

The many faces of Thomas Cromwell

Review Number:

1168

Publish date:

Tuesday, 1 November, 2011

Author:

Geoffrey Elton

ISBN:

9780521098090

Date of Publication:

1973

Price:

£27.99

Pages:

182pp.

Publisher:

Cambridge University Press

Place of Publication:

Cambridge

Author:

Hilary Mantel

ISBN:

9780007230181

Date of Publication:

2009

Price:

£5.99

Pages:

672pp.

Publisher:

Harper Collins

Place of Publication:

London

Reviewer:

Mark Horowitz

When a late-medieval or Tudor historian is asked to compare and contrast a historical novel with a scholarly book that both take as their subject Thomas Cromwell, and the latter work has been written by the late G R Elton, the inevitable disclaimer becomes compulsory unless that historian has spent several decades inhabiting a historiographically-isolated cave during the rise and fall of the Tudor revolution in government. In the present case, I must submit that I knew Sir Geoffrey during his last 15 years at Clare College, Cambridge and I still retain a cache of our letters. I read his publications and the numerous reviews of them, and I on occasion disagreed with the perspicacious Regius Professor verbally in conversations and once in print with regard to his view that Henry VIII's principal minister, Thomas Cromwell, was the mastermind

behind the inchoate modern English state as first described in Elton's *magnum opus* on a Tudor revolution.
[\(1\)](#)

That written wallop, relevant to this present assessment, occurred when I was asked to write an article on a book he co-wrote with the future Nobel laureate, Robert Fogel. I began by briefly summarizing each author's past work. I ended Elton's by posing the query of whether it was Thomas Cromwell behind the Henrician revolution in government or G. R. Elton behind the Cromwellian revolution in history. Upon completing the piece, I asked both authors to read the final draft before submission in case of any factual errors and with the understanding that in effect the article itself was cast in stone. Although neither found any glaring mistakes and thanked me for the endeavour, I must believe that Elton displayed a bent eye as he read my Cromwell quip. With this in mind, I have approached the present dual review from the narratives and conclusions offered by the respective authors, and not from what others have thought of them or written about their books.[\(2\)](#)

Thomas Cromwell is a good subject for fact and fiction. He was and remains somewhat of an enigma both as a visionary for government efficiency and as an ambitious 'new man' rising from the obscurity of a blacksmith's son to perhaps the most powerful man in England save his king, Henry VIII. Moreover, much like his mentor Cardinal Thomas Wolsey – the son of an Ipswich butcher – Cromwell's descent was as spectacular and dramatic as his climb. For both men, historians have tried to untangle how much influence they had over Henry VIII and whether they were the puppet-masters or the puppets in the monarch's affairs of state and of the heart. Regardless, the arcs that were their lives remained dependent on the whims and commands of a Tudor king.

Mantel pursues segments of the lives of Wolsey and then Cromwell, beginning in 1527 amid the rising turmoil of the Great Matter (Henry's annulment of his marriage to Katherine of Aragon to make Anne Boleyn his queen and progenitor of a male heir) and leading up to the execution of Sir Thomas More in 1535. Elton focuses on Cromwell and his legislative roots and actions during the 1530s within the environment of Protestant evangelicalism, humanistic writings and verbal discourse. The authors necessarily pursue different genres and disciplines for their accounts. Mantel constructs lives, images and conversations from what is known about her characters; Elton seeks to establish Cromwell as a thoughtful, purposeful and results-oriented minister based on interpretation of surviving documentation. It is therefore perhaps best to discuss three topics where the paths of the authors intersect. The first centers on the personality of Thomas Cromwell. The second involves the religious and humanistic nature of Cromwell's beliefs and their effect on his actions and life. The third entails his accomplishments and acumen at survival as the chief minister of Henry VIII. However, the style, format and themes followed by the respective authors will be addressed first to understand better where they are coming from and, if it might be suggested, where they intended to go.

