

From princes to pages. The literary lives of Cardinal Wolsey, Tudor England's 'other king'.

By Gavin Schwartz-Leeper. (Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 202.) Pp. xi + 261 incl. colour frontispiece and 1 fig. Leiden: Brill, 2016. €129. 978 90 04 31750 5; 1573 4188

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Gavin Schwartz-Leeper begins his study by ruminating on the nature of 'truth'. What were the early English Protestants Jerome Barlow and William Roy up to when they insisted that 'I saye no thyng but trouthe' but went on to offer a satire of Wolsey? In what senses can a satire or a caricature be 'true'? Can such a satire capture an essential truth? In assessing John Skelton's satires of Wolsey, Schwartz-Leeper puzzles over the contradiction, memorably discussed by Greg Walker in *John Skelton and the politics of the 1520s* (1988), between Skelton's excoriating satires and the subsequent panegyrics in which he lavishly praised Wolsey. Where is truth? And in his final section, Schwarz-Leeper remarks that the contemporary title of the play we now call *Henry VIII* was *Henry VIII: or, All is true*. Schwartz-Leeper thus notes the challenge of 'truth', but does not in practice do more than bring it to our attention. The difficulty is that the literary lives that are at the core of his study do not of themselves offer any resolution. Schwartz-Leeper's way of proceeding is to quote from them and offer commentaries that are often not much more than paraphrase. He is concerned to gauge how critical his chosen writers were of Wolsey. He suggests that George Cavendish, Wolsey's gentleman-usher, offered a less than full defence of Wolsey. He notes that Shakespeare and Fletcher give not one but two impressions of Wolsey, one of which presents a much more sympathetic portrait of him as a hard-working, long-suffering agent of a capricious king. Schwartz-Leeper is always on the look-out for influences, noting how Holinshed was influenced by Foxe and how Shakespeare and Fletcher drew on Holinshed. Here it is a pity that Schwartz-Leeper's choice of texts did not include Edward Hall's *Chronicle*, on which Foxe and Holinshed drew considerably. What comes over forcefully, though it is obviously not a new insight, is that anyone reading or hearing these texts would have received an impression of Wolsey that was largely, though not exclusively, negative, not least since negative views tended to be expressed more boldly. It would have been interesting here to pursue C. S. L. Davies's question about just how much people in the sixteenth century could know about the recent past. One difficulty that Schwartz-Leeper is aware of, but does not confront directly, is that Wolsey was the last of the line of medieval prelates. His fall was followed by the break with Rome and religious change. For Protestants Wolsey would represent the abuses of the medieval Church. For Catholics Wolsey could seem an embarrassment, a churchman who had served his king better than he had served God. Wolsey had no obvious defenders. When Henry VIII brought him down he encouraged his subjects to bring charges against him. But whether what was said against Wolsey was true cannot be determined by studying these literary texts alone. Each of the criticisms made of Wolsey would need to be considered in the light of all available sources. That Schwartz-Leeper does not attempt. He commends Peter Gwyn for the most authoritative uncovering of biographical information about Wolsey. Gwyn did much more than that in his monumental *The king's cardinal* (1990). His book is

not so much a biography as a thematic consideration, and often rebuttal, of charges that were made against Wolsey at the time, in the later sixteenth century, and by modern professional historians. Schwartz-Leeper's quotations and commentaries raise, as he says, interesting questions, but rather more is needed to offer substantial answers to them.

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John Calvin. The Strasbourg years (1538–1541). Edited by Matthieu Arnold (trans. Felicity McNab). Pp. xvii + 245. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016. \$52 (paper). 978 1 4982 3962 2
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We have long known that John Calvin's years in Strasbourg (1538–41), after he and William Farel were expelled from Geneva, were significant. There Calvin became a pastor, theological lecturer, wrote a second edition of his *Institutes of the Christian religion* (1539) along with a commentary on Romans (1540), and saw first-hand the workings of a city church striking its Protestant path into what became the 'Reformed' church tradition. Most significantly, Calvin learned from Strasbourg's leading reformer, Martin Bucer. Scholars have seen Bucer's influence in Calvin's developing theology; and have also noted Calvinian influences on the great reformer.

Now we can gain an even wider and deeper picture of Calvin's formative years in Strasbourg through this collection which emerged from the 2009 Symposium in the city, 'When Strasbourg Welcomed Calvin, 1538–1541'. The publication of sources since the great work of Émile Doumergue at the beginning of the twentieth century, on which much of the Calvin story in Strasbourg was based, has enabled new looks to fresh dimensions of Calvin and Strasbourg. This book brings the work of the symposium into an accessible form. It features fourteen pieces from mainly Strasbourg-based teacher-researchers who are experts in various disciplines.

Marc Lienhard's 'Strasbourg in Calvin's time' admirably sets the stage for the coming contributions. Lienhard explores the Strasbourg context, its leaders – Bucer and Wolfgang Capito(n) – and major lineaments of the Church. Bucer believed that 'a Christian magistrate had the duty to promote true religion and to punish everyone who was against it' (p. 10). He had close ties with Luther, Melancthon and Zwingli and in his tireless quest for Christian unity, 'Bucer's horizon was truly Europe' (p. 11). Tensions emerged with city leaders as Bucer 'pleaded for a church discipline, which was required according to him in order to improve the life of Christians' (p. 21). Calvin saw this as he participated in the city's full church life. He also saw that Bucer's theology was 'always attentive to the church' (p. 17).

Through Christopher Burger's work on Calvin's correspondence up to 1538, we see Calvin adapting to his new city, but always with an eye toward Geneva, by which the deep wound of expulsion had been inflicted. He participated in a number of religious colloquia, enabling him to see the complexities of the growing reform movements. Calvin was to return to Geneva in September 1541 to help meet the city's needs. But the Strasbourg pastors emphasised that 'once the Reformer had finished his task Geneva could send Calvin back to Strasbourg' (p. 37).