

# EARLY MODERN LITERARY STUDIES



**Matthew Dimmock, Andrew Hadfield and Paul Quinn (eds), *Art, Literature and Religion in Early Modern Sussex: Culture and Conflict* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).**

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The study of the county in early modern England displays a somewhat uneven historiography. It reached its zenith with the publication of several county histories in the 1960s and 70s devoted to the civil wars of the seventeenth century. Before and since, however, the picture has been mixed. This attests partly to the question of balance: the task of achieving an appropriate blend — and two-way dialogue — between the provincial and the national, the periphery and the centre, at a time of profound cultural change.

Individually and collectively, the nine essays in this volume meet this challenge head-on. The result is a fine study, which while not exactly putting Sussex on the early modern map — Anthony Fletcher's *A County Community in Peace and War: Sussex 1600–60* (1975), curiously uncited here, holds that distinction — significantly broadens our knowledge and deepens our understanding of this 'unwieldy, complicated and often obscure region' of England (p. 2).

Following an Introduction which lucidly sets out the volume's governing theme — the complexity of the religious settlement in Sussex during the Reformation — Caroline Adams' study of Elizabethan progresses into Sussex sets a high bar. Sussex may have been geographically isolated, despite being a home county, but the monarch's visits — like Henry VIII's before her — showed that it was fully plugged in to the national political grid. Elizabeth's progresses to East Sussex (1573) and West Sussex (1591) reflect contrasting court priorities and attitudes. As Adams shows, elite Catholic responses to the West Sussex visit played out in revealing ways. Henry Percy, 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Northumberland, was murdered in the Tower in 1585, probably for his private

support for Mary Queen of Scots. This helps to explain his equivocal stance eight years prior to the 1591 progress, when there was a chance he would be asked to play host to Elizabeth at Petworth House. Though ostensibly gratified by the proposed offer, he did everything he could to avoid accepting it, notably emphasising to the court the treacherous condition of local roads. On the other hand, his successor, the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl, attempting to transform his reputation for hedonism, was keen on receiving a visit, but was overlooked. Generally, however, the court exhibited a pragmatic tolerance of local Catholic affiliations, even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada, at least so long as allegiance to the crown was assured.

The fractured religious landscape of Reformation Sussex, its role as a crucible of contemporary confessional dispute, is adeptly explored by two of the volume's three editors, Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield, in the next chapter. This focuses on contrasting though equally committed Catholic and Protestant intellectuals, neglected authors Thomas Drant and Anthony Copley. It leads on to a study by Karen Coke of the huge panel paintings by Lambert Barnard in Chichester Cathedral, which provides fresh insights into patron-client relationships outside of London. The same building remains under scrutiny in the next two chapters. Andrew Foster takes us behind the scenes of an early modern cathedral, investigating its position as a centre of intellectual activity. Foster tracks the publications of several members of its sizable clergy, and makes important connections with Oxford and Cambridge universities, the lawyers' colleges and literary networks in London. Daniel Starza Smith examines Bishop Henry King's library at the cathedral, casting new light not only on King himself but also on the episcopal scholarship of the time. The author uses modern techniques of ownership attribution to piece together how the 300 volumes in the collection came into and left King's possession.

Nearby Arundel is the focus of the chapter by Elizabeth McCutcheon, which considers the manuscript writings — collections of *sententiae*, or proverbial sayings, translated from Greek and English into Latin — of Mary, Duchess of Norfolk. These pieces illustrate the enduring popularity of the study of pithy phrases in the early modern period, and the seriousness with which elite women pursued their education, not least in associating their families with classical literary works, including, in this case, Plutarch's *Moralia*. Michael Questier considers inter-Catholic tensions in Sussex deriving from the imposed jurisdiction of a Roman bishop, Richard Smith, in 1625, ecclesiological differences which led some recusants to regard Smith, and the pope himself, as 'Anti-Christ'. The resulting bitter controversies drove many Catholics to the Church of England, 'a perverted mirror-image in fact of the "conversion of England", which was the proper function of the Catholic clergy.' (p. 192).

If the orthodox view of recusant harmony is disrupted here, Paul Quinn performs a similar function in respect of the Protestant martyrs of Sussex. Influenced by the writings of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the preservation of the memory of these victims of Marian persecution evolved into a cult in the nineteenth century. As Quinn argues, however, for the sake of national Protestant hegemony these pious Sussex men were wrongly held to form one body with identical beliefs. Employing the iron maker Richard Woodman as a case study, the author demonstrates how readings of Foxe ignored the 'complex interconnection of religion, family and commerce' in the county (p. 219).

Before a succinct afterword by Duncan Salkeld comes a chapter by Nigel Llewellyn on seventeenth-century commemorative art in Sussex. Embellished by 21 images, it skilfully traces the personal and political aspects of tombs and wall monuments commissioned by a range of elite Sussex families, with a strong emphasis on the influence of civil war allegiance.

The editors are to be congratulated on assembling essays of high quality and satisfying coherence, into a volume which highlights the complexity of the Reformation as it developed — and encountered various forms of resistance — in the localities. It is to be hoped that similar studies of other counties follow.

### **Works Cited**

- Fletcher, Anthony, *Sussex, 1600–1660: A County Community in Peace and War* (London: Longman, 1975).