throughout the second half of the 1520s, most notably for the Augustinian friar Robert Barnes, who challenged Wolsey’s lavish public image in the legatine court itself. Barnes’ spirited defense before Wolsey employed many of the same images and criticisms levelled at the Cardinal by Skelton, and indicated how these images were becoming associated increasingly with Wolsey.[[506]](#footnote-506) As the Reformation progressed, the death of Charles III, duke of Bourbon—commander of the imperial forces in Italy—sparked the infamous sack of Rome, wherein Clement VII had to flee the city and was a virtual prisoner of the emperor until 1528. The consequences of the sack cannot be underestimated: beyond its effect on Rome (which was profound, as the dearth of pre-1527 buildings can demonstrate), it gave rise to a resurgence of Savonarola’s adherents in Florence, gave an incalculable boost to reformers claiming the sack as an act of a vengeful God, and it virtually removed the pope as a key political figure for more than a year.[[507]](#footnote-507) Clement VII’s hour of desperation might well have provided Wolsey with crucial leverage to wring concessions on the divorce from the pope: however, the pope’s captor was Charles V, the nephew of Katherine. Trapped between Charles V, Campeius, and Anne Boleyn, Wolsey had very little chance of securing the divorce. The matter was referred to Rome in the late summer of 1529, and thereafter Wolsey’s fall would be effected with extreme rapidity.

As mentioned previously, Henry’s gradual cooling towards his chancellor had begun years previously and may not have had anything to do with the cardinal’s successes or failures. However, Wolsey’s position was entirely dependent on his ability to please the king: with the failure of the divorce, Henry was singularly displeased and unwilling to protect his Lord Chancellor from the disaffected noblemen who Wolsey had alienated through years of power consolidation. Wolsey’s fall from power began with a charge of *praemunire* being served against him in Chancery on 7 October, 1529, and he was officially deprived of the chancellorship on 1 November, receiving a secret pardon on the same day from the king.[[508]](#footnote-508) When it came to light, Henry’s secret pardon must have caused consternation throughout the camp of Wolsey’s enemies, as the potential for the cardinal to stage a dramatic return (and exact revenge on his detractors) was still very high. A number of lords signed a petition to the king, detailing Wolsey’s alleged crimes, but its effect is unclear.[[509]](#footnote-509) Nevertheless, Wolsey was commanded to remove himself to his house at Esher to await the king’s pleasure, in the mean time losing all his English offices (though not his cardinalate, which came from Rome and not Henry). Suffering from continued ill health, Wolsey recovered enough that by February 1530 he was deemed fit to receive a general pardon and the return of his archbishopric, and underwent an assessment of his personal wealth.[[510]](#footnote-510) He was then instructed to travel north to York (his archiepiscopal seat), which he had never yet visited. He did so slowly, so that when his enemies had persuaded the king to order Wolsey’s arrest for treason, the agents bearing the warrant found Wolsey at Cawood Castle in Yorkshire on 4 November. From there, Wolsey proceeded south before being struck with an unknown stomach complaint. His captors led him to Leicester Abbey on 26 November, where he laid for three days before dying on the morning of 29 November, 1530.

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1. Jerome Barlowe and William Roye, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, ed. Douglas H. Parker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), f. a1r, ll.1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Using the name ‘Jerome Barlowe’ is problematic, as scholars are divided on whether or not the author was the Franciscan friar Jerome Barlowe (fl. 1528–1529) or the reformist bishop William Barlow (d. 1568), or whether these two figures are actually one and the same. However, a letter from 12 June 1529 to Wolsey indicates that the Cardinal was actively seeking Roy and a ‘Jerome Barlowe’. That letter, amongst others, combined with Parker’s use of ‘Jerome’ means that this thesis will also use ‘Jerome Barlowe’. See Brewer, John Sherren, ed., *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII* (London: Longman, Trübner, Parker, Macmillan, A. & C. Black, and A. Thom, 1876). Vol. 4.3, it. 5667. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Parker, p. 3. Also see *L&P*, 4.3, it. 5667. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Rede Me*, f. a1v, ll.8-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The reference to Wolsey’s alleged enmity to the ‘white lion’ is particularly interesting in the context of the perceived feud between Wolsey and the Howard family (whose badge was the white lion). As we will see in chapter I, it is unlikely that there actually was a high degree of tension between Wolsey and the Howards. However, the inclusion of this feature in *Rede Me* indicates a contemporary perception of a feud, which indicates the lack of control Tudor figures might have had over their public images. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For more on Sidney and copia, please see James A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Rede Me*, f. a1v, ll.15-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. These periods are largely accurate in regards to the texts in this corpus, but certainly are not intended to be exclusively accurate for all sixteenth-century texts that mention Wolsey. Instead, they correspond roughly to the dominant depictions and/or genres found in those periods, as well as demarcating periods of innovation. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Thomas Betteridge, *Tudor Histories of the English Reformation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. As evidenced in the 2010 RSC production of *Henry VIII* at the Globe Theatre, as we will see in Chapter V. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For example, a round-table discussion of Henry VIII and his representations took place in 2011 at the Sixteenth Century Society Conference at Fort Worth Renaissance Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Thomas Betteridge and Thomas Freeman, *Henry VIII and History* (London: Ashgate, 2010). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Cavendish, ff. 89v-90r, pp. 180-181. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Appendix 1, episode 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Hereafter referred to as the *Life*. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Mike Pincombe, “A Place in the Shade: George Cavendish and *de casibus* tragedy”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. McMullan, Gordon, ‘Introduction’, in William Shakespeare and John Fletcher, *King Henry VIII*, ed. Gordon McMullan (London: Arden, 2000), p. 9. Also see Charles Spencer, “Henry VIII at Shakespeare’s Globe, review”, in the *Telegraph*, 25 May 2010, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/7764638/Henry-VIII-at-Shakespeares-Globe-review.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Garrett Mattingly, *Catherine of Aragon* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1942), p. 172. Quoted in Fletcher, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. George Puttenham, *The arte of English poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589), p. 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Editions of Skelton’s poems printed between 1499(?) and 1624 available via the English Short Title Catalogue number 34 (including collections of poems, but not including editions attributed to Skelton during the early modern period), with the most numerous editions being of *Colin Clout* (7 editions), *Philip Sparrow* (6 editions), and *Why come ye nat to courte?* (6 editions). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, vol. 2 of *The Oxford English Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 23. Also see John Bale, *Scriptorum illustrium maioris britanniae catalogus* (Basel: Joannes Oporinus, 1557-1559). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Robert S. Kinsman, *John Skelton, Early Tudor Laureate: An Annotated Bibliography, c. 1488-1977* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979), pp. 15-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. For more on Shepherd’s Skeltonic satires, see Luke Shepherd, *An Edition of Luke Shepherd’s Satires*, ed. Janice Devereux (Tempe, AZ, Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Kinsman, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. For more information, see Jane Griffiths, John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak (Oxford: Oxford English Monographs, 2006). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Edmund Spenser, “Maye,” in *Shepheardes Calendar*, (London: Matthew Lownes), 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 170-181. The masques she identifies are *The Gypsies Metamorphos’d* (1621), *The Masque of Owls* (1624), and *The Fortunate Isles* (1624). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Edwards, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Edwards, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Kinney, p. 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Scattergood, p. 431. For Pollet’s argument, see pp. 82-83 of his monograph. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Griffiths, pp. 187-188. While most scholars have dated the poem to 1514-1516, if we are to understand the livery comment to be directed at Wolsey, it could not have been written until after Wolsey’s being appointed a cardinal in September 1515. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Griffiths, p. 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. *AVT*, p. 137. Translation from Scattergood as follows: “Here he refers to Roman letters woven in bright colours on the front and back of liveries of followers.” Scattergood, note to p. 137 on p. 431. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. *AVT*, lines 16-23 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Kinney, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Edwards, 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. ‘lack’, 2b. *OED.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. ‘lack’ 3rd sense, *OED* [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *AVT*, ll. 18-19. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Edwards, p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. “Read Philostratus on the life of Apollonius of Tyana.” (trans. Scattergood). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. *AVT*, ll. 49-54 incl. marginalia. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, Psalmi Iuxta 139, 2-5, pp. 942, 944. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Translation mine. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. *Against Venemous Tongues*, ll. 55-58, incl. marginalia. “Why do we need examples from abroad? Let us revert to our own land.” Trans. Scattergood in John Skelton, *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by John Scattergood (London: Penguin Books, 1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. William O. Harris, *Skelton’s Magnyfycence and the Cardinal Vice Tradition*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, UNC Press, 1965), pp. 12-45. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. The dating of *Speculum principis* is uncertain, but it was almost certainly written while Henry was Duke of York and Salter makes a strong case for the date of composition to be 1501. For more information, see F. M. Salter, “Skelton's Speculum Principis,” *Speculum* 9.1 (January 1934). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. John Skelton, *The Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell*, in *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, edited by John Scattergood (London: Penguin Books, 1983), ll. 1226-1232. All references to any of Skelton’s works will be from this edition, unless otherwise noted. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Walker, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Peter Happé, *Four Morality Plays* (London: Penguin, 1979), 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 403-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* ll.28-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. “Lindsey-woolsey.” [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. “Spider”. (1989). *Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1207, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1238-43, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Jackdaw”. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 417-423, p.152. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. “A general term of opprobrium, reproach, or abuse, implying either dullness and incapacity, or idleness and rascality; a sluggard, vagabond, ‘loafer’.”*OED*, “lurdan”. Griffiths, p. 188. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Skelton may well be punning on the relationship between “carlys” and “Cardinal”, though certainly Wolsey was not the son of any churchman. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 898-901, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Carl”. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 907-11, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 522-23, p. 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 902-6, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.vv. “Sire”; “Dam”. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. John Foxe, Acts and Monuments […] (1563 edition), [online]. (Sheffield: hriOnline, 2006), http://www.hrionline.shef.ac.uk/foxe/ (Accessed: 02.24.2009), 441. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 1023-24, p.169. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. *Magnyfycence*, l. 1030, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Kinsman, pp. 10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Walker, p. 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. *Speke, Parott*, 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. J. S. Brewer, ed., *Letters and Papers: Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII* (London: Longman, 1864), 2712. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Walker, 173; Giustiniani’s quote may be found in *Letters and Papers*, II.ii 4438. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. *L&P*, II.ii it. 4438, pp. 1363-1364. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. *Speke, Parott*, p. 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Carline”. It also is a variant spelling of ‘carline’, a contemptuous term for a woman which was frequently used in Scotland and the north of England during the late medieval and early modern period, though this is almost certainly not the sense Skelton meant it in. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Churl”. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. *Speke, Parott*, ll. 120-126, p. 234. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. F.W. Brownlow, "Speke, Parrot": Skelton's Allegorical Denunciation of Cardinal Wolsey” in *Studies in Philology* 65.2 (April 1968), pp. 124-139. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 1, 6-18, pp. 246-247. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 47-53, 58; p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Probably the bishops of London, Rochester, Lincoln, and St. Asaph. Of these, John Fisher of Rochester was the most prominent opponent of Wolsey and, later, the divorce. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 1086-1089, p. 273. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Paul E. McLane, *“*Prince Lucifer and the Fitful ‘Lanternes of Lyght’: Wolsey and the Bishops in Skelton's ‘Colyn Cloute’”, in *Huntington Library Quarterly* 43.3 (Summer 1980), p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Walker, p. 189. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 162-166. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. William Langland, *Piers Plowman, with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Pearl and Sir Orfeo*. trans. by Terence Tiller and J.R.R Tolkien, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Everyman, 2001) p. 176-181. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 188-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Scattergood, note to line 193 of *Collyn Clout*, p. 467. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. *Collyn Clout*, ll. 120-131. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Kinsman, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. *WCYNTC*, ll. 1-2, p. 278. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. *WCYNTC*, ll. 3-14, pp. 278-279. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Walker, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. *WCYNTC*, ll. 17-26, p. 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Scattergood, note on p. 482. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. *WCYNTC*, ll. 134-135, p. 282. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. *WCYNTC*, ll. 169-176, p. 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. William Nelson, “Skelton’s Quarrel with Wolsey”, in *PMLA,* Vol. 51, No. 2 (Jun., 1936), p. 392. Cavendish’s description of Wolsey’s processions during term time will be discussed further in Chapter III. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. *Decastichon Virulentum*, p. 311, line 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. *WCYNTC*, ll. 480-494, p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, 953-956, p. 303. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Scattergood, note on p. 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Scattergood, p. 517, note to p. 372. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Edwards, p. 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. *Replycacyon*, ll. 35-39, p. 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. *Replycacyon*, ll. 114-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Fish, p. 223. References to Kendle are taken from an unpublished dissertation, *The Ancestry and Character of the Skeltonic* (dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1961), pp. 46-47. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. The Skelton is line 1222 of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, p. 309, and the argument is in Fish, p. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Scattergood, 1-16, pp. 309-310. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Fish, pp. 224-225. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Kinsman, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Nelson, p. 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. *The Doughty Duke of Albany*, ll. 523-531. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Nelson, p. 396. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Greg Walker, *Medieval Drama, An Anthology* (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p. 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. In the introduction to his authoritative edition of *GQH*, Greg Walker makes a strong case for the date of composition to be 1529, but acknowledges that previous scholarship has given dates ranging from 1522 to 1527. David Bevington puts the date as sometime between 1527-1529, but does not provide much evidence. For more information, see Walker’s *Plays of Persuasion* pp. 102-132 and David Bevington’s *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Mike Pincombe, “Comic Treatment of Tragic Character in *Godly Queen Hester*”, in *Interludes and Early Modern Society*, eds. Peter Happe and Wim Husken (Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2007), p. 97.

*Biblia Sacra Vulgata*, 5th ed., eds. B. Fischer et al (Stuttgart: Duetsche Bibelgesellscaft, 2007) Liber Hester 8:13, p. 721. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. *Godly Queene Hester*, in *Medieval Drama: An Anthology*,edited by Greg Walker (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000), p. 412, ll. 94-102. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. *GQH*, p. 441, ll. 57-63. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Peter Gwyn,*The King’s Cardinal* (London: Pimlico, 1990), p. 114. For more information, see John Guy, *The Cardinal’s Court: The Impact of Thomas Wolsey in Star Chamber* (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977). [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Gwyn, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Gwyn, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Holinshed, 1587 edition, p. 839. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. *GQH*, ll. 390, p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. *GQH*, ll. 402-416, pp. 416-417. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. See Chapter I. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. See Chapter III. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See Chapter V. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. See Chapter II. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. *GQH*, ll. 1007-1012, p. 428. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. *GQH*, 1048-1049, p. 429. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. *Magnyfycence*, ll. 902-6, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. *GQH*, stage directions for ll. 338, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. *GQH*, ll. 368-381, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Holinshed’s *Chronicle*, 1587 edition, p. 837. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Richard Andrews, *Scripts and scenarios: the performance of comedy in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. In addition, at the end of this scene Aman re-enters and speaks with Assuerus, who apparently has not left the stage (even to enter his traverse, which he does at line 635). [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. *GQH*, ll. 338-341, 346-353, 358-368, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. *GQH*, ll. 364-365, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. *GQH*, ll. 350-353, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. For more information, see chapter IV. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Walker, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Bevington, p. 91. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. *OED*, “jackdaw”, “daw” sense 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. *GQH*, ll. 454-457, 459-460, p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. *GQH*, ll. 424-431, p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Footnote to line 431, *GQH*, p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. *GQH*, ll. 544-557, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. For more detailed information on Wolsey’s dioceses, see the *Guide to Bishops’ Registers of England and Wales*, ed. by David M. Smith (London: Royal Historical Society, 1981), pp. 35, 124, 211, 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Pindar, *Pindar vol. I: Olympian Odes; Pythian Odes*, ed. and trans. by William H. Race (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press for Loeb Classical Library, 1997), p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. *GQH*, ll. 1030-1045, pp. 428-429. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. Mike Pincombe disagrees, writing that Hardydardy “never descends to the low thematic level of farts and whores”, p. 113. However, Hardydardy here is on very thin ice and a distraction would have been welcome: if Aman is to be understood as Perillus, then the logical inference is that Assuerus is represented by Phalaris the tyrant. Hardydardy, questioned by Assuerus about his meaning, must quickly reinforce the connection between Aman and Perillus and quietly let the original context of the anecdote drop. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. *GQH*, l. 636, p. 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. *GQH*, ll. 645-649, p. 422. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. *GQH*, ll. 797-803, p. 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Pincombe, p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. *GQH*, footnote 40, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Bevington, p. 90. Walker, pp. 102-132. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Thomas Betteridge, ‘John Heywood and Court Drama’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature:1485-1603* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. See Chapter I. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. *ODNB*, ‘Cavendish, George (1494–1562?)’; see also Mike Pincombe, “A Place in the Shade: George Cavendish and *de causibus* tragedy”, in *The Oxford Handbook of Tudor Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 375. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Richard S. Sylvester, “Introduction”. The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey, (London: Early English Text Society, 1959), p. xx. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Sylvester, p. xxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. *Life*, p. 11, f.8 and p. 1, f. 3-4. Note on pagination in Cavendish’s Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey: I will be following Richard Sylvester’s practices as far as page references are concerned. First the page number will be provided, followed by the folio number. These correspond to Sylvester’s organization in the 1959 EETS edition of the Life. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. *Life*, p. 1, f. 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Edwards, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. Edwards, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Edwards, pp.7-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. George Cavendish, *Metrical Visions*, ed. by A.S.G. Edwards (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), p. 27, f. 95r. Note on references: I will give the page references as Edwards has, referring to both the Edwards edition page and the Egerton manuscript pagination. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1970), pp. 251-252. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 1-14, p. 25, f.94r. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. *Metrical Visions*, f. 94v-95r, lines 23-25, 48-49. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Wiley, Paul L. (1946). “Renaissance Exploitation of Cavendish’s *Life of Wolsey*.” *Studies in Philology*. 43 (2), p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Wiley, p. 127. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. *Metrical Visions*, f. 148v, lines 2397-2401. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. *Metrical Visions*, f. 149r, lines 2405-2411, 2419-2425. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
184. *OED*, “press”, sense II.5a. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
185. *Metrical Visions*, f. 96r, lines 85-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
186. *Metrical Visions*, f. 98r, lines 183-189. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
187. *Metrical Visions*, f. 98r, ll. 169-170, p. 33. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
188. *Metrical Visions*, f. 97r, ll. 141-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
189. *Metrical Visions*, f. 99r, line 219, ll. 204-217, ff. 98v-99r, pp. 34-35. [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
190. Wolsey’s tomb was not occupied by its creator, as his unexpected illness and death necessitated a quick burial at Leicester Abbey. Instead, it was appropriated by the state after his death and stored in Westminster and was intended initially to house Henry’s body. After lying empty for nearly three centuries, the sarcophagus now contains the remains of Lord Nelson in the North Crypt of St. Paul’s Cathedral. See P. G. Lindley, “Playing check-mate with royal majesty? Wolsey’s patronage of Italian Renaissance sculpture”, in *Cardinal Wolsey: Church, State and Art*, eds. S. J. Gunn and P. G. Lindley, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
191. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 218-231, f. 99r, p. 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
192. Lindley, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
193. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 281-282, f. 100v, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
194. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 281-294, f.100v, p. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
195. *Metrical Visions*, l. 295, f. 101r, p. 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
196. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 85-86, f. 96r, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
197. *Metrical Visions*, l. 497, f. 105v, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
198. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 505-511. f. 106r, p. 49. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
199. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 687-690, 694-700, ff. 110r-v, pp. 57-58. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
200. *Metrical Visions*, ;ll. 708-714, f. 110v, p. 58. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
201. Edwards, notes to ll. 1-7, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
202. Edwards, notes to ll. 379-380, p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
203. *Metrical Visions*, ll. 510-511, f. 105v, p. 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
204. Edwards, notes to ll. 510-511, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
205. *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?*, ll. 739-741, p. 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
206. Scattergood, notes to ll. 718-741, p. 488. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
207. Edwards, notes, to ll. 510-511, p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
208. Possibly one of Richard Kele’s editions from the 1540s, as it was both recent and readily available. This is speculative, however; Cavendish could equally have held onto a manuscript copy of *Why Come Ye Nat To Courte?* from his days in service to Wolsey. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
209. Pincombe, pp. 376, 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
210. Pincombe, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
211. Pincombe, p. 374. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
212. *Life*, f. 3, p. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
213. See Colin Burrow, ‘The Reformation of the Household’, in *Cultural Reformations*, eds. James Simpson and Brian Cummings (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 459-480. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
214. Hilary Mantel, “The Other King” in *The Guardian*, 25 April 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
215. See Sylvester’s Introduction, xxxv. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
216. Richard Sylvester, “Cavendish's ‘Life of Wolsey’: The Artistry of a Tudor Biographer”, in *Studies in Philology* 57.1, January 1960, p. 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
217. Stephen Greenblatt, “Resonance and Wonder” in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jan., 1990), p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
218. *Life*, ff. 7r-7v, pp. 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
219. Busch pp. 381-382, quoted in Sylvester, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
220. *Life*, f. 7v, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
221. *Life*, p. 15, f. 11r. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
222. *OED*, ‘varlet’ and ‘buget’: a low-born servant’s bag. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
223. *Life*, p. 16, ff. 11v-12r. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
224. *Life*, p. 16, f. 12r. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
225. See Foxe table episode 2, Holinshed table episode 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
226. Foxe, 1570 edition, p. 1124. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
227. Holinshed, 1577 edition, pp. 1497-1498. [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
228. *Life*, f. 13v, p. 19; f. 14v, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
229. *Life*, ff. 14v-15r, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
230. *Life*, f. 14v, pp. 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
231. Foxe, 1563 edition, p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
232. *Life*, f.88v, pp. 178-179. [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
233. *Life*, f.88v, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
