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CHRISTOPHER F. LOAR. *Political Magic: British Fictions of Savagery and Sovereignty, 1650–1750*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2014. Pp. 344. $65.00 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.18

Christopher Loar's monograph *Political Magic: British Fictions of Savagery and Sovereignty, 1650–1750* reconsiders the history of political liberalism by demonstrating how persistently a topos of first colonial contact involving a display of seemingly superhuman powers—often with gunpowder, but also with dual-use technologies such as magnifying lenses—informed allegorical fictions of British home rule from the late Stuart to early Hanoverian eras. According to the ur-narrative (derived from Jacobean travelogues), the spectacle awed native peoples into civic tractability, at least temporarily; for Loar, its relevance to colonialism per se is less important than its utility to Thomas Hobbes and other theorists of British statehood. The conceit exposes a razor's edge between the secular conversion of subjects through terrifying spectacle and the implied threat of government by terror (39). In the writings of Margaret Cavendish (who operated in and near Hobbes's circle), Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Swift, and Eliza Haywood, Loar finds that even as the idea of liberty within constitutional monarchy became an assumed good—and even as that idea is understood today to have relied increasingly on Enlightenment secularism—there remains a robust, un-ironized appeal to popular superstition and military might as the orbit of modern state legitimacy. Importantly, Loar establishes that this subtextual defense of martial law clashed with the progressivist suggestion, in fictional scenes of horrific colonial bloodshed, that political stability could never be achieved through violence.

These rhetorical instabilities are partly explained through the concept of extralegality, borrowed from Giorgio Agamben, though not thoroughly explicated in his terms, and present in Hobbes. Extralegality focuses the central paradox: the savage can bewilder the colonizer by appropriating the spectacular technologies of rule (guns and garrisons in the *Robinson Crusoe* sequels, for example), while the Hobbesian sovereign, as the ultimate arbiter and above the common law, is in a sense situated "still" within a pre-political state of nature (222). Loar shows how Behn, Defoe, and Swift figured extralegality as, variously, the hallmark of colonial abjection, political resistance, and salvific leadership. More particularly, he sees in Cavendish and Haywood efforts to use women's extralegal, veritably "savage" status, as a position from which to reimagine political authority. Their heroines—alternately traumatized exiles and lucky monarchs—are nevertheless contained by Foucault's foundational biopolitics, as the sexual concomitants of savagery and sovereignty in women are shown to need disciplining.

Intriguingly, *Political Magic* displaces contractarianism for emblematic dramas of a "civilizing process" resting in "acts of deferred violence" (3). Hobbes's narrative of commonwealth formation comes closest to the travelogue version by theorizing the primitive, but even Hobbes is vague, Loar notes, as to the *process*—the imagined theatrics—by which the pre-political becomes the political (37–41). Locke is largely absent from the book, and this may be a good thing, as Loar also intends to blur pre- and post-1688 periodizations of partisan politics. Justifying his decision to downplay factional histories, Loar asserts that "the political thought of these writers is not limited to the narrowest concerns of their immediate political milieu" and that fiction was for them an exploratory medium of political philosophy (32).

This approach, to which I am sympathetic, works best when the reader stands back from Loar's necessarily granular readings of under-studied texts to recognize the broader relationships that emerge among chapters. For example, Loar shows us that whereas Cavendish uses spectacle to highlight "the difficulty of clearly establishing sovereign right through reason or rhetoric alone" (61), Behn, some twenty-five years later, is even more skeptical (contra readings of her as an unquestioning royalist): what if the would-be lawgiver has trouble deploying political fetishes, and what if his allies "are themselves a rabble" (89)? Similarly, Loar's chapters on Defoe and Swift work well together, less for the now-common

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.18 Published online by Cambridge University Press

reading of Swiftian parody than for their complementary scenes in which the aboriginal nation accredits itself through retaliatory spectacle.

However, there is a gap between the macro- and micro-iterations of Loar's hermeneutic: the readings do not always speak clearly to one another, despite lengthy chapter and section preambles, so that I came away with fewer transferrable insights about the crucial "process" than I had hoped for. For instance, a "politics of exemplarity," identified as a concern of Swift's, seems likely to have been relevant to other figures as well (165). The book's introduction prepares us for some movement from a "first gunshot topos" (4) to more complex exchanges of symbolically loaded technologies, but does not fully account for the spatial, architectonic, and generic turns Loar must take in later chapters to characterize a particular strain of political ambivalence. That middle-ground accounting might have been helped through some admixture of political biography and reception history. More direct talk of the ironic parallels between Swift's and Defoe's careers as political hