

Daniel Andersson. *Lord Henry Howard, 1540–1614: An Elizabethan Life*. Studies in Renaissance Literature 27. Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2009. xiv + 221 pp. index. append. bibl. \$105. ISBN: 978–1–8438–4209–5.

It may perhaps seem a little curious to write the biography of a prominent statesman under James VI/I that focuses entirely on his pre-Jacobean career, but Daniel Andersson's Elizabethan life of Lord Henry Howard is very much concerned with the latter's intellectual formation and the various texts that he composed before he finally achieved overt political success after 1603. This makes the book a complement to, rather than a replacement for, Linda Levy Peck's *Northampton: Patronage and Policy at the Court of James I* (1982), which concentrates mainly on Howard's career under James and on questions of political patronage and corruption. As the brother and grandson of a duke and the son and uncle of an earl (his father was the famous poet, the Earl of Surrey), Howard might have seemed naturally destined for a life of political significance. The eight or so years that he spent learning and teaching at Cambridge — a commitment to academic life that was probably unparalleled by any other English nobleman of the early modern period — might also perhaps be seen as marking him out for future advancement. Howard's experiences during the reign of Elizabeth I, however, were largely those of frustration, exclusion from influence, and repeated bouts of detention for his support of Mary Queen of Scots. Instead of taking a prominent place at the royal court, Howard was forced to employ his considerable intellectual talents in parrying suspicions of political unreliability and currying favor with politicians whom he privately despised. This struggle, together with the richness of surviving evidence, makes Howard's career before 1603 an important case study in the relationship between humanist scholarship and politics in Renaissance England.

In the opening chapters, Andersson meticulously reconstructs Howard's experiences at Cambridge in the 1560s, hypothesizing with care when explicit evidence is lacking. Subsequent chapters turn to Howard's life away from the university and focus upon the various tracts that he penned to serve his interests. Although two of his tracts — the anti-Presbyterian *A defence of the ecclesiastical regiment in England* (1574) and the critique of astrology published as *A defensative against the poyson of supposed prophecies* (1583) — were published in print, most of Howard's

writings remained resolutely in manuscript form. Andersson has traced many of these copies and lists them in an annotated handlist at the end of the book. Although one occasionally wishes for a longer treatment of these writings, they are consistently discussed with sensitivity and laudable erudition. Like the excellent discussion of mid-Tudor Cambridge, these sections of the book emphasize Andersson's real ability as a scholar of Renaissance intellectual practices. The analysis of Howard's *Defensive*, for example, offers a useful corrective to Mordechai Feingold's influential arguments about the study of occult pursuits in Elizabethan England, emphasizing the apparently limited interest in this subject within the English universities (unlike in some aristocratic households) before the 1570s or '80s.

The book is perhaps a little less convincing on the politics of this period, although Andersson's discussion of Howard's own actions is consistently sound and sensible. The least satisfactory part of the book is its treatment of the 1590s, when Howard's longstanding dependence upon Lord Burghley was complicated by his political wooing of both Burghley's son, Sir Robert Cecil, and the flamboyant Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, whose rise threatened to imperil the Cecilian dominance over Elizabeth's counsels. The friendship between Howard and Essex — expressed in copious notes of private political advice directed at the earl — was very close, but Howard was unable to steer Essex away from political disaster in 1601. Unlike Francis Bacon, whose very public distancing of himself from Essex angered many and ultimately forced him to defend himself in print, Howard navigated the earl's fall so successfully that it finally set the scene for him to achieve the political success that had previously eluded him. By discreetly championing Cecil's relationship with James over the last eighteen months of Elizabeth's reign, Howard forged a bond with both men that would propel him to high office and the title of Earl of Northampton in the new reign. Unfortunately, this critical transition is rather abruptly described here and consequently seems somewhat opaque.

This book is clearly not the last word on Howard, but it is genuinely learned and judicious. The impressive range of languages and concepts explored in this book mean that it is very much aimed at advanced students of intellectual culture in Renaissance England. Such readers will find much of benefit in this insightful and detailed study of Lord Henry Howard.

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