Elton decidedly positions himself as the master of the manuscripts, in this case contemporary documents and parliamentary records from the statutes and the journals of the House of Commons. He comes close to chastising those historians pursuing the history of ideas – he is not a fan – believing that all is for naught unless such ideas can be traced to actions beyond the mental exercise. Indeed, he has little time for More's *Utopia* because no proposals were put forth to better the commonwealth, only 'remedies in the fictional realm of the unattainable'. Elton's goal is to demonstrate the translation of 'aspiration into achievement' and how 'thought yielded results in deed'. This of course provides a theme and path for his discussion of Thomas Cromwell as the exemplar of a Tudor action hero of sorts, and he takes his readers on a legislative journey portraying a practical minister's transition into a proficient planner stoked by the reformist fervour of the day.

Elton accomplishes this first by examining three members of Cromwell's reformist *group* – Stephen Vaughan, Thomas Starkey, and Richard Morison – although he takes pains to convince that none were part of an official body but rather a 'company of like-minded men' who were 'haphazardly brought together and always on their own initiative'. This may seem to some as flying in the face of the adage that coincidences take a lot of planning. Nonetheless, Elton insists they were not recruited by the minister but simply thought much as he did, although they are labeled 'Cromwellians' by the author because they believe Cromwell

would reform England along humanistic, Protestant thinking. Then true to Elton's mission, any contemporary rivals to the man behind reform and renewal are summarily dispatched. He quickly marginalises Cromwell's predecessor and mentor Wolsey as never doing anything, completely 'useless' to a generation of intellectuals and reformers, and the poster child for the old clerical order they deplored. He then finds time to stomp on Thomas More as missing the boat to becoming the Erasmian humanist reformer in favour of concentrating on heresy and the maintenance of the church. This provides a segue to the actions of the minister who got it right – Thomas Cromwell – and what he did during the parliamentary sessions of the Henrician Reformation. Because the book is a compilation of Elton's Wiles Lectures presented at Queen's University, Belfast in 1972, they fall under thematic headings although Cromwell's legislative agenda is placed in somewhat chronological order.

The tone and style exhibited by Elton are those of a constitutional scholar in the know, lecturing other historians (often by name) on where they were misled – or failed to lead at all – while forcefully demonstrating Cromwell's *modus operandi* through the use of parliamentary documentation. The general public might not grab on readily to the scholarly story being told, but Elton has a self-assured way with words that is understandable and on occasion clever and humorous: Cromwell as the 'pragmatic prophet' who receives letters in Latin 'with Greek bits in them'; propagandist preambles to parliamentary bills embodied with 'standard commonwealth stuff'. Few would argue that Elton's lectures did not contribute to a clearer understanding of how bills were initiated, their chances of passing based on origin (Commons, Lords or support from the king) and the nuances involved in the role of politics and religion, which from a modern perspective were hopelessly intertwined. It remains not so much winning a legislative initiative, which will be addressed later, but the intent and purpose that is at the heart of Elton's narrative and thesis. The medium Cromwell utilizes, with far-reaching effects for the development of the modern English state, is parliament, through which the laws of England are guided with his steady if not always successful hand.

Mantel proffers a Thomas Cromwell confident in his own thinking and actions regarding the law, a posture developed early on through the reactions of a young boy to his physically abusive father. This situation is introduced on the first page when as a 15-year-old Cromwell is almost throttled to death – occurrences that later shape his views towards legal reform to protect the helpless. Through intermittent flashbacks and intriguing dialogue with key players in the era of Henry VIII, the author constructs a self-made, self-educated man unafraid to face the unknown: living and learning business in Northern Europe, fighting in continental wars. Both Mantel and her Cromwell are cynical about Roman Catholicism, which she views as a corrupt business founded on practices not mentioned in the New Testament – for this is the time when translations into the vernacular by the likes of Tyndale and Luther unmask the deceptions of the popes and their biblical foundation for authority and practice.

So when in 1527 Wolsey's trip to France includes granting throngs of people remission for their sins, the author throws out an observation by no one in particular: 'That's a few thousand Frenchmen free to start all over again'. Mantel also confides Cromwell's knowledge that to obtain the right scriptural interpretations or permissions from the pope for marriages or divorces, every 'opinion' must be paid for in cash. It is this disdain for the church and its reliance on cash payments from countries in need of capital – such as England – that fuels Cromwell's search for reform and solvency for his king and country. However, to dispel the irony of a future principal minister cutting his political teeth in the household of a cardinal, Mantel's Wolsey – a very rich character in the story and in many respects more interesting than Cromwell – shares some of the cynicism of the day against Rome.

