

Susan M. Cogan

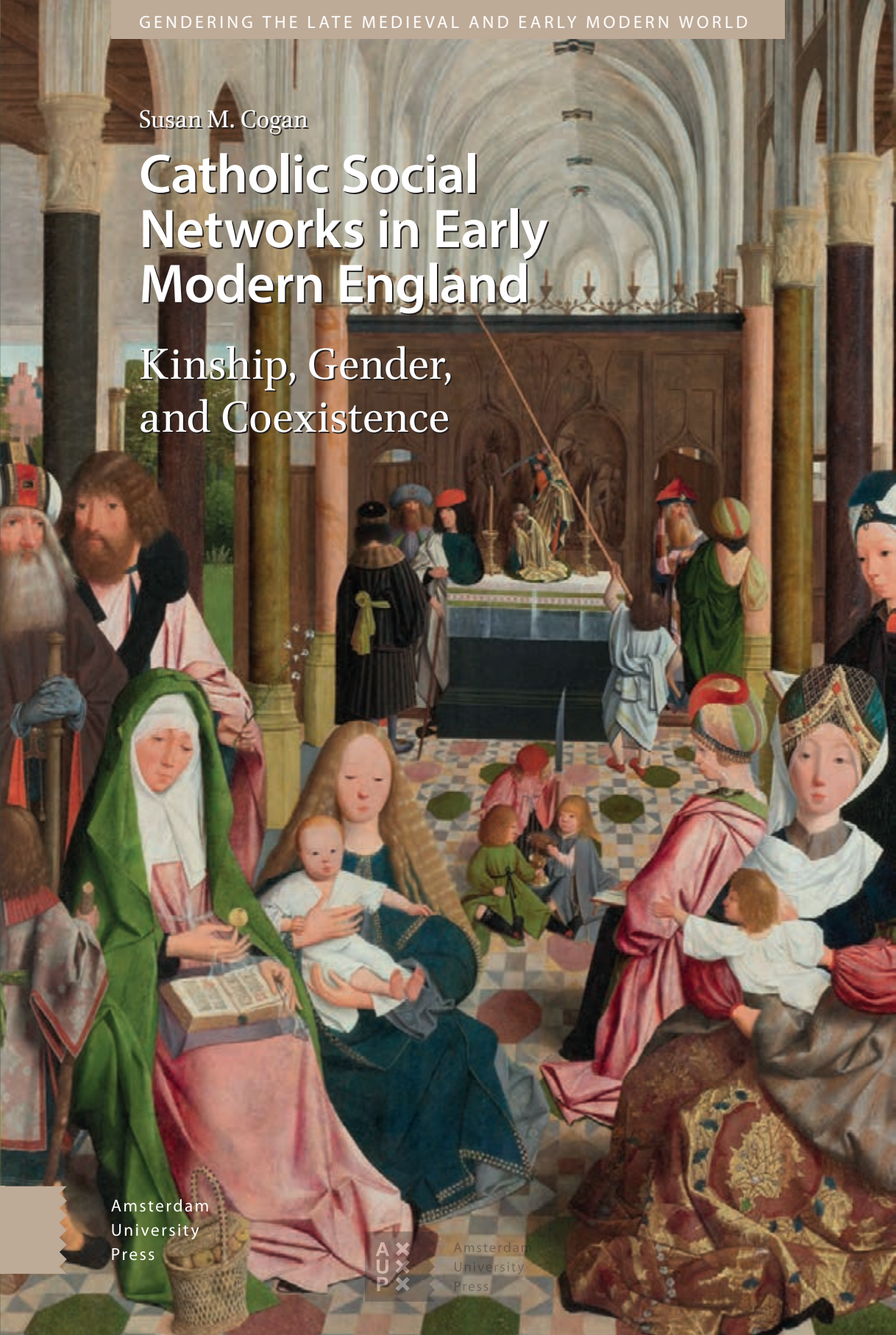
# Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England

Kinship, Gender, and Coexistence

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Catholic Social Networks  
in Early Modern England



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# Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England

*Kinship, Gender, and Coexistence*

*Susan M. Cogan*

Amsterdam University Press



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For Katherine and Hannah



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# Abbreviations

- APC** *Acts of the Privy Council of England: New Series*. Edited by John Roche Dascent et al., 46 vols. London: Printed for Her Majesty's Stationary Office by Eyre and Spottiswode, 1890–1964
- BL** British Library, London, UK
- CSPD** *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*
- HEHL** Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA
- HH** Hatfield House, Hatfield, Hertfordshire, UK
- HMCB** Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of Buccleuch and Queensbury at Montagu House*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for His Majesty's Stationary Office by Mackie & Co., 1899–1926).
- HMCS** Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable The Marquess of Salisbury, Preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, 24 vols. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1883–1976).
- HMCV** Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections, Vol. III: The Manuscripts of T.B. Clarke-Thornhill, Esq., Sir T. Barrett-Lennard, Bart., Pelham R. Papillon, Esq., and W. Cleverly Alexander, Esq.* (London: Printed for His Majesty's Stationary Office by Mackie & Co., 1904)
- LPL** Lambeth Palace Library, London, UK
- LLRRO** Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, Wigston Magna, Leicestershire, UK
- NRO** Northamptonshire Record Office, Northampton, Northamptonshire, UK
- ODNB** *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
- SBT** Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, UK
- TNA** The National Archives, Public Record Office, Kew, London, UK
- WRO** Warwickshire Record Office, Warwick, Warwickshire, UK





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# Acknowledgements

This book is the result of questions I began asking as an undergraduate student of Prof. Stanford Lehmberg at the University of Minnesota: how did Catholics who could not accept the Protestant English church navigate the new world they faced? Who helped them? How did they survive? Over time, those questions grew into a series of complex questions that interrogated the role of the family, Renaissance culture, political culture, and how deep into the medieval past were the origins of the family networks visible in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries. The answers, like the people and families who lived them, are complex.

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# 1. Introduction

## Abstract

The Introduction articulates the argument of the book and provides the reader an introduction to the themes, methodology, and structure of the book.

**Keywords:** kinship, gender, networks, patronage, coexistence

During the century following the English Reformation, English church officials, government officers, and laity negotiated new forms of English society and culture that reflected new forms of English identity. Five decades after Pope Leo X granted Henry VIII the title *Fidei defensor*, 'Defender of the Faith,' Pope Pius V excommunicated Henry's youngest daughter, Elizabeth I, for her adherence to and support of Protestant religion. Officially, after 1559, to be English was to be Protestant. In theory, conformity to the English Church signaled an individual's or family's loyalty to the state. In practice, however, conformity and loyalty were complex, and most of the people who continued to practice Catholicism demonstrated loyalty to the monarch and government. Gentry and noble families relied on the crown for patronage that brought employment, favors, prestige, and socio-economic advancement. Many of the late sixteenth century's powerful families had been in service to the monarch and state since the fifteenth century. Their wealth, power, and prestige grew as successive generations enjoyed the benefits of royal patronage and high state offices. These families knew how destabilizing war, demographic shifts, and religious change could be for their own economic well-being and the state's, and for general social order. They were intent to maintain their own authority and prestige and claim their right to religious practice in accordance with their conscience, not the monarch's. To do so, individuals and the families to which they belonged had to display their honor, loyalty to the state, and their legitimacy as members of the gentry and nobility.