234. *Life*, f.90v, p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
235. *Life,* p. 182, f.90r. [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
236. Sylvester, xxix. [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
237. As Sylvester rightly notes, we do not know exactly what Cavendish and Wolsey spoke about, and speculation on specifics “force[s] an editor of the *Life* into conjecture.” ( xxix). Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that Wolsey was the primary source for the *Life*. [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
238. Pincombe, p. 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
239. *Life*, p. 178, f. 89r. [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
240. *Life*, p. 179, f. 89r. For the entire speech, see pp. 178-181, ff. 89r-90r. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
241. *Life,* p. 180, f.89v. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
242. For more information on the 1549 rebellions, see Tom Betteridge’s *Literature and Politics in the English Reformation* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 87-129. [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
243. *Life*, pp. 127-128, f. 64v. [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
244. *Life,* pp. 128, f. 64v. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
245. *Life*, p. 5, f. 5r. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
246. Thomas Grey, first marquess of Dorset (c.1455–1501), who employed Wolsey as a tutor to his sons; Gwyn, footnote to p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
247. *Life*, pp. 5-6, f. 5v. [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
248. Holinshed, 1577 edition, p. 1555. [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
249. See Chapter III. [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
250. *Life*, p. 6, ff. 5v-6r. [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
251. Stella Fletcher, *Cardinal Wolsey: A Life in Renaissance Europe* (London: Continuum, 2009), p. 173. [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
252. See BL EG2402, BL ADD4233, BL ADD48066, BL SLOANE 848, amongst others. [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
253. A.S.G. Edwards, *Introduction*, in *Metrical Visions* (Columbia S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1980), p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
254. Sylvester, xxxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
255. Thomas S. Freeman, ‘Research, Rumour and Propaganda: Anne Boleyn in Foxe's “Book of Martyrs”’ *The Historical Journal*, 38:4 (1995), 797-819 (799). [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
256. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, item 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
257. John King, ‘Introduction’, in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. by Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
258. Patrick Collinson, ‘John Foxe and National Consciousness’, in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. by Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002) p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
259. Freeman, ‘Research, Rumour and Propaganda’, pp. 806-807. [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
260. Thomas S. Freeman, ‘John Foxe: A Biography’ in John Foxe, Acts and Monuments [...]. The Variorum Edition. (Sheffield: hriOnline, 2004) http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/foxe/ [Accessed: June 8 2009]. [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
261. Freeman, ’John Foxe: A Biography <http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/foxe/> [Accessed: 8 June 2009]. [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
262. See Appendix One for a complete breakdown of anecdotes and marginalia. [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
263. 1525 is, admittedly, something of an arbitrary date: it is utilized here to demonstrate that the overwhelming amount of Foxe’s anecdotes about Wolsey concern the Cardinal’s fall from power and role in the divorce, rather than Wolsey’s rise to power and career preceding the divorce (which is, of course, almost all of it). [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
264. Hereafter referred to as ‘*Rerum*’. [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
265. ODNB, Elizabeth I. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
266. J. Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 252. [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
267. David J. B. Trim, ‘Seeking a Protestant Alliance and Liberty of Conscience on the Continent, 1558-1585’, *Tudor England and Its Neighbors*, ed. by Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 139-177 (145). [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
268. Guy, p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
269. Guy, p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
270. Guy, p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
271. Guy, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
272. At least, to openly embrace the rebellion. She initially only allowed surreptitious military aid (consisting of money and arms) to be given to the rebels, though in March 1560 she authorized naval blockades of Scotland and sent an army to assist her ships. This eventually led to the signing of a peace treaty with France in July of the same year. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
273. King, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
274. Guy, pp. 272-273. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
275. Guy, p. 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
276. Pauline Croft, ‘“The State of the World is Marvellously Changed”: England, Spain and Europe 1558-1604’ in *Tudor England and Its Neighbors*, ed. by Susan Doran and Glenn Richardson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2005), pp. 178-202. [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
277. Croft, pp. 185-186. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
278. Richard Williams ‘“Libels and payntinges”: Elizabethan Catholics and the International Campaign of Visual Propaganda’, in *John Foxe and his World*, ed. by Christopher Highley and John N. King (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2002), pp. 198-215. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
279. King, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
280. Glyn Parry, ‘Elect Church or Elect Nation? The Reception of the *Acts and Monuments*’, in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. by David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 167-181 (172). [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
281. King, pp. 112-113. Quoted text from York, Borthwick Institute, Institution Act Book 2, part 3, fol. 85v; as quoted in Evenden and Freeman, “John Foxe”, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
282. King, 124. Also see, Jesse Lander ‘Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*:Printing and Popularizing the *Acts and Monuments*’ in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, ed. by Claire McEachern and Deborah Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 69-92. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
283. King, p. 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
284. Croft, p. 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
285. King, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
286. See Glyn Parry, ‘Elect Church or Elect Nation? The Reception of the *Acts and Monuments*’, in *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective*, ed. by David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 167-181. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
287. King, p. 131. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
288. King, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
289. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, it. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
290. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, it. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
291. Foxe, 1570, pp. 1120-21. See Appendix One, it. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