It is Mantel's dialogue between Cromwell and major characters and the development of their personas that drives her story. Because of the abundance of personages, a glossary is provided for those unfamiliar with the period. This is not a bad idea because in many respects the reader waits in anticipation for the next tête-à-tête between Cromwell and a variety of people besides important figures such as Anne Boleyn, Henry VIII, the duke of Norfolk (an avowed enemy turned self-interested ally), Thomas More (portrayed as more of a Torquemada-on-the-Thames when it comes to heretics than even Elton suggests), Bishop Stephen Gardiner, and Jane Seymour and Mary Boleyn (targets of Cromwell's affections and perhaps more). Historians do not have the luxury of making up dialog – although mental attempts often occur once years are spent studying an

individual – and Mantel is wonderfully adept at coloring her characters with attributes well-known to aficionados of Tudor history. Hence, when Anne Boleyn speaks the reader is already aware that when Cromwell gives her a present of silver forks with rock crystal handles one Christmas he notes that ‘he hopes she will use them to eat with, not to stick in people’. To make the point stick further, so to speak, on another occasion when thinking about Anne he confesses ‘you wouldn’t trust her near a sharp knife’. It is largely through these conversations, and the musings of Cromwell, that the theme of a rapidly-ascending powerful and shrewd minister amid court intrigue develops.

While such interplay between people helps advance the story of the rise of Cromwell, the stylistic use of the pronoun ‘he’ when referring to him is both confusing and momentum-halting. Indeed, on several occasions it was necessary to reread a few lines just to determine who was speaking. This uncertainty of voice is compounded by an occasional shifting into first person singular or plural: Cromwell, after being referred to as ‘he’, suddenly says ‘I dry my eyes’; an abrupt shift from being ‘he’ to a new scene beginning ‘October, and we are going to Calais’; a conversation between Cromwell and Henry VIII includes the narrative ‘He watches Henry’s face. He is alive to anything that concerns honour’. Presumably it is Henry alive with the notion of honour. Presumably, if in fact the reader is aware of the king’s obsession with honour as explicated in such historical works as Lacey Baldwin Smith’s book on Henry VIII.⁽³⁾ While experimentation in writing style is the artist’s prerogative – from Dorothy Parker’s ‘stream of consciousness’ dialog with oneself to the frenzied episodes that comprise James Joyce’s *Ulysses* – it serves little purpose to push Cromwell away by becoming ‘he’ through most of the book just as the reader tries to get closer to him.

Mantel is intent on staying fairly true to what is known about Cromwell and his life, such as information gleaned from Cavendish’s book on Thomas Wolsey.⁽⁴⁾ She also hints at events or attributes that the knowledgeable reader will enjoy but the neophyte might miss unknowingly. So when it is suggested that Anne Boleyn has a ‘deformity’, many readers may be unaware that she has been attributed to having, among other things, six fingers on one hand – an improbability given Henry’s superstitious nature that nonetheless has brought about much discussion, including an essay in a medical publication.⁽⁵⁾ The king of England’s trip to the Field of Cloth of Gold near Calais in June 1520 to meet with the king of France is mentioned several times but without the visually interesting story of Henry VIII being thrown to the ground in a wrestling match by his regal cousin Francis I: fodder for further character development of a Tudor king Mantel portrays as paranoid, constantly hunting and bedding, and doubting of his abilities and his future. Those aware of these inside stories will gain a greater embellishment of the world of Thomas Cromwell and how he acts and reacts within it.

