

*Early Modern Catholics, Royalists, and Cosmopolitans: English Transnationalism and the Christian Commonwealth.* Brian C. Lockety.

Transculturalisms, 1400–1700. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015. xii + 376 pp. \$129.95.

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This monograph sets out to challenge the tendency of literary scholarship to focus on the construction of English national identity in the early modern period at the expense of alternative approaches pursued by contemporaries. Lockety sheds light on a strain of cosmopolitanism, rooted in pre-Reformation thought, which offered an alternative to, and a possible critique of, the “writing of the nation.” Through a close reading of a range of different texts — including pamphlets, plays, and poetry — Lockety traces the shifting use of this early modern cosmopolitan approach. In the early part of the period, of course, it was Catholic writers for whom this was most fruitful. Robert Persons, Nicholas Sander, and others reemphasized the significance of an international Christian commonwealth in which the pope or the ecclesiastical realm could act as a brake on the ambitions or errors of secular rulers. Thus the papal bull of excommunication, far from being the novelty that the Elizabethan establishment claimed, was part of a longer papal tradition of action in a transnational context. Interestingly, there were also Protestant writers sympathetic to the view that a secular ruler should be open to correction by an ecclesiastical hierarchy: in this case, not the Catholic hierarchy, but the English episcopacy. John Harrington, identified by Lockety as a “secular cosmopolitan,” expressed unease that the membership of Elizabeth I’s Privy Council for a while lacked an episcopal presence.

It is in these “secular cosmopolitans” that Lockety sees the next use of cosmopolitan thinking, shorn of its reliance on the papal deposing power. Protestant authors from the time of Elizabeth, but most notably Civil War writers of different stripes, Lockety says, turned to an ideal of cosmopolitanism that had less to do with ecclesiastical corrective and more with a transnational community of Christian monarchs who could advise and,

where necessary, restrain each other. Sydney and Spencer, Lockey argue, still saw the need for some external force to provide correction to a tyrannical sovereign. Writers and translators such as Fanshawe, Davenant, and Hobbes envisaged a role for the poet and philosopher as advice giver to monarchs — thus the poet was taking up the role previously occupied by clerics. Milton, too, saw himself as part of a transnational intellectual elite, one to replace the episcopal hierarchy in the older conceptions of cosmopolitan thought. The continuing resonance of cosmopolitanism through sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing, Lockey argues, provides the bridge to the forms of cosmopolitanism most associated with the Enlightenment. Enlightenment values, apparently based on “free commercial exchange and secular philosophical reason,” were not without historical precedent, as Enlightenment writers would have us believe: rather, their roots lay in the much older Roman Catholic conception of the Christian commonwealth.

In the process of discerning these cosmopolitan strains, Lockey draws together work by a range of early modern authors who would traditionally not sit alongside each other. In doing so he reminds us of the ways in which Catholic and Protestant writers of various persuasions did not write in isolation of each other, but were only too aware of the range of possibilities explored by their rivals. The author’s treatment of a range of literary texts is careful and thoughtful, although in places some more direct engagement with scholars working across the boundaries of English literature and history might have been useful: recent work exploring the changing meanings of *commonwealth* and indeed of *exile* might have made an appearance in his analysis. He rightly observes that the “marginalised perspective” of sixteenth-century Catholics and seventeenth-century Royalists encouraged their cosmopolitan approach, although more might have been said of the specifics of their marginalized position, which varied according to particular context.

Lockey clearly emphasizes that “English cosmopolitanism was first and foremost traditional and conservative” (314), although it served as a challenge to the emerging national narratives, and it contained the potential to be stripped of its more obviously conservative manifestations. It could be employed, for example, by writers who were working in the Protestant tradition, who introduced a transnational approach inherited from “a prohibited ideology” (315). His monograph offers a careful exploration of early modern texts and a thought-provoking read for scholars working in the discipline of history as well as English literature.

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