The European Reformations ushered in a century of religious and social changes that drove conflict within and between communities, regions, and states. In England, religious tumult was not as severe as in many regions of the European continent; indeed, when England erupted into Civil War in 1642, it was not a religious war. This book explains how central families were to encouraging social harmony and to valuing coexistence over persecution. Post-Reformation English Catholics relied on their social worlds to mitigate tensions with Protestant neighbors and the Protestant state. Both as individuals and families, English people who did not follow the Protestant state religion relied on their social networks to provide protection from anti-Catholic legislation and governmental persecution. These networks were important for post-Reformation English Catholics and particularly so for Catholic recusants – people who refused to attend Protestant church services – since they faced the harshest sanctions and the greatest danger to their well-being, economic livelihood, and lives. Through analysis of the different networks Catholics created and inhabited, this study reveals how Catholics built, maintained, and used bonds of patronage and clientage. More importantly the study illuminates larger strategies that encouraged social concord in early modern England, including the strengthening of social and intellectual bonds through culturally valued activities such as gardening and architectural design.

Under Elizabeth I and James I, the English government implemented a series of increasingly stringent laws designed to drive Catholics into conformity with the English church and to punish those who refused. Financial penalties for refusal to attend Protestant church services became devastating even for wealthy families. Administration of political oaths did not allow for the separation of religious and political loyalties and led to removal of many Catholic men from administrative offices. Catholics faced restrictions on the education of their children, on their mobility, on their support of missionary priests, and endured confiscation of their weapons and armor. English Catholics lived in an atmosphere of potential persecution throughout the Elizabethan and early Stuart periods. Although the extent of persecution leveled against lay Catholics was not as severe as Jesuit contemporaries or Catholic polemicists suggested, it was nevertheless present, and recusants regularly felt its sting. The Privy Council used recurrent imprisonment and grants of liberty as a tool by which to manage and observe the realm's most prominent recusants, especially the patriarchs of families who wielded the most influence in their local communities. Although upper-status recusants usually did not have difficulty in obtaining liberty when they or their patron requested it, decades of intermittent imprisonments took



their toll on health, families, and finances. Recusant Catholics lived with an ever-present threat. They needed patrons to shield them from harassment by local officials or neighbors, to mitigate the punishments they incurred for their recusancy, or who could promote them into local office and support them once they were there.

At the same time that religious reforms prompted a reordering of hierarchy based on ideas of religious truth, England was in the midst of deep social change. In urban areas, market towns, and villages throughout the realm, there was a general increase in concern about wrongdoing from the fifteenth through the late sixteenth centuries and a strong societal impulse to maintain concord within communities. The core values of early modern English society were to ‘preserv[e] harmonious and tranquil relationships within a community [and to] enforc[e] good order, control, and discipline.’<sup>1</sup> Early modern ideas about honor and virtue meant that individuals were also aware of the social and economic concerns of credit and reputation. People closely monitored the behavior of individuals and groups they believed threatened the well-being of their community. In some communities, this increased vigilance drove a decline in neighborliness.<sup>2</sup> That decline, paired with religious and social change, surely seemed to some people permission to persecute neighbors with whom they disagreed or simply disliked. Thus, while polemicists saw society as torn asunder, divided between right and wrong, or truth versus heresy, English communities valued concord and self-determination at the same time they sometimes lapsed into discord. People in the Midlands communities that form the basis of this study were simultaneously concerned about wrongdoing and apprehensive about social and religious changes they faced. They were also committed to resolving disputes and preserving concord as much as was feasible in an era of instability and religious persecution. Catholics, whether they conformed to the state church or recused themselves from it, worried about escalating anti-Catholic laws. Patron-client relationships offered Catholics some protection from those laws and reassured Protestants that their Catholic kin, friends, and neighbors would remain loyal to the state.

The strategies that elite families developed to ensure their survival through periods of significant dynastic, social, and religious change were

1 Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 209–210.

2 Tim Stretton, ‘Written Obligations, Litigation and Neighbourliness, 1580–1680,’ in *Remaking English Society: Social Relations and Social Change in Early Modern England*, ed. Steve Hindle, Alexandra Shepard, and John Walter (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, N.Y.: Boydell and Brewer, 2013), 192–193.



honed over multiple generations that spanned at least two centuries. To understand how kinship networks functioned in the post-Reformation period, we need to understand how they were formed, how long they operated, and how they had functioned during earlier periods. Thus, the book begins with an examination of England's late medieval kinship and social networks, which became the foundations of later, post-Reformation networks. The heart of the book focuses on the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, c. 1570–1630, roughly the period between Elizabeth I's excommunication and the onset of the English Civil Wars. The social mechanisms that supported social and religious coexistence in the century following the Reformation were durable structures established over a century earlier.

This study articulates a new model for understanding how elite English society worked through the myriad pressures of the post-Reformation period. Through kinship, friendship, and the performance of elite values, multiple generations of upper-status families navigated the social, political, and religious changes that threatened their very existence. English Catholic gentry and nobility negotiated the challenging boundary between political loyalty and religious faith and helped to forge a reality that allowed for both the expression of religious dissidence and its containment. Although many of these people professed strict adherence to Catholic doctrine and worship, they made clear that their elite social status and their relationship to the crown were as important as their religion, and sometimes more so.

This book focuses on the upper-status groups of the nobility and gentry. Nobility and gentry were a demographic minority in early modern England, but controlled most of the wealth, land, and people on the land. These groups were divided by hierarchy and for the nobility those distinctions are most apparent through titles. Dukes were at the top of the noble hierarchy, followed by marquesses, earls, viscounts, and barons. Individual circumstances varied widely, however, and during this period, dukedoms were rare, and some viscounts and barons were among the wealthiest and most powerful members of the nobility. Hierarchical distinctions within the gentry were more fluid than the nobility, which contributed to what Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes called 'a lack of identity between the various ranks of the gentry.'<sup>3</sup> At the top of the hierarchy were knights, followed by esquires and gentlemen. Knights and some esquires were members of the upper gentry, while most esquires were considered middling gentry, and gentlemen made up the lesser gentry. Income, landholdings, and political authority

3 Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500–1700* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 15.



varied widely between the upper and lesser gentry. Altogether, there were only sixty-two nobles in 1560, and the queen's reticence for elevating many more families to the peerage meant that the number remained fairly stable throughout her reign.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the numbers of gentry rose exponentially during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; in some counties their numbers quadrupled.<sup>5</sup> The rising population of gentry drove social and political tensions as existing families sought to protect their status and new families sought to establish their standing. Inevitably, these tensions both shaped and were shaped by the religious reforms that occurred during this same period.