292. Foxe, 1570, p. 1121. See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
293. Foxe, 1570, p. 1121. See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
294. Foxe, 1570, p. 1121. See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
295. Foxe, 1563, p. 418. In the later three editions, the comment reads, “How God confoundeth the pride and pompe of men.” (1570, p. 1121; 1576, p. 960; 1583, p. 986.) See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
296. In the 1563 edition Foxe simply states that the story is “Ex Parclipomena” (1563, p. 418), but in the three later editions he clarifies the citation as having come from Hall: “Ex Edouar. Hallo.” (1570 p. 1121; 1576 p. 960; 1583 p. 986). See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
297. Edward Hall,*The vnion of the two noble and illustre famelies of Lancastre [and] Yorke[...]* (London: Richard Grafton, 1548), (p. 441). [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
298. Foxe, 1563, p. 417. See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
299. *Life*, p. 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
300. More commonly known as Spartans. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
301. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, it. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
302. Foxe, 1563. p. 417. See Appendix One, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
303. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, it. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
304. Foxe, 1563, p. 417. See Appendix One, it. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
305. Foxe, 1570, p. 1120. See Appendix One, it. 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
306. *ODNB*, ‘Wolsey, Thomas (1470/71–1530)’. [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
307. Gwyn, p. 1.; Cavendish, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
308. Gwyn, p.182. [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
309. Foxe gives the year as the 17th of Henry VIII’s reign, which was 1526. [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
310. Foxe, 1563, p. 436. See Appendix One, it. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
311. Hall, 1548, fols. cxliii-cxliiii. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
312. Foxe, 1563, p. 457. See Appendix One, it. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
313. Foxe, 1570, pp. 1193-1194. See Appendix One, it. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
314. Hall, 1548, f. clxxxir. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
315. Holinshed, 1587, p. 908. See Appendix Two, it. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
316. *Henry VIII*, 2.4.72-2.4.82. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
317. See Boswell-Stone’s *Shakspeare’s Holinshed*. Walter George Boswell-Stone, *Shakspeare’s Holinshed: The Chronicle and the Historical Plays Compared* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1896). [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
318. *Henry VIII*, 2.4.105 & 2.4.107-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
319. Gillespie, p. 174. [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
320. Gillespie, p. 172. It should be noted that Thomas Freeman has argued that distribution of the 1570 edition was nowhere near complete, and that the presence of the *Acts and Monuments* in parish churches reached its peak just before the Civil War. For more, see *ODNB*, ‘Foxe, John’. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
321. It should be noted here that there is no known evidence to show that Wolsey did in fact kill himself, intentionally or by accident. [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
322. As with the story of the arrival of Campeius, the account of Wolsey’s death in Cavendish’s *Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* differs significantly. Cavendish does not mention any of the more graphic (or potentially allegorical) details of the final days of Wolsey that Foxe relates, though he delves into great detail in all other respects. (see Cavendish pp. 177-183) [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
323. Foxe, 1563, p. 1383. See Appendix One, it. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
324. See Suzanne Evans, “The Scent of a Martyr”, in *Numen*, 49.2 (2002), pp. 193-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
325. *ODNB*, ‘Wolsey, Thomas (1470/71–1530)’. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)
326. Foxe, 1570, p. 1133. See Appendix One, it. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-326)
327. Foxe, 1570, p. 1133. See Appendix One, it. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-327)
328. Foxe, 1563, p. 1717. [↑](#footnote-ref-328)
329. Thomas Freeman, ‘Fate, Faction, and Fiction in Foxe's “Book of Martyrs”’, *The Historical Journal*, 43:3 (2000), 601-623, p. 604. [↑](#footnote-ref-329)
330. Foxe, 1570, p. 1172. See Appendix One, it. 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-330)
331. Foxe, 1563, p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-331)
332. Foxe, 1570, p. 1952. See Appendix One, it. 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-332)
333. Foxe, 1563, p. 1382. [↑](#footnote-ref-333)
334. Freeman, Thomas. Editorial comment: Foxe, 1563, p. 1382. [↑](#footnote-ref-334)
335. Cavendish, p. 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-335)
336. Cavendish, p. 178-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-336)
337. Levy, cited in Patterson, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-337)
338. Booth, cited in Patterson, p. 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-338)
339. Patterson, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-339)
340. Patterson, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-340)
341. *ODNB*, ‘Reyner Wolfe’. [↑](#footnote-ref-341)
342. *ODNB*, ‘Raphael Holinshed’. [↑](#footnote-ref-342)
343. *ODNB*, ‘William Harrison’. [↑](#footnote-ref-343)
344. *ODNB*, ‘Richard Stanihurst’. [↑](#footnote-ref-344)
345. 1577, p. 1497. See Appendix Two, it. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-345)
346. 1577, pp. 1505-1506. See Appendix Two, it. 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-346)
347. See *OED*, ‘pompous’, senses 1 and 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-347)
348. 1577, p. 1498. See Appendix Two, it. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-348)
349. 1577, p. 1498. See Appendix Two, it. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-349)
350. 1577, p. 1505. See Appendix Two, it. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-350)
351. 1577, p. 1505. See Appendix Two, it. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-351)
352. 1577, p. 1505. See Appendix Two, it. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-352)
353. Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*, trans. Rufus Goodwin (Boston: Dante University Press, 2003), p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-353)
354. For more information, see Antony Grafton’s introduction to Machiavelli, Niccolo. *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-354)
355. 1577, pp. 1504-1505. See Appendix Two, it. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-355)
356. 1577, p. 1505. See Appendix Two, it. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-356)
357. “A notice fastened on the back of a criminal undergoing punishment, specifying his or her offence”, *OED* “paper”, sense 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-357)
358. 1577, p. 1498. See Appendix Two, it. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-358)
359. 1577, pp. 1498-1499,. See Appendix Two, it. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-359)
360. 1577, pp. 1498-1499. See Appendix Two, it. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-360)
361. 1577, pp. 1498-1499. See Appendix Two, it. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-361)
362. 1587, p. 951. [↑](#footnote-ref-362)
363. *OED*, ‘parrhesia’. [↑](#footnote-ref-363)
364. 1577, pp. 1555-1556. See Appendix Two, it. 99. Quoted from a manuscript copy of Edmund Campion’s *The Historie of Ireland* (1571), which was first published by Sir James Ware in 1633. Full reference: Edmund Campion, *Two Histories of Ireland*, ed. Sir John Ware, (Dublin, 1633), p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-364)
365. *ODNB*, ‘Abraham Fleming’. [↑](#footnote-ref-365)
366. 1587, p. 837. See Appendix Two, it. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-366)
367. From ‘The Making of the Chronicles’, available at http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml Accessed: August 29 2011. [↑](#footnote-ref-367)
368. 1587, p. 837. See Appendix Two, it. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-368)
369. “Both gods above and mortal men abhor this pomp / This levity displeases man and God.” 1587, p. 837. See Appendix Two, it. 9. Italics added for contrast. [↑](#footnote-ref-369)
370. 1577, p. 1504. See Appendix Two, it. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-370)
371. 1587, p. 845. See Appendix Two, it. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-371)
372. 1587, p. 845. See Appendix Two, it. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-372)
373. 1577, p. 1552. See Appendix Two, it. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-373)
374. See Appendix 1, it. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-374)
375. “Looseness of the bowels, diarrhœa; an attack of this”. *OED*, ‘laske’. [↑](#footnote-ref-375)
376. 1577, p. 1555, See Appendix Two, it. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-376)
377. 1587, p. 915, See Appendix Two, it. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-377)
378. “From life’s first thread we bear diverse afflictions / and by frightful evils are we tried: / Till he who lived at sunset turns from sunrise / Before the life he learned to live should die.” 1587, p. 917. See Appendix Two, it. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-378)
379. 1587, p. 917. See Appendix Two, it. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-379)
380. For more information, see the prefatory essay, ‘The Making of the Chronicles’ at http://www.cems.ox.ac.uk/holinshed/chronicles.shtml#two. In addion, see ‘Thynne, Francis (1545?-1608)’ in *ODNB*. [↑](#footnote-ref-380)
381. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-381)
382. For more on Sidney and *copia*, please seeJames A. Knapp, *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003). [↑](#footnote-ref-382)
383. Knapp, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-383)
384. Patterson, ix [↑](#footnote-ref-384)
385. 1577, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-385)
386. Patterson, 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-386)
387. McMullan, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-387)
388. Howard Felperin, ‘Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII*: History as Myth’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 6:2 (1966), p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-388)
389. The play originally appeared as ‘All is True’, with the title ‘Henry VIII, Or, All is True’ appearing in the First Folio. Numerous editors and directors—most recently Gordon McMullan—have attempted to reclaim the original title, generally with little success. [↑](#footnote-ref-389)
390. Charles Spencer, “Henry VIII at Shakespeare’s Globe, review”, in the *Telegraph*, 25 May 2010, available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/7764638/Henry-VIII-at-Shakespeares-Globe-review.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-390)
391. McMullan, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-391)
392. McMullan, p. 28-32 [↑](#footnote-ref-392)
393. Fletcher, p. 179. The Duke’s Company’s patronage by the future James II came during a period of outward Anglican conformity, but James’s subsequent Catholic conversion unsettles any definitive claims we might make about James’s role in politicizing Wolsey’s role. [↑](#footnote-ref-393)
394. Fletcher, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-394)
395. Fletcher, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-395)
396. Fletcher, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-396)
397. Fletcher, p. 182. The effect of a female Wolsey is worth briefly commenting on: a female Wolsey juxtaposed with an aggressively masculine Buckingham would draw out the tension between these two characters. This casting would also highlight the intimate partnership between Wolsey and Henry. [↑](#footnote-ref-397)
398. Fletcher, p. 185. [↑](#footnote-ref-398)
399. Fletcher, p. 190. [↑](#footnote-ref-399)
400. Doran in McMullan, p. 54. [↑](#footnote-ref-400)
401. Russell Jackson, “Shakespeare at Stratford-upon-Avon, 1996-98; or the Search for a Policy” in *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (Summer, 1999), p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-401)
402. Jackson, p. 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-402)
403. The second Duke of Norfolk died in 1524, and in the play is conflated with his son Thomas, who became the third duke on his father’s death. [↑](#footnote-ref-403)
404. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. “keech.” [↑](#footnote-ref-404)
405. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. “file.” [↑](#footnote-ref-405)
406. Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1999), p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-406)
407. William Shakespeare, *Mr. William Shakespeares comedies, histories, & tragedies* (London, I. Jaggard and E. Blount, 1623), p. 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-407)
408. Foxe, 1570, p. 1122. [↑](#footnote-ref-408)
409. Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Rufus Goodwin (Boston: Dante University Press, 2003), p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-409)
410. Edmund Spenser, “Maye,” in *Shepheardes Calendar*, (London: Matthew Lownes, 1611), p. 19-20. [↑](#footnote-ref-410)
411. McMullan, footnote to ll. 158-160, p. 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-411)
412. See Chapter I. [↑](#footnote-ref-412)
413. The chronology of the play does not match the historical record, as is indicated by the difficulty in identifying who exactly the Lord Chamberlain is meant to be: Charles Somerset, first Earl of Worcester (c.1460-1526), was Lord Chamberlain until his death, but Lord Sandys took up the position after 1526. Yet both these men appear onstage together throughout the play, even well after the events of 1526 have passed. The playwrights telescoped the time between events for dramatic effect, resulting in occasional historical inaccuracies or moments of confusion. The same problem arises again with the inclusion of both the Duke of Suffolk and a separate ‘Brandon’ character later in the play. [↑](#footnote-ref-413)
414. Figures taken from George Mason University’s Open Source Shakespeare project at http://www.opensourceshakespeare.org/. [↑](#footnote-ref-414)
415. Sir Robert Dallington, *View of Fraunce* (London: Simon Stafford, 1604), f. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-415)
416. Raphael Holinshed, *Chronicles*, 1587 edn. p. 922. [↑](#footnote-ref-416)
417. Gordon McMullan, note to l. 86, p. 264. [↑](#footnote-ref-417)
418. For more information on Pace’s illness and Wolsey’s alleged role in exacerbating it, see Fletcher, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-418)
419. McMullan, note to ll. 128-134, p. 288. [↑](#footnote-ref-419)
420. Quoted in Janette Dillon, *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-420)
421. See McMullan’s note to ll. 0.6-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-421)
422. Holinshed (1587), p. 921. [↑](#footnote-ref-422)
423. McMullan, note to 2.4, p. 299. [↑](#footnote-ref-423)
424. For more information on legatine regalia, see *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* (1984), especially sections pertaining to archiepiscopal crosses (p. 62 and 79). Wolsey’s choice of processionary pillars and crosses may not be proscribed specifically by contemporary sources, but there appears to have been no contemporary consensus (or attempt at consensus) to limit his choice of regalia. The use of these crosses appears to go back to the tenth *Ordo Romanus* in the eleventh century. [↑](#footnote-ref-424)