Elton’s Cromwell is a far-horizon thinker and it is through the minister’s surviving papers that the reader encounters a man jotting down ideas for future actions: improving the system of taxation (clearly an age-old problem for king and commoner alike); addressing the enclosure of pasture and farmland by sheep owners at the expense of farmers. While ignoring Wolsey and the possibility that many such reforms were first addressed by the cardinal without follow-through or result – a circumstance similar to many of Somerset’s non-starters under Henry’s son, Edward VI – Elton sees Cromwell as a visionary bent on converting ideas into actions that succeed. Part of this image stems from an innate work ethic and drive, and Elton relates that Stephen Vaughan tells his friend Cromwell that he is overworking as the king’s minister. Moreover, to support the idea that having what we would call a Type A personality and being a workaholic are forces for Cromwell’s personal mission, Elton paints a portrait of an erudite analyst with an eidetic gift that allows him to memorize Erasmus’ Latin version of the New Testament – no mean feat. He is also represented as an intellectual equal to the Oxford man and humanist Thomas Starkey, for whom Cromwell obtains a position as a chaplain to Henry VIII. Indeed, Elton argues that Starkey’s writings are influenced by discussions with Cromwell, more often at the minister’s house with other reformers at what is referred to as a ‘learned salon’. Cromwell’s view of pursuing a middle way (*via media*) is part and parcel of the like views held by these men. The minister thus avoids the extremes and this possibly is a reason he was able to survive throughout the 1530s amid social and religious upheaval in England.

Perhaps the most important aspect of Cromwell’s personality and political outlook is, according to Elton, a belief and reliance in the efficacy of the law and its use to reform and transform England. Cromwell’s vision

of a self-contained realm – the phrase ‘this realm of England is an Empire’ illuminates the preamble to the 1533 Act of Restraint of Appeals that removed papal authority from England – becomes a focal point for laws that encourage growth and stability internally and commerce with Europe. In spite of his often grandiose schemes, Elton notes that Cromwell is nonetheless a realist aware of the opposing forces to change: the church, the nobility, the gentry and often the king himself. This is perhaps why Cromwell relies on couching bills in rhetoric pointing to precedents and age-old practices: a means to demonstrate what has always been, not what must now become.

Curiously missing from Elton’s portraiture is a discussion of the Great Matter or even Cromwell’s involvement with the monumental affair. This is perhaps because the core concerns of Elton’s Cromwell are reforms through parliamentary action, rather than the larger issues of cause and effect during the break with Rome. However, Cromwell could hardly ignore the fact that his mentor Wolsey fell from grace over his failure to achieve the ‘Divorce’. Nor could he fail to understand that much of the legislation he proposed dealt with the severing of financial and religious relations with the vicar of Christ, once Henry VIII moved from a wayward Roman defender of the faith threatening papal authority to an independent head of his own church and state. One can say that keeping all the money destined for the church or making the bible more accessible to the populace were reforms long overdue (or more likely long in the making). But it is difficult to ignore the trigger for this flurry of legislation in parliament: Henry’s desire to marry Anne Boleyn. It takes away little to realize that Cromwell and his king could each have their cake and eat it too by abandoning Rome – one seeking to reform age-old or emerging iniquities, the other desperately in need of an unquestionable male heir.

Mantel, of course, can paint broad strokes on a large canvas that is the Cromwell in her mind’s eye, and it is most enjoyable to view. She does an admirable job of bringing in contemporary stories and historical sketches concerning Cromwell’s traits, including much that is in common with Elton. When Cromwell talks about a book of mathematics and its lesson of balance, Mantel is echoing the *via media* views often expressed about the minister. She notes that when Cromwell writes ‘this realm of England is an empire’, he does so almost in passing – it is obvious to him and it is a means to an end. As Cromwell reflects on parliament and drafting bills, he says ‘like spells, they have to make things happen in the real world’. Nevertheless, because the minister realizes that it is difficult to implement ‘new things in England’, he says ‘there can be old things freshly presented, or new things that pretend to be old’. Mantel carries this English viewpoint to other characters: when Cromwell tells Katherine of Aragon and her daughter Mary Tudor that Henry’s rule over the English church is based on ancient precedents, Mary replies such precedents were ‘invented these last few months’.