Kinship, gender, and coexistence played a significant role in the process by which elite Catholic families reintegrated themselves into a Protestant state. Kinship and social networks created social groups that valued concord over tumult and thereby encouraged communal harmony during a tumultuous period. Gendered roles also underwent change during this period, and Catholic women and men both shaped and were shaped by those alterations. Women, less engaged in formal service, could continue to practice pre-Reformation forms of sociability and status-building activities. As recusancy and governmental suspicions of Catholics sent gentlemen and noblemen to prison, into exile, or removed them from administrative office, wives, mothers, and sisters sometimes enjoyed new forms of power and responsibility. For men, by contrast, recusancy or affiliation with Catholicism could lead to exclusion from the main activity upon which masculine reputations were constructed: service to patron, county, and crown. This situation created a fundamental crisis of masculinity for upper-status Catholic men and forced them to adapt their strategies for establishing and maintaining their personal and family honor. Such strategies included working through familial and patron–client networks to gain administrative appointments, investing increased time and financial resources in cultural forms of status building, such as gardening and architecture, and, for a few, becoming entangled in plots against the Protestant state. The struggle of elite Catholic men to prove their manhood without sacrificing their families' honor and social status fueled their transformation from medieval subjects of the English king into citizens of the nascent early modern state. They became architects of a society in which exemplary service counted for more than religious affiliation.

4 Janet Dickinson, 'Nobility and Gentry,' in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. Susan Doran and Norman Jones (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 285.

5 Heal and Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, 11–12.

## Themes of the Book

### Kinship and Networks

Kinship groups and the larger social networks they inhabited were the most significant means by which post-Reformation England encouraged social concord and avoided religious war. Multiple kinship groups, distributed over multiple counties, created networks that supported continued access to patron–client transactions for members of a demographic that could easily have become marginalized. Kinship and family networks formed the foundation of early modern English social networks. Catholics in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, and Warwickshire constructed and inhabited social networks comprised primarily of biological and marital relations. While many scholars have regarded the function of kinship in England as both narrow and shallow, with connections and favor extending to aunts and uncles at the most, this study demonstrates that extensive affective and effective ties existed and were employed to the benefit of kinsmen.<sup>6</sup> This pattern displays broad and deep kinship relationships within local and regional communities, in keeping with David Cressy's observation that kinship had broad biological and geographical reach.<sup>7</sup> Such ties kept people bound to one another even during periods when they did not need to utilize those relationships for patronage and helped to revivify the patronage connection at moments when it became necessary.<sup>8</sup> That sense of obligation was a key factor in creating communities of relatively harmonious coexistence in the post-Reformation century.

6 Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling, 1525–1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 85–92; Keith Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English Village: Terling, Essex, 1550–1700,' in *Land, Kinship and Life-cycle*, ed. Richard M. Smith (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 318–324; Keith Wrightson, 'Household and Kinship in Early Modern England,' *History Workshop Journal* 12 (1981): 153; Rab Houston and Richard M. Smith, 'A New Approach to Family History?' *History Workshop Journal* 14 (1982): 127.

7 David Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England,' *Past & Present* 113 (1986): 46–47.

8 Miranda Chaytor, 'Household and Kinship: Ryton in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries,' *History Workshop Journal* 10 (1980): 25–60; Naomi Tadmor, 'Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change,' *Continuity and Change* 25, no. 1 (2010): 25; James E. Kelly, 'Kinship and Religious Politics among Catholic Families in England, 1570–1640,' *History* 94, no. 3 (2009): 328–343.



Kinship connections, social networks, and the performance of elite values ensured that elite families remained integrated in the patron–client exchange regardless of which religion they practiced. Although patronage was almost a birthright for individuals with high rank and status, access to the kinds of relationships that provided patronage required careful maintenance of social credit, displayed through one's virtue and honor. Patronage fostered ties that resulted in employment, office holding, marriage, wardship, and for many upper-status Catholics, mitigation of the punishments mandated by the anti-recusancy statutes of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

Elite social networks originated within the kinship group and expanded to include friends, neighbors, and tenants. In early modern England, 'friend' denoted relationships of emotional attachment, trust, and support.<sup>9</sup> Friendship was one component of sociability, which was important to maintaining order within both the household and society at large.<sup>10</sup> Friendships were a source of mutual support and a significant factor in the accumulation and maintenance of patrons and clients.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, friendship and clientage became so intertwined in the early modern period that 'friend' was also often used to mean 'patron' or 'client,' especially in England and France.<sup>12</sup> Friendships were typically considered horizontal relationships in contrast to clientage as a vertical arrangement, but relationships were not always so tidily defined. Catholics drew their patrons from their social networks: from a group of people with whom they shared a connection, whether ties of kinship, ties of friendship, or the bonds of one's neighborhood and county.

The term 'network' is used throughout this work to signify a social group that included not only a family's affinity, but also the wider network of which a family or individual was a part. Affinities were defined in the late medieval and early modern period as a group of people with whom one was

9 Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), 97; Barbara J. Harris, 'Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of English Aristocratic Women, 1450–1550,' in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 21–50.

10 Karl E. Westhauser, 'Friendship and Family in Early Modern England: The Sociability of Adam Eyre and Samuel Pepys,' *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 3 (1994): 518. Westhauser defines sociability as the sum of all interpersonal interactions within the space of a day, of which friendship is one part. See also Susan D. Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford; New York: Blackwell, 1988).

11 Paul D. McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (London; Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

12 Sharon Kettering, 'Friendship and Clientage in Early Modern France,' *French History* 6, no. 2 (1992): 141–142.



connected by blood, marriage, spiritual kinship (godparentage), a sense of mutual dependence, or retinue. The term does not allow for connections beyond the affinity, nor for patronage relationships with social or political superiors. 'Network' encompasses a wider group and is used here to indicate specific connections which could be used for 'preferment, information [...] [or] professional advantage.'<sup>13</sup> This differs from the 'entourage' Michael Questier analyzes in his study of the Browne family. Questier's entourage was focused on kinship, patronage, and ideological affinity and was more flexible than traditional conceptions of patronage structures, affinities, or John Bossy's idea of 'Catholic community' would allow.<sup>14</sup> This definition of networks expands on Questier's entourage to include overlapping types of social relationships among multiple families, which functioned over multiple counties and through multiple centuries.

