

John M. Adrian. *Local Negotiations of English Nationhood, 1570–1680*.

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John M. Adrian's book is a wide-ranging study of the importance of local identity in Elizabethan and Stuart England that asserts that local consciousness has often been overlooked or disregarded in favor of an emphasis on the emergence of national identity in the period. As such, it is a spirited response to Richard Helgerson's seminal *Forms of Nationhood* (1992) and to a generation of literary scholars who have focused on the formation of an Elizabethan national culture. Although few serious scholars would argue, as Adrian suggests they might, that local identity was either swept away or absorbed in the rush to nationhood, the continuing importance of local consciousness is often underestimated, and it is timely to have its significance reasserted here. Through an exploration of how early

modern writers invoked local places, traditions, and mindsets to respond to the political, religious, and cultural changes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Adrian effectively demonstrates how local identity remained a dynamic site of negotiation in the period.

The initial chapter defines local consciousness, placing it within a historical and national context that dwells on English diversity and insularity, and examines how awareness of local identity altered during the reign of Elizabeth. The introduction also provides an overview of the geographical literature of the period and explores the genre of chorography in particular, providing a context for the works examined in later chapters. The introduction is followed by five case studies examining how local identity was articulated and used in different literary genres and by different authors in Elizabethan and Stuart England. While the authors chosen were socially cohesive — all being drawn from the gentry — their political and religious positions were widely divergent. William Lambarde was an Elizabethan lawyer and civil servant, whose *Perambulation of Kent* is presented as an example of how chorography could provide a local, decentralized approach to order within the context of the increasingly centralized state. This is followed by a contrasting exploration of the use of local references by Michael Drayton, both in his historical poems and in the chorographical *Poly-Olbion*, to fashion a heroic alternative to the unheroic Jacobean Court. George Herbert's prose work *The Country Parson* is considered as a reflection on contemporary anxieties concerning the impact of Laudianism on parish religion, as experienced by a priest seeking a *via media* in rural Wiltshire in the 1630s. The different ways in which both sides utilized a local focus to negotiate their experience of the Civil War, and in particular of defeat, is explored through an examination of Izaak Walton's *Compleat Angler*, written by a royalist during the Interregnum, and Lucy Hutchinson's biography of her husband, representing a parliamentary reaction to the Restoration. The final chapter describes how country-house poetry evolved over the seventeenth century to accommodate the increasingly commercial and colonial outlook of the English gentry.

This is an interesting and well-written exploration of an important subject that provides an important counterweight to the emphasis on nationalism within the culture of Elizabethan and Stuart England. It will be useful to experts in the field, while remaining accessible to undergraduates. The case studies are well-chosen to illustrate the different aspects of the author's theme, and make their cases well. The initial chapter is less assured and to support its argument draws too stark a divide between earlier literary expressions of local identity and the period under study. Since the introduction raises the issue of the marketplace for geographical works, I would have liked to have seen this carried through to the provision of more information about the publication history and reception of the works considered in the case studies. Does the commercial success of Lambarde's and Walton's works compared to the disappointing sales of Drayton's *Poly-Olbion* tell us something about the readers' responses to evocations of local identity? There is scope for further research here.

In this age of digital images, the range and quality of the illustrations is disappointing. I recommend that readers track down the engravings from *Poly-Olbion* in order to fully appreciate the argument in the chapter on Drayton. Overall, though, I would recommend this book as an important contribution to our understanding of the significance of local consciousness in Elizabethan and Stuart politics and culture, which raises issues for further consideration.

JAN BROADWAY
Independent Scholar