Where her ability to use tone and colour to evoke personality resonate is in her depiction of Cromwell. For one, he is a clever, ambitious man with a quick mind bordering on the cynical and the brazen. When a self-righteous Thomas More tries to bait him into heresy, Cromwell dodges and parries verbally with great effect. Mantel uses his famous portrait by the court painter Hans Holbein (also a character) as a means to reference the ‘hard Cromwellian stare – the equivalent of a kick’ that many fear once he becomes the king’s chief advisor. This goes hand-in-hand with a self-assuredness not often seen in a Tudor courtier. His first long conversation with Henry VIII reveals an almost flippant Cromwell, and although his stark honesty no doubt brings him into Henry’s trusted graces one wonders if he truly sparred with words in his meetings with the combustible king. Mantel, like Elton, recognizes Cromwell as the chief architect of many statutes of the realm. When Katherine of Aragon introduces him to her daughter, Mary, she says ‘This is Master Cromwell. Who now writes all the laws’. Near the end of the book it becomes clear that ambition is part and parcel of Cromwell’s persona. In thinking of his various properties he muses ‘all this is small stuff. It’s nothing to what he intends to have, or to what Henry will owe him’.

Cromwell is also a vindictive man with a long memory and the patience to wait for the right time to bring down an enemy – Mantel says he keeps a mental list of those who have crossed him. When his mentor Wolsey is arrested by Henry Percy, the author writes of Cromwell: ‘God need not trouble, he thinks: I shall take it in hand’. On another occasion, when he hears rumors of Anne Boleyn having an affair with Tom Wyatt, Cromwell overlooks it but notes that he will ‘bear it in mind’ for the future. He also places people in

his debt, running the gamut from merchants and clerks to nobles and queens and the king himself. He pays for the installation of his nemesis, Stephen Gardiner, to become the bishop of Winchester, creating a future accounting for the prelate.

There is a sensitive side to Mantel's Cromwell not usually considered by historians of the period. Cromwell cries in talking about the loss of his wife and two daughters to the periodic sweating sickness that killed those of low and high birth with impartiality. He is compassionate for the poor, feeding vagrants at his gate and bringing a poor mother and her two children into his household – but telling her she must learn to read. He also has an affair with Johane, the sister of his dead wife, and he is portrayed as possessing strong feelings for the likes of Anne's sister, Mary Boleyn and the king's future wife, Jane Seymour – two very risky attractions considering they at various times are placed in Henry VIII's bed during the story.

Cromwell's religious beliefs and humanistic opinions are of import to both authors and are seen as driving forces in his actions. Elton tells of a Cromwell who is patron to scholars and a 'man of the gospel'. Reformers wanted new laws, and Elton describes a process where experts in Cromwell's employment discuss reforms, draft them as laws and encourage their master to bring them to the king and council for promotion to parliament. A slight glitch in this analysis is noted: Elton admits it is difficult to ascertain if Cromwell was annotating a private petition to reform something he believed in, or whether he was merely helping a private interest. Although unemployment is identified as the main target for reform (high rents, enclosures, loss of trade opportunities), Elton sees four areas Cromwell pursues for his reformist program: the church, removing special privileges and constitutional diversities such as in Wales and Ireland, overhaul of the central administration of state to make it less personal, and socio-economic problems. However, while these areas are targets for both commonwealth reformists and Protestant adherents, many of them had been addressed in varying degrees before – Elton observes that impeding enclosures dated back to a statute in Henry VII's reign and the subsequent 1517 Enclosure Commission spearheaded by Wolsey. The impression given is that Cromwell hopes to succeed where others failed, and he could attempt to do so within the maelstrom of the retreat from Rome and a willingness for parliament to take bold actions for the king and their own self-interests.

Mantel places Cromwell and his beliefs in a world where Christianity and pagan practices are balanced to hedge one's bets. Henry VIII is a good Christian son who believes he rules by divine right and is in touch with the Supreme Being. But he also keeps astrologers close at hand and listens to the rantings of a so-called holy woman who predicts the future. Cromwell is religious in the sense that he compartmentalises what may be divine from what may be politically useful. He can therefore seek religious reform, including getting rid of the non-biblical concept of Purgatory, yet at the same time pay for seven years' worth of masses for his deceased wife while his nieces pray with rosary beads. Where there is no compromise to him is the law. To Cromwell, Christ did not bestow lands and property on people – that is done through earthly authority and none higher than parliament. Indeed, Cromwell believes that the king derives his power from the people and the laws of parliament – if Henry VIII did not at least recognise this in practice, Cromwell would not follow him.