Networks of affinity and support were central to late medieval and early modern daily life. In the fifteenth century, kinship networks and social networks helped families to rise or sometimes simply to survive during a turbulent period of dynastic war. In the post-Reformation century, such networks could soften the consequences of religious nonconformity and encourage societal unity during a period of tumult. As England navigated religious reforms, episodes of persecution were a reality, but the goal, if not the norm, for many English communities was social harmony, or 'getting along.'<sup>15</sup> This is where social and religious experiences interact: most people valued getting along even when it meant allowing for religious plurality. Persecution destroyed community bonds and generated an atmosphere of intolerance and conflict that many English laypeople sought to avoid.<sup>16</sup> As John Coffey and Alexandra Walsham have observed, persecution and

13 'network, n. and adj.,' *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, accessed 26 December 2018, <http://www.oed.com>; 'Network' was in use during the sixteenth century, but referred to material objects of manufacture.

14 Michael C. Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c. 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2–3; Bossy, *The English Catholic Community*.

15 W.J. Sheils, "'Getting On" and "Getting Along" in Parish and Town: Catholics and Their Neighbours in England,' in *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands c. 1570–1720*, ed. Benjamin Kaplan, Bob Moore, Henk van Nierop, and Judith Pollman (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 67–83.

16 Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

toleration exist in tandem, not independently from one another.<sup>17</sup> Persecution–toleration is also incredibly complex, a tangle of political, economic, and social relations ‘tied to competing conceptions of legitimacy and order.’<sup>18</sup> Catholics themselves sought accommodation above toleration, although they would have made do with the latter if that was all they could get. But careful and skillful employment of the networks that reflected friendship, kinship, and neighborliness could help to forge social and religious concord and demonstrate one’s gentle and noble virtues.

Networks of kin, friends, and other supporters speak to the question of how the various communities of Catholics were made. Rather than one overarching Catholic community, as John Bossy proposed, recent scholarship demonstrates the multiple and overlapping communities of post-Reformation English Catholics. Michael Questier’s account of the Catholic Browne family, the first and second Viscounts Montague in Sussex illustrates the enduring influence of the entourage of an aristocratic family and their network of clients.<sup>19</sup> James Kelly’s analysis of marriage patterns of the Petre family in southeast England reveals how political considerations shaped marriage arrangements between some Catholic families. The alliances expose how powerful were political loyalties and lay factionalism to Catholic community formation in southeast England.<sup>20</sup> Even if all English Catholics adhered to identical post-Tridentine doctrine and practice (which they did not) and were therefore doctrinally or ideologically unified (which they were not), their unequal social, economic, and political status prevents defining them as a singular community.<sup>21</sup> English Catholics held divergent ideas about political matters ranging from the royal succession to alliance with Spain; they disagreed about

17 Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006); John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689*, Studies in Modern History (Harlow: Longman, 2000).

18 Randolph C. Head, ‘Religious Coexistence and Confessional Conflict in the *Vier Dorfer*: Practices of Toleration in Eastern Switzerland,’ in *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration before the Enlightenment*, ed. John Christian Laursen and Cary J. Nederman (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 147.

19 Questier, *Catholicism and Community*.

20 James E. Kelly, ‘Counties without Borders? Religious Politics, Kinship Networks and the Formation of Catholic Communities,’ *Historical Research* 91, no. 251 (2018): 35.

21 Although John Bossy referred to post-Reformation English Catholics as a community, Benedict Anderson’s ideas of an ‘imagined community’ are predicated on greater horizontal structure than existed in early modern England. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1993); Bossy, *English Catholic Community*.



militant revolt against the monarch; they were riven from within, the Archpriest Controversy being one example. Inconsistent application of anti-Catholic legislation in different geographic areas further complicates the narrative, as local and county governments carried out enforcement in different ways. Furthermore, English Catholics lacked the geographic boundaries that are central to the idea of a community.<sup>22</sup> Rather, Catholics were found throughout the realm and in widely varying environments: urban, rural, open-field (or 'champion'), and wood-pasture. The breadth of their connections to other Catholics was related to the breadth of their connections generally; the greater an individual's or family's status, the more likely they were to have an extensive network that covered a large geographic area and included a wealth of diverse personalities and viewpoints.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, rather than a single Catholic community, English Catholics made up a collection of what Michael Braddick calls 'dissident oppositional expressions of religious motive, linked by a common reliance on Rome.'<sup>24</sup>

Regardless of which networks or communities English Catholics belonged to, they had to rely on patronage networks for advancement, and for recusants, sometimes for their survival. Patronage was one of the principal social processes of early modern Europe. It helped to articulate social hierarchy, to define a person's position in that hierarchy, and was a key feature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English politics and aristocratic culture.<sup>25</sup> In the early Tudor period, the monarch used royal and court patronage as a means to motivate the gentry and nobility to devote their loyalty and service to the crown and to integrate local and regional political elites into the state – an especially important consideration during the reigns of the first two Tudor monarchs, who had to remain vigilant not to allow the realm to collapse back into the kind of dynastic wars that

22 Beat Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: The Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c. 1400–1560*, St. Andrew's Studies in Reformation History (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996).

23 For further discussion of why these dynamics make 'community' a fraught term, see Christine Carpenter, 'Gentry and Community in Medieval England,' *Journal of British Studies* 33, no. 4 (1994): 340–380.

24 Michael Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 300–301.

25 Werner Gundersheimer, 'Patronage in the Renaissance: An Exploratory Approach,' in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 4; Linda Levy Peck has called patronage the 'basis of English politics in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.' Peck, 'Court Patronage and Government Policy: The Jacobean Dilemma,' in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 28.

had plagued the late fifteenth century.<sup>26</sup> By the early seventeenth century, however, the structure of patronage was changing. King James employed court patronage not for the assurances of loyalty and service that the Tudors sought, but with the purpose of introducing experts into government as advisors and administrators.<sup>27</sup> Under James and even more so under the direction of his favorite, the Duke of Buckingham, court patronage became increasingly corrupt during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Still, James and his advisors continued to rely on patron–client relationships to bind Catholics to the crown and state.