425. Michael Woodcock, ‘“Their eyes more attentive to the show”: Spectacle, tragedy and the structure of *All is True (Henry VIII)*’, *Shakespeare* 7:1 (2011), 1-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-425)
426. Introduction to *Henry VIII* in Shakespeare, William, *The Complete Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare: New Cambridge Edition*, ed. by Charles Jarvis Hill and William Allan Neilson (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 905. [↑](#footnote-ref-426)
427. Foxe, 1570, p. 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-427)
428. *Biblia Sacra, Vulgatæ Editionis*, 5th edn.,(Tournai: Soc. S. Johannis Evang., 1894). Secundum Mattheum VI:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-428)
429. *Biblia*, trans. Miles Coverdale (Antwerp: Martin de Keyser, 1535), Mathew chapt. 6, f. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-429)
430. *ODNB*, s.v. “Fletcher, John”. [↑](#footnote-ref-430)
431. McMullan, footnote to l. 213. [↑](#footnote-ref-431)
432. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edition, s.v. “jade.” [↑](#footnote-ref-432)
433. McMullan, footnote to ll. 297-298. [↑](#footnote-ref-433)
434. *LP*, 6075, p. 2713. [↑](#footnote-ref-434)
435. McMullan, footnote to ll. 440-457, pp. 361-362. [↑](#footnote-ref-435)
436. Holinshed, 1587, p. 917 [↑](#footnote-ref-436)
437. Cardinal Allen (1532–1594) was an exiled prelate who worked amongst the Elizabethan Romanist diaspora to achieve the reconversion of England. See *ODNB*, s.v. “Allen, William”. [↑](#footnote-ref-437)
438. See Appendix One, item 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-438)
439. Jerome Barlowe and William Roye, *Rede Me and Be Nott Wrothe*, ed. Douglas H. Parker (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), f. a1r, ll.1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-439)
440. Quoted in Patterson, ix. [↑](#footnote-ref-440)
441. Fletcher, pp. 156-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-441)
442. Fletcher, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-442)
443. Fletcher, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-443)
444. Cavendish, f. 5, p. 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-444)
445. Cavendish, f.67, p. 133. [↑](#footnote-ref-445)
446. Fletcher, pp. 6-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-446)
447. See *ODNB*, “Wolsey, Thomas”; Gwyn, p. 1; Cavendish, f. 5, p. 4; Guy, p. 83; Fletcher, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-447)
448. Fletcher, p. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-448)
449. Gwyn, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-449)
450. Guy, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-450)
451. Guy, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-451)
452. Gwyn, p. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-452)
453. Fletcher, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-453)
454. Guy, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-454)
455. Fletcher, pp. 14-15. Also see Cavendish, f.6v, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-455)
456. Cavendish, ff. 6v-7v, pp. 8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-456)
457. Fletcher, p. 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-457)
458. As Gwyn details, the assumption that Wolsey was named almoner in November 1509 is erroneous: the *L&P* (1.1, it. 253) mentions a grant to Wolsey as almoner on this date, but that does not indicate anything about the date of his appointment other than the logical inference that it must have preceded this grant. See Gwyn, p. 4 and Fletcher, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-458)
459. Fletcher, p. 18; Gwyn, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-459)
460. Guy, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-460)
461. Quoted in Guy, p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-461)
462. Fletcher, p. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-462)
463. Guy, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-463)
464. Guy, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-464)
465. Guy, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-465)
466. Jonathan Foyle, “A Reconstruction of Thomas Wolsey’s Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace” in *Architectural History*, Vol. 45 (2002), p. 129 [↑](#footnote-ref-466)
467. John Skelton, “Why come ye nat to courte?” in *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, ed. by John Scattergood (London: Penguin Books, 1983), p. 289, ll. 401-404. [↑](#footnote-ref-467)
468. A particular example of this was the case of Richard Hunne, a London tailor who was found hanged after bringing suits against Richard Fitzjames, the bishop of London. The case immediately became a focal point for concerns about an overly independent clergy, and Wolsey carefully washed his hands of the matter by deferring the entire debate to Rome. For more, see Fletcher, pp. 39-40. [↑](#footnote-ref-468)
469. Guy, p. 89. [↑](#footnote-ref-469)
470. Fletcher, p. 43. [↑](#footnote-ref-470)
471. Guy, p. 90. [↑](#footnote-ref-471)
472. See Guy, pp. 90-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-472)
473. Guy, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-473)
474. Guy, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-474)
475. Guy, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-475)
476. Fletcher, p. 84. For more on the alleged conflict between the Howards and Wolsey, see ch. 1 of Greg Walker’s *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s.* [↑](#footnote-ref-476)
477. A. F. Pollard, *Wolsey* (London: Fontana, 1965), p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-477)
478. Pollard, p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-478)
479. Also known as Laurence/Lorenzo Campeggio (or Campeggi). His Latinized name is used throughout this thesis for clarity, as this was how he was referred to by most contemporary writers. [↑](#footnote-ref-479)
480. A Papal envoy of the highest rank, who is empowered to act with the authority of the Pope himself. These legates were normally appointed temporarily to complete a specific task. Not to be confused with a *legate a natus*, an ecclesiastic officer given authority over a particular area (ecclesiastic or geographic) by virtue of his office (for example, Wolsey as archbishop of York). [↑](#footnote-ref-480)
481. Fletcher, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-481)
482. Guy, p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-482)
483. For a more detailed discussion, see Fletcher, pp. 69-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-483)
484. Fletcher, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-484)
485. Fletcher, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-485)
486. Fletcher, p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-486)
487. *L&P*, Vol. 3.1, it. 1213. Quoted in Gwyn, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-487)
488. Fletcher, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-488)
489. Gwyn, p. 156. [↑](#footnote-ref-489)
490. Gwyn, p. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-490)
491. Fletcher, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-491)
492. See Fletcher, p. 102, and *ONDB*, s.v. ‘Alcock, John’. [↑](#footnote-ref-492)
493. Gwyn, p. 477. [↑](#footnote-ref-493)
494. Gwyn, p. 478. [↑](#footnote-ref-494)
495. Fletcher, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-495)
496. Guy, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-496)
497. Guy, p. 103. [↑](#footnote-ref-497)
498. Fletcher, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-498)
499. Fletcher, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-499)
500. Fletcher, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-500)
501. Fletcher, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-501)
502. Gwyn, p. 502. [↑](#footnote-ref-502)
503. Fletcher, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-503)
504. Gwyn, pp. 503-504. [↑](#footnote-ref-504)
505. Gwyn, p. 481. [↑](#footnote-ref-505)
506. Fletcher, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-506)
507. Fletcher, p. 125. [↑](#footnote-ref-507)
508. Fletcher, pp. 156-157. [↑](#footnote-ref-508)
509. Fletcher, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-509)
510. Fletcher, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-510)