When it comes to accomplishments and the art of survival, each author takes a different route with varying results. Elton seems to see the act of proposing legislative reforms as both an end unto itself and an achievement. Yet he is hard-pressed to show that Cromwell overall was successful during the Reformation Parliament up until his execution in 1540. It is clear that this was a very busy minister, but the success rate getting reformist bills passed was not earth-shattering. The 1536 Enclosure Act he shepherds through the Commons loses much of its teeth along the way. Cromwell's attempt at a Poor Law, part of the reformist agenda, is eventually watered down and fails. His efforts to limit sanctuary and benefit of clergy – the latter where men could easily claim the privilege to avoid common law prosecution – were addressed by Henry VIII in subsequent statutes without Cromwell's imprint. When Cromwell attempts to restrain sanctuary in a 1540 bill, it is defeated after his fall. Much of the legislation in the last years of the Reformation Parliament involved law enforcement, not law reform; those law reform bills that were initiated failed, including a bill to prosecute rigged juries. In all of this, Elton makes clear that Cromwell can only do so much to push through a bill, and fairly little if the king is against it.

Ironically, Elton undercuts his argument after outlining Cromwell's legislative reform failures by noting that in the last four parliaments after Cromwell's fall, 12, 13, seven and 14 acts deemed commonwealth bills actually pass. Nevertheless, Elton entitles his last chapter 'The achievement', although admitting that most plans for the common weal through Cromwell's endeavors 'came to little or nothing'. Some that succeed were for terms, lasting until the next parliament or the death of the king. One is left with the impression that a hard-working minister, undeterred by defeat and opposition, doggedly pushes bill after bill through an institution without result. Thomas Cromwell perhaps believed in parliament more than it believed in Thomas Cromwell and his purpose. His survival through these turbulent times is not directly addressed by Elton, nor are much of the politics beyond parliamentary procedures. Nonetheless, it is clear that Cromwell had the trust of the king during the uncertainty of continental responses to the Henrician Reformation and the demise of three wives until both court intrigue and an unfortunate poisoning of Anne of Cleves cost the minister his life.⁽⁶⁾

Time and again, Mantel portrays Cromwell as adept at manipulating Henry VIII. There are many examples throughout her story: instructing Henry that it is the king who is now head of the church of England in place of the Roman church in England; 'teaching' the king to call the pope the bishop of Rome; interpreting Henry's dream in the middle of the night as a call to take charge of the realm; telling Henry that the monasteries are corrupt and useless, and thus ripe for dissolution. It is, after all, the caprice of a ruler – yesterday and today – that determines the rise or fall of a minister. Cromwell is a master of his master, and therefore of survival amid court plotting, back-stabbing and the volatile nature of a king losing his youth, his health and his hold on a viable dynasty. Mantel has Cromwell play the game as well as anyone in the Tudor orbit. Moreover, because of his ability to accomplish what his monarch wants – and here she only mentions those laws that passed – this unlikely minister through tenacity and ruthlessness was able to survive and thrive until, ironically, the Reformation was legislatively complete and England was, indeed, its own realm.

Mantel's book as a whole sets itself up for a sequel, and those familiar with the period have a sense of what will happen to many of the characters presented, including Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour and Thomas Cromwell. A word should be mentioned about the title, *Wolf Hall*, since it is more descriptive of what it portends than what it has to do with the present book. The Seymours live at Wolf Hall, and it will be Jane Seymour who succeeds Anne Boleyn as Henry VIII's next wife and the one who fulfils his quest for a male heir. Apart from passing mentions, it is only discussed briefly on the last page and in fact the last sentence. Cromwell, whom we know is emotionally attached to Jane Seymour, intends to visit her and the Seymour family. The book ends thusly: 'Early September. Five days. Wolf Hall.' To the reader waiting to understand the significance of the title, it is a long wait indeed and perhaps without any meaning for the entire story. It is the author, in her notes published at the end of the novel, who admits as much: 'Wolf Hall, the Seymour house in Wiltshire, is where we're going at the end of the book. But, of course, I chose it primarily for its metaphorical resonance: who could resist it? The whole of Henry's court is Wolf Hall.'