Early modern patronage and clientage were built on a system of individual ties and networks that relied on connections of friendship, kinship, and credit. These relationships, which were deliberately constructed and nurtured by both client and patron, yielded favor and advancement to the client and accrued power to the patron; they were ‘an essential part of the functioning social machinery’ and central to the function of government.<sup>28</sup> Regardless of the type of patronage a patron dispensed – social, political, cultural or ecclesiastical – patrons assembled a network of clients (or followers), to whom they granted favors and resources in exchange for the client’s loyalty, service, and, perhaps most important, the ‘reinforcement of power and prestige.’<sup>29</sup> The instability of the sixteenth and early seventeenth

26 Peck, ‘Court Patronage and Government Policy,’ 31; Steve Hindle, *The State and Social Change in Early Modern England, c. 1550–1640* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave, 2000), 12. For the role of Henry VII in establishing England’s first court to offer ‘widespread and systematic’ cultural patronage to artists and scholars, on which he consciously ‘emulat[ed] the dukes of Burgundy,’ see Gordon Kipling, ‘The Origins of Tudor Patronage,’ in *Patronage in the Renaissance*, ed. Guy Fitch Lyle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 118. Stuart Carroll observed a similar dynamic in late-sixteenth-century France, where the function of the state required ‘judicious distribution of patronage and the manipulation of networks of personal influence.’ Stuart Carroll, *Noble Power during the French Wars of Religion: The Guise Affinity and the Catholic Cause in Normandy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 3.

27 Peck, ‘Court Patronage and Government Policy,’ 28.

28 Wallace MacCaffrey, ‘Patronage and Politics under the Tudors,’ in *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court*, ed. Linda Levy Peck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22. See also Wallace MacCaffrey, ‘Place and Patronage in Elizabethan Politics,’ in *Elizabethan Government and Society: Essays Presented to Sir John Neale*, ed. S.T. Bindoff, J. Hurstfield, and C.H. Williams (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1961), 95–126; Sharon Kettering, ‘Patronage in Early Modern France,’ *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1992): 839; Kristin Neuschel, *Word of Honor: Interpreting Noble Culture in Sixteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, NY; London: Cornell University Press, 1989); Catherine F. Patterson, *Urban Patronage in Early Modern England: Corporate Boroughs, the Landed Elite, and the Crown, 1580–1640* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 2.

29 Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 48.



centuries meant that order and power were constantly being negotiated, and increasingly in ways that granted power to local elites.<sup>30</sup> That power included the distribution of patronage and the accumulation of clients for local and regional elites with goods and favor to dispense.

Although there were many different kinds of patronage in early modern England, from royal and crown patronage to political, artistic, or ecclesiastical, this book defines patronage as an action by one person or entity that dispensed favor, reward, employment, or protection to another individual. Brokers, as Sharon Kettering has argued, occupied a middle ground: they transacted patronage for their clients by working with their own patrons, and made themselves more powerful in the process.<sup>31</sup> Brokers functioned as a type of patron and are treated as such in this analysis, although their role as a broker is acknowledged. As the evidence will show, friends and relations could be patrons or brokers when they were in the right position to dispense favor, reward, or protection.

## Gender

Gender played a significant role in the networks analyzed here, as it did in recusancy as a whole. Men and women forged their networks differently. Family networks were masculine in orientation, defined by the patrilineal descent of the family, and headed by the paterfamilias of the kinship group. Women created networks that overlapped but did not replicate the family network. Based on necessity those networks could operate independently from or in tandem with the larger family network. Usually, a woman's networks vertically linked two or three generations (mother, daughter, granddaughter, for example); their principal arrangement was horizontal, with a web of connections concentrated on her friends, siblings, cousins, members of the local or county community, patrons, and clients. When a woman died, her network could be absorbed into the larger kinship network, which helped to fortify that group. In contrast to women's networks, the focus of family networks was vertical, following the descent of the family from its progenitors and the expansion of the kinship group resulting from

30 Hindle, *The State and Social Change*, 233.

31 Sharon Kettering, *Patrons, Brokers, and Clients in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 33–36; Malcolm Walsby, *The Counts of Laval: Culture, Patronage and Religion in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century France* (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007).



intermarriage with other families. Family networks also displayed horizontal reach through new kinship connections forged through marriages, friendships, and patronage and clientage. Their main function was to support the overall vitality of the kinship group and thereby to secure the successful future of the family.<sup>32</sup>

Modern scholars have attested that recusancy was particularly attractive to women, but the inverse was also true: recusancy was unattractive to many male heads of household because of the risks to property and position. Alexandra Walsham has argued that Catholic men preferred strategic conformity to recusancy, since the latter imperiled a man's political authority and his family's assets. Activist recusant women are easier to spot in the archives than are the majority of Catholic women since they appear most frequently in legal and government records, whether in recusant rolls, interrogatories, and in Jesuit writings, such as the reports English Jesuits sent to their superiors in Rome. Consequently, the source material has emphasized the significance of atypical women.<sup>33</sup> Women such as Anne Line, Margaret Clitherow, Jane Wiseman, Eleanor Vaux Brokesby, her sister, Anne Vaux, and Elizabeth Roper Vaux dominate the narrative of the female relationship to Catholicism because of their roles as activists. Most of the recusant women and conformist women are hard to find in extant documentation. Their letters often have not survived and even their obstinate recusancy meant that they infrequently appeared in legal or government records. Nevertheless, it is possible to see into the lives of Catholic and recusant women through family papers, including correspondence, commonplace books, account books, contracts, and wills. Examination of the Throckmorton Papers in the Warwickshire Record Office, for example, made possible Jan Broadway's reconstruction of a young Catholic widow's life.<sup>34</sup> Family papers contain information about a woman's role within her family; her efforts to construct and maintain her own network; her practice of piety; and her political

32 John Bossy was among the first to note recusancy's appeal for women in his *The English Catholic Community, 1570–1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 157. For strategic conformity, see Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1993), 80; Andrew Muldoon, 'Recusants, Church-Papists, and "Comfortable" Missionaries: Assessing the Post-Reformation English Catholic Community,' *The Catholic Historical Review* 86, no. 2 (2000): 252.

33 Marie B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women, 1560–1640,' in *Women in English Society, 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 49.

34 Jan Broadway, 'Agnes Throckmorton: A Jacobean Recusant Widow,' in *Catholic Gentry in English Society: The Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation*, ed. Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 123–142.



engagement, mainly in the form of petitions she wrote on behalf of other members of her family or network.

This study addresses the gap between patriarchal manhood, or normative manhood, and the ‘competing sources of male identity claimed by early modern men’ by articulating some of the ways in which post-Reformation Catholic and recusant men redefined their own manliness.<sup>35</sup> For recusant men, that manliness was found in part through the suffering they experienced at the hands of the state. For example, recusant men responded to imprisonment as a matter of duty connected to their honor, albeit not a duty they appreciated, rather than a source of shame.<sup>36</sup> Their imprisonment represented their piety and their political loyalty, especially when they reported to prison as ordered, even securing travel licenses to do so before setting out on their journey. They justified their requests for liberty from imprisonment by invoking economic imperatives tied to the locus of masculine authority, the household and estate. In acknowledgement of these gender imperatives, it was women, not men, who invoked the detriment to the household in the absence of patriarchal care and direction. As James Daybell and Svante Norrhem have argued, the household was ‘the crucible of patriarchy,’ thus the family and kinship group was a theater of gender construction, performance, and negotiation.<sup>37</sup> The ‘well-ordered household’ that signified successful patriarchal manhood was orderly, prioritized social harmony, and had ‘families that produced stability through dynastic tenacity, [with] leaders who produced authority through self-control and moderation.’<sup>38</sup> It was within the context of these expectations, which saturated every part of early modern society, that recusant men and their families worked to produce social and religious coexistence within their networks and communities.

The myriad penalties for recusancy could have eroded manliness because it placed men in situations of greater dependency on other men, sometimes even men who were their social or economic inferiors. But as Alexandra

35 Alexandra Shepard, ‘Manhood, Credit, and Patriarchy in Early Modern England, c. 1580–1640,’ *Past & Present* 167 (2000): 102.

36 Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500–1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), esp. chs. 7 and 16; Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex, and Marriage* (London: Longman, 1999).

37 James Daybell and Svante Norrhem, ‘Introduction: Rethinking Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe,’ in *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1800* (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 9.

38 Cynthia Herrup, *A House in Gross Disorder: Sex, Law, and the 2nd Earl of Castlehaven* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70.



Shepard has so effectively demonstrated, dependency prompted men to 'seek alternative forms of manliness' rather than to cease being men. For recusant men, whose frequent imprisonments required reliance on wives and patronage to gain liberty and be able to perform their duties as patriarchal heads of household, alternate forms of manliness ensured their continued authority within the household and community.<sup>39</sup> Since gender was contested and negotiated, Catholics could restyle it to suit their requirements. Recusant men, rather than representing failed patriarchy, demonstrate its flexible and negotiated qualities and the contradictions within it. Just as the state needed gentry and nobility – even Catholic ones – to govern the provinces, so too did husbands need their wives to run their households.<sup>40</sup> Recusant and Catholic wives responded to this by redefining femininity, part of which included supporting the patriarchal authority of their husbands. In trying to have their husbands released from prison, recusant wives argued that their households were adrift without the patriarch to guide them. This in turn reinforced patriarchy as a social formation that shaped and was shaped by the other systems with which it interacted.<sup>41</sup>

It is important to remember that the period of the greatest tension between Catholics and Protestants was also the period during which political, economic, and social tensions precipitously increased in response to demographic rebound after the Black Death. At the same time, English society exhibited heightened interest in controlling multiple types of misbehavior, especially the infractions that led to breakdowns in social harmony and inversions of order, including inversions of gender roles.<sup>42</sup>

## Coexistence

This monograph moves analysis of the relationship between networks and coexistence to a broader geographic capture than what previous studies have offered. Keith Luria and Mark Greengrass have argued that boundaries between religious and social groups were fluid and contested as people

39 Shepard, 'Manhood, Credit, and Patriarchy,' 102; Daybell and Norrhem, 'Introduction: Rethinking Gender,' 3.

40 Susan D. Amussen, 'The Contradictions of Patriarchy in Early Modern England,' *Gender and History* 30, no. 2 (2018): 347.

41 Amussen, 'The Contradictions of Patriarchy in Early Modern England,' 344.

42 Marjorie K. McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England*, David Cressy, 'Cross-Dressing in the Birth Room: Gender Trouble and Cultural Boundaries,' in *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 92–115.



negotiated the Reformations, literally ‘living religious diversity.’<sup>43</sup> Coexistence was tension and concord; anxiety and harmony; dislike and friendship; and constantly negotiated. It included instances of ‘charitable hatred,’ often propelled by polemicists and popular fear of divine retribution for superstition and wrong belief.<sup>44</sup> Yet in many cases people of differing faiths did not hate each other, and when acrimony erupted it was often for causes distinct from religion: economic factors, social enmity, or political ambition.

The terms ‘coexistence’ and ‘concord’ are useful in this study because they reflect the lived experience of the historical actors. English Catholics expressed their desire to live in harmony with their Protestant neighbors. If official toleration was impossible, then they sought at least concord, wherein people of different faiths might live together harmoniously, with honor and social order intact. Coexistence included a range of human interactions, bad and good, or what William Sheils has called ‘getting on’ and ‘getting along.’<sup>45</sup> Neighborliness was an important ingredient, since it encouraged harmony and good order; its spiritual and social value was transmitted through the Bible and also via late medieval behavioral codes. Benjamin Kaplan has illustrated the power of neighborliness to shape coexistence within communities, despite concerns about spiritual purity.<sup>46</sup> Granted, some people, especially those on the more radical sides of Catholicism or Protestantism, felt that individuals of other faiths were a threat to entire communities, a contaminant in the midst of a pure society, neighborhood, or household, who required eradication. But within this broader range, harmonious coexistence meant that individuals worked toward concord more often than they did toward intolerance or persecution, especially within settings where they knew one another or when they could agree on common interests.

Religious coexistence, like family and social networks, had a durable history in sixteenth-century England. Late medieval reform movements such as Lollardy and localized practices that included both Catholic and pagan customs gave English society experience with religious plurality and with individuals who adhered to prohibited doctrine and practice for over a

43 Keith Luria, *Sacred Boundaries: Religious Coexistence and Conflict in Early Modern France* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 147–148. Mark Greengrass, ‘Afterword: Living Religious Diversity,’ in *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Friest, and Mark Greengrass (Aldershot, Hampshire; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 294.

44 Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*.

45 Sheils, “‘Getting On’ and ‘Getting Along’ in Parish and Town.”

46 Kaplan, *Divided by Faith*, 251.



century prior to the Reformation. Many late medieval gentry families knew reform-minded Lollards, and thus the sixteenth-century reforms did not present an entirely new way of engaging with dissenters in a community or family group. Margaret Aston, Andrew Hope, and Richard Rex are among those who have established that the geographic distribution of Lollardy as a durable reform movement included sections of the east and west Midlands.<sup>47</sup> These reformers were a distinct minority, but their family, friends, and neighbors knew who they were and engaged in neighborliness with them.

The medieval heritage provided models of coexistence regarding both religious differences and cultural values pertaining to proper behavior for gentry and noble families. Authority as a birthright, reflecting medieval ideas of hierarchy such as the Great Chain of Being and the Body Politic and behavior predicated on chivalry and enhanced by Renaissance-era expectations of restraint are but two examples of this heritage. In the sixteenth century, many elites – especially those of ancient standing in their region – believed gentle and noble status was hereditary, transmitted through bloodlines and evident in individual virtue and behavior: courage and loyalty for men and modesty and obedience for women.<sup>48</sup> Reputations were carefully guarded, and an assault on one family member could endanger the kinship group as a whole. After the Reformation, protecting the interests of the family group meant supporting family members regardless of their religious position, since the esteem of the kinship group was more important than the reputation of any of its individual members.

The sixteenth century's shifting political landscape fostered both acrimonious and harmonious coexistence. The volatility of 'true' religion in England's early Reformation, with the brief reigns of Edward VI and Mary I swinging the pendulum between Reformed Protestantism and Roman Catholicism within the span of a few years, meant that the nature of true religion was elastic and unstable. In some cases the instability propelled anxiety over political status or social standing, which drove episodes of harassment or persecution of minority religions. Yet it also encouraged

47 For Lollards in the Midlands, including Northamptonshire, see Andrew Hope, 'The Lady and the Bailiff,' in *Lollardy and the Gentry in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Margaret Aston and Colin Richmond (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 252–255; Richard Rex, *The Lollards*, *Social History in Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 70–71; R.M. Serjeantson and W. Ryland D. Adkins, eds., *The Victoria History of the County of Northampton, Volume Two* (London: [Constable], 1906), 28–30.

48 Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales*, 9–10; Richard Cust, 'Catholicism, Antiquarianism, and Gentry Honour: The Writings of Sir Thomas Shirley,' *Midland History* 23 (1998): 54.





cooperation and concord since people were acutely aware that the wheel of fortune could shift, once again disrupting the current power structure.

Previous studies of religious and social coexistence in early modern England have established communities' preferences for concord over tumult. Muriel McClendon and Joseph Ward have demonstrated how in urban settings people with opposing religious beliefs set aside theological disagreement and prioritized civic or corporate harmony, in part to retain self-governance and to experience as little interference as possible from state authorities.<sup>49</sup> Among northern Catholics, William Sheils argued that communities prized coexistence because it preserved social order.<sup>50</sup> Melissa Franklin Harkrider has noted the same dynamic among Lincolnshire elites, as has Michael Questier in his analysis of the Sussex-based entourage of the Browne family and the Viscounts Montague.<sup>51</sup> This book extends those local studies to analysis of multiple families and networks, arranged over several counties, to demonstrate how long-standing kinship and social relationships encouraged coexistence against a backdrop of social, economic, demographic, and political change.

## Sources

This study relies on social, legal, and economic materials to illuminate the processes of religious and social change. Through correspondence, wills, contracts, account books, parish records, and maps, we see a different story emerge than the ones reproduced by reliance on sermons, polemic, or Jesuit accounts of persecution. Correspondence reveals thoughts, emotions, conflict, and harmony. Wills highlight relationships and proximity of those relationships through bequests and the value of those bequests. Sometimes they reveal godparentage, which parish registers do not record, or the existence of a child or sibling that does not appear in other documentation. Contracts and account books are useful because they reveal the parties to different legal and economic relationships and the contours of those

49 Muriel C. McClendon, *The Quiet Reformation: Magistrates and the Emergence of Protestantism in Tudor Norwich* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999); Joseph P. Ward, *Metropolitan Communities: Trade Guilds, Identity, and Change in Early Modern London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

50 Sheils, "Getting On" and "Getting Along" in Parish and Town.'

51 Melissa Franklin Harkrider, *Women, Reform, and Community: Katherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk, and Lincolnshire's Godly Aristocracy, 1519–1580* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008); Questier, *Catholicism and Community*.



agreements, whether for marriage, land, labor, or socializing. Parish records allow us to trace movements between estates and to trace possible godparent relationships through naming patterns.

Of course, every source presents unique challenges. For letters, we have to remain alert to the inherent bias of the writer, not only that they often sought to present themselves and their situations in a positive light, but also that at least some of the time they wrote for a wider audience than the addressee. Recusant Catholics, and especially those in prison for religious disobedience, expected their mail to be read by government officials. Occasionally, their letters seem more for the gaoler or government officials than for the declared recipient. Account books are rich economic and social documents but are often difficult to read because of challenging orthography, incredibly detailed recordkeeping, and accounting systems unfamiliar to most modern readers. Wills are challenging because of the multiple factors that shaped them. Testators' voices could be altered by the clerk writing the document, for example, and while wills signal positive relationships through bequests, absences of those gifts do not necessarily indicate a lack of affection. Contracts and other legal documents suggest affinity through the presence of signatories and witnesses, telling us who was making agreements with whom. But those on their own cannot be taken as evidence of friendship or affinity without support from other documents, unless the same cohort of names appears with such frequency that a pattern can be detected. Parish records, when they survive, are as detailed as the cleric or churchwarden decided to make them. A span of richly detailed entries can be bookended by stark entries that supply only basic information, as was the case with the parish registers at Rushton All Saints in Northamptonshire.

## Methodology

This book examines the kinship and social networks of multiple families who held lands in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, and Warwickshire between 1400 and 1630. In contrast to most existing studies, which offer either a broad national view or a discrete portrait of one family or county, the book reveals the regional landscape of several kinship networks that operated over multiple counties, how they functioned, and the effect of those networks on post-Reformation English society. They include some of the most notorious recusant families alongside less well known ones, and still other families that were Catholic but not recusant. Nearly all of



the kinship groups included a blend of Catholic and Protestant religious adherence; a purely Catholic or Protestant kinship group was uncommon during this period. Most of the families included in this study controlled land in multiple counties, as was common in the late medieval period, and that diversified land holding meant wide distribution of the kinship network. Each of the counties examined here possessed the usual county-level and local-level personnel such as justices of the peace, sheriff, muster masters, and borough, corporation, and forest officials. For most of the period between 1585 and 1630 each county also had a crown-appointed lord lieutenant who in turn had several deputies. In all three counties, ecclesiastical boundaries crossed county lines; each county was divided among multiple bishoprics. However, as this book emphasizes, the status of individual noble and gentry families, the relationships between those families, and the ways in which families divided or delegated administrative responsibilities was much more important for making sense of county politics than was the formal administrative structure. In Northamptonshire, with its abundance of 'new men' recently risen into the ranks of the nobility and gentry, individuals and families had to be quick and clever enough to stay a step ahead of their rivals, collegial enough to work with other elites, and in possession of a strong network of friends and relations upon whom one could rely for help, favors, or protection. Leicestershire and Warwickshire, by contrast, were each dominated by one noble family, the Hastings earls of Huntingdon and the Dudley earls of Leicester and Warwick, respectively. That noble hegemony meant that in many ways, the counties functioned on late medieval models of the noble affinity and the affinity's allocation of patronage to ensure its own continued power. The varied social and political structures of these three counties resulted in differences in the attitudes toward and treatment of their Catholic residents and shaped those residents' patronage needs. This regional, multicounty approach allows for a more detailed examination than is possible in a top-down national study, of the ways in which Catholics operated in their local communities and across multiple counties, in the areas where they wielded social, cultural, and political authority.

### Periodization

Although, as mentioned above, the heart of the book focuses on the years between c. 1570 and 1630, the fifteenth century supplies the foundation of this analysis. Moving beyond conventional date spans illuminates the longevity and significance of kinship and social networks. Rather than bookending the study by dynastic period, such as 'Tudor–Stuart' or by traditional date



spans (for example, 1485–1603), this book takes a different approach. The beginning is determined by the dates of these families' earliest detectable affiliation with each other. For many of these families that means a starting point in the first half of the fifteenth century. The study terminates c. 1630, before the disruption of the Civil Wars and as many of the children who had grown up in these Catholic and recusant families reached the ends of their lives. Although the book does not engage with the English Civil Wars, it helps to explain why those wars were not religious wars between Catholics and Protestants.

### Religious Identity and Terminology

In an effort to meet the historical actors on their own terms I endeavor whenever possible not to assign people religious labels, since these labels so often tend to encourage artificial categories. That said, sometimes those labels are necessary to avoid confusion. Although there were a variety of reasons for which someone might be recusant, including debt, illness, and apathy, by the 1580s the term 'recusant' was usually used to indicate a Catholic who refused to attend parish worship services or to take communion. In this study I use 'recusant' to mean Catholic and recusant; I use 'conformist' to denote Catholics who outwardly conformed to the English Church.

Rather than adhering to one religious position such as 'conformist' or nonconformist', 'recusant' or 'Puritan', people tended to move along a wide continuum of belief and practice. Religious conformity, regardless of a believer's doctrinal affiliation, was contested, negotiated, and flexible.<sup>52</sup> As recent work on Elizabeth Isham has illustrated, Puritan belief and practice had a wide scope. 'Puritanism' did not fit tidily into a confessional box, but was shaped by individual believers.<sup>53</sup> The same was true for Catholics. Catholic strategies for adapting to and coping with enforced Protestantism included degrees of conformity that ranged from partial to full (yet

52 Peter Lake, 'Moving the Goal Posts? Modified Subscription and the Construction of Conformity in the Early Stuart Church,' in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), 179–205; Michael Questier, 'Conformity, Catholicism and the Law,' in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), 237–261.

53 Isaac Stephens, 'Confessional Identity in Early Stuart England: The "Prayer Book Puritanism" of Elizabeth Isham,' *Journal of British Studies* 50, no. 1 (2011): 24–47.



qualified) conformity.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, a number of Catholic families in the Midlands conformed to the state church – not because of ‘spineless apathy or ethical surrender’ but of positive action that expressed an individual’s moral principles.<sup>55</sup> Conformity signaled a desire to remain a full participant in the conflicting fields of one’s personal faith convictions, in one’s loyalty to the monarch and state, and in their local parish community. This book examines conformist Catholics and recusant Catholics: those who conformed, either regularly or occasionally, to the English Church, and those who refused to do so. As the evidence will show, conformist Catholics were themselves sometimes a difficult group to define since the degree of conformity varied by individual and changed across the life span.

## Structure

This study is organized into six thematic chapters that present the primary network types that defined elite life. This approach allows us to focus on specific types of networks that built on one another over time, moving from kinship and social networks to cultural, political, and finally patronage networks. Chapter Two traces the medieval origins of what would become the post-Reformation networks of the principal Catholic families in the English Midlands and establishes the foundations of network analysis for this study. Chapter Three explains how those networks developed over the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and distinguishes between the different types of family networks: masculine-oriented kinship networks and women’s networks, which operated separately from but overlapped the larger family network. Keeping track of so many families over a long period of time is challenging, especially when names repeat across kinship groups in successive generations. Thus, to supplement these chapters, kinship tables of the main families in this study are offered as an Appendix. These tables are constructed from primary sources (e.g. wills, parish registers, marriage contracts, and state papers) to ensure accuracy. Chapter Four introduces Renaissance forms of architecture and gardening, two of many cultural activities that gentry and nobility engaged in as part of the display and

54 Alexandra Walsham, ‘Yielding to the Extremity of the Time: Conformity, Orthodoxy and the Post-Reformation Catholic Community,’ in *Conformity and Orthodoxy in the English Church, c. 1560–1660*, ed. Peter Lake and Michael Questier (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2000), 212. See also Walsham, *Church Papists*.

55 Walsham, ‘Yielding to the Extremity of the Time,’ 213.



assertion of their elite status. For Catholics, this cultural practice had the added benefit of forging new relationships and maintaining established ones, both of which led to the creation of a distinct cultural network and encouraged coexistence based on common interests. Chapter Five examines Catholic political engagement and identities. Catholics, and especially recusants, created alternative means of political engagement in response to their progressive exclusion from positions of traditional political authority. Some Catholics remained in local, county, and state administrative roles, and more of them moved back into those roles under the early Stuarts. Others used military work and petitioning to articulate their membership in the polity and to make claims on citizenship in the emerging early modern nation-state. Chapter Six draws on the networks discussed in the previous chapters to explain how those networks contributed to discrete patronage networks. Gender is centered within each chapter, as all of these networks were predicated on the normative gender roles of the period under consideration. As a whole, the book demonstrates how various networks created relationships based on social harmony and religious coexistence and ensured that Catholic gentry and nobility would continue to participate in elite patronage and clientage, access to which was not assured, but contingent and negotiated for all elites.

## Conclusion

Patronage and clientage advanced the difficult process of establishing religious coexistence and social concord during a period of government-mandated worship practices. Deep social relationships, particularly networks of kinship and patronage and patterns of everyday life, were ways in which individuals and families found paths toward greater stability. These connections predated the Reformation but also extended through it, illustrating that despite religious controversy, neighbors and kin and the social groups, or networks, of which they were part, strove for concord. These strategies resulted in some unexpected outcomes, chief among them the significant role Catholics played in shaping early forms of English citizenship. Despite the state's efforts to marginalize most Catholics from positions of political influence, that marginalization drove Catholic women and men to expand their political worlds and to form their identity as citizens in the emerging nation-state.

The ways in which early modern English people of all faiths worked out how to get along despite deep differences of conviction regarding salvation



and truth emphasizes the power of the family, household, and community to heal societal rifts. Religious polemicists and some government officers, in theological and polemical works, emphasized religious difference and advocated persecution of religious nonconformists. In contrast to such literature, family papers reveal that the lived experience of most Catholic and Protestant individuals and their family, friends, and neighbors, indicate a different reality. This book argues that Catholic elites nurtured and successfully employed social relationships at their disposal to receive and dispense patronage, to remain connected to the state, and relevant across a number of different fields: socially, culturally, politically, and economically.

