

secular priests in England sought a hierarchy that would give them more independence from Jesuit influence. Rebuffed in 1598, they succeeded in 1602, with the help of French diplomacy, in having the archpriest's authority clearly separated from all Jesuit direction. Playing the French off against the Spanish, and trying (naively) to bargain with Elizabeth's government for more toleration in return for the expulsion of the Jesuits, the appellants contributed to the conflicts of interest that ensured there would be no unified Catholic approach to the succession, on which the health of the Catholic community seemed so much to depend. If Persons had had his way, the Catholic powers of Europe would have united behind a single, unequivocally Catholic candidate for the succession, and the Catholics in England would have had no doubt who to support. He was right about James, let down by the archpriest Blackwell and even more by Philip III of Spain: his opponents were wrong if they thought him all-powerful in Rome or all-malign.

It lies outside the scope of McCoog's work to analyse the political situation comprehensively, although this book represents an advance even on his essay in Susan Doran and Paulina Kewes's 2014 collection, *Doubtful and Dangerous: The Question of Succession in Late Elizabethan England*. The crucial significance of the manoeuvring so expertly delineated here was that early modern British Catholicism entered the Stuart era under a cruelly disappointing religious dispensation, with the mission no longer a united enterprise: authority was now divided between the archpriest and the Jesuit superiors. Readers are thus presented with the perfect starting point for the study of Catholicism in Britain in the seventeenth century.

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Jonathan Baldo and Isabel Karremann, eds. *Forms of Faith. Literary Form and Religious Conflict in Early Modern England*, Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. xii + 248, £70.00, ISBN: 9780719096815

This volume originated in a 2010 conference at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and a seminar of the Shakespeare Association of America about confessional conflict and its negotiation in early modern Europe. It is preceded by the book *Forgetting Faith? Negotiating Confessional Conflict in Early Modern Europe* (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), to which Isabel Karremann and Jonathan Baldo also contributed. In the volume under review they have brought together a strong line-up of authors with varied research interests, Shakespeare scholars making up the largest subgroup.

As a reader who often engages with early modern literature as a site of controversy, a war zone in which no pamphlet was left unanswered and every line is read time and again in an endeavour to attach religious labels to authors, the intent of this volume came as a bit of a surprise. In their Introduction, the editors venture a positive answer to the question whether literary forms could 'act as places in which religious tensions and conflicts were tempered in early modern England' (p. 13). The forms of negotiation explored are not political but literary and cultural, insofar as literature reflects and impacts upon shared feelings and attitudes. The essays in the book propose a formalist approach to analyse a literary work in terms of how genre, language, and form are linked to meaning. The resulting conclusions are nevertheless informed by historicism in that it was the specific context of the post-Reformation era that created a need for English people to come to terms with collective trauma and coexist despite the existing debates and social rift.

Throughout the volume, contributors put the emphasis on what might have bound members of the audience and readers together notwithstanding their religious stance. This locus of communion could be a shared regard for a tradition that encouraged cross-confessional values such as hospitality, as Phebe Jensen expounds in a fascinating piece in which she proves that Christmas celebrations were perceived as part of English identity even after they came under the attack of die-hard Protestantism. It could also be the core Christian beliefs shared by Catholics and Protestants. Brooke Conti analyses the assimilation of Easter symbols into the final act of *The Merchant of Venice*, discussing the ways in which they remained alive in Protestant memory and are deployed in the text to invoke a narrative of conversion and the continuity of Christianity over time. In the satirical *Eastward Ho*, Quicksilver's goodnight ballad presents a conventional generic structure illustrating the stages of Christian repentance which is so recognisable that the ballad becomes an instrument of persuasion and reinforces a personal spirituality, according to Jacqueline Wylde. As Thomas J. Moretti discusses in his thought-provoking essay, all religious positions and widely-shared symbols (such as the wedding ring) come under attack on stage in Webster's *The White Devil*, so that the audience is brought together in an affective reaction to the 'evils' on stage (p. 136) and a desire to cling to an undermined, but ultimately spared, Christian identity.

Brian Walsh and Mary A. Blackstone discuss how the workings of collective memory and the anxiety generated by a shifting religious status quo may have impacted on the audience's reactions to the history plays *When You See Me You Know Me* (by Samuel Rowley) and Shakespeare's *Henry V*, respectively. Rowley's play presents a

panorama of the English Reformation as a turbulent process, fraught with ‘false starts’ (p. 115) and backward steps connected with the successive monarchs, and creating deep social fractures and a shared sense of uncertainty about the future. Shakespeare’s is analysed with a focus on the ‘questioning conscience’ (p. 164) of characters, whose internal conflict the audience would mirror when facing the dilemma between professing allegiance to the earthly monarch or following the dictates of one’s soul.

The traditional attempt to label authors as partisans to one religious position based on textual evidence is superseded with an examination of the latitude they allowed themselves when making use of religious symbols and rituals to suit varying literary and aesthetic purposes. In the case of Sidney’s romance *Arcadia*, Christina Wald suggests, the Catholic notion of the Eucharist as transubstantiation underpins characters’ transformations and identity changes, putting aside the raging debate about the sacrament. In Karreman’s contribution, ruins not only feature in the title of Spenser’s poem *The Ruines of Time* but are embedded in the very fabric of the text, the debris of monasteries a reminder that Catholic forms of mourning and memorialization no longer stood and that there was a need for a new Protestant poetics to replace the notion of the poem as an everlasting monument. John Donne masters this latitude or creative eclecticism in his poetic use of different semiotic models derived from contrasting views on the Eucharist, a way of formal experimentation which generates what Alexandra Block terms an ‘artistic ecumenicalism’ independent from his personal beliefs on religion. Donne is also the focus of Joel Dodson, who reads a 1619 sermon advocating confession not as a form of subjection to power but of self-care and communal well-being, drawing on Foucault’s notion of the ‘care of the self’ in his argument. In *Macbeth*, it is not the appropriation of religious symbols but the conscious use of indeterminacy that comes across when the Weird Sisters are portrayed, James Macdonald argues. Their nature and the scope of their agency is obscured so that the spectacular remained while religious sensibilities would not be hurt.

In his Afterword, Richard Wilson views the apparent disregard for ‘political theology’ (p. 229) and the conflict and violence arising from religion as a limitation of this book. However, the reader’s awareness of that reality is not suspended when confronting an analysis of a literary work as a site of de-escalation; if anything, it may provide a useful referential framework. The contributions in this volume open up exciting possibilities for further close-readings of other early modern texts.