It might prove useful to begin with Elton's book, if the reader desires to understand first what it was that

preoccupied most of Thomas Cromwell's time, and only subsequently move to Mantel's depiction of the social and political world he dealt with on a daily basis during his rise to become the chief minister of Henry VIII. It is sometimes difficult to comprehend a life solely through a fictionalised account, no matter how well researched, without becoming grounded in how things worked, or why they did not. Both authors have a great respect for their subject, and together they have taken a Tudor figure who is less known in the popular mind and created a major component in one of the great events of English history: the Henrician Reformation, with its cast of famous characters caught up in this uncertain time.

Notes

1. G. R. Elton, *The Tudor Revolution in Government: Administrative Changes in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1953).[Back to \(1\)](#)
2. For a good summary of Elton's thesis and a revision of his conclusions, see Ethan H. Shagan, 'The Tudor Revolution in Government fifty years later: rethinking Geoffrey Elton's vision of political modernization', paper presented at The University of Chicago Nicholson Center for British Studies Conference: Modernizing Politics? (21–2 May 2005).[Back to \(2\)](#)
3. Lacey Baldwin Smith, *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty* (London, 1971).[Back to \(3\)](#)
4. George Cavendish, *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey*, ed. Richard S. Sylvester, Early English Text Society, 243 (London, 1959). Cavendish was a gentleman usher in Wolsey's household.[Back to \(4\)](#)
5. Félix Martí-Ibáñez, M.D., 'The "Anne Boleyn" syndrome', *MD Medical News Magazine*, 18, 10 (Oct 1974), 11–16. There are no contemporary descriptions of Anne's deformities. The notion of having six fingers (polydactylism), a goiter and 'moles' occurred years after her execution and most likely by anti-Anglicans seeking to portray the attributes of a witch who enchanted Henry VIII into his divorce from Katherine and the papacy.[Back to \(5\)](#)
6. It has always been my feeling that once Henry VIII viewed the unfortunate lady in person and recognized the disparity between pictorial rendition and reality, it should have been the artist, Hans Holbein, who went to the block and not Cromwell. After Cromwell's demise, Henry lamented the execution of his minister and might have come to the same conclusion. Holbein died in 1543, possibly from the plague.[Back to \(6\)](#)

Other reviews:

Telegraph

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5207969/Wolf-Hall-by-Hilary-Mantel-review.html>

[3]

Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/apr/26/hilary-mantel-wolf-hall> [4]

Financial Times

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/8a1bec94-465d-11de-803f-00144feabdc0.html> [5]

Independent

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/wolf-hall-by-hilary-mantel-1680694.html>

[6]

Los Angeles Times

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/oct/08/entertainment/et-book8> [7]

New Statesman

<http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2009/05/cromwell-mantel-hall-henry> [8]

New York Review of Books

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/how-it-must-have-been/> [9]

New Yorker

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/10/19/091019crbo_books_acocella [10]

San Francisco Chronicle

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi> [11]

Scotland on Sunday

http://www.scotsman.com/news/book_review_wolf_hall_1_1352279 [12]

Spectator

<http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/3614358/the-benefit-of-the-doubt.shtml> [13]

Wall Street Journal

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703746604574461110318457866.html> [14]

Source URL: <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1168>

Links

[1] <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/item/7812>

[2] <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/item/7811>

[3] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/5207969/Wolf-Hall-by-Hilary-Mantel-review.html>

[4] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2009/apr/26/hilary-mantel-wolf-hall>

[5] <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/8a1bec94-465d-11de-803f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1ecWGimoN>

[6] <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/wolf-hall-by-hilary-mantel-1680694.html>

[7] <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/oct/08/entertainment/et-book8>

[8] <http://www.newstatesman.com/books/2009/05/cromwell-mantel-hall-henry>

[9] <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/nov/05/how-it-must-have-been/>

[10] http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/10/19/091019crbo_books_acocella?currentPage=all

[11] <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/12/06/RVT21AQ1OM.DTL>

[12] http://www.scotsman.com/news/book_review_wolf_hall_1_1352279

[13] <http://www.spectator.co.uk/books/3614358/the-benefit-of-the-doubt.shtml>

[14] <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703746604574461110318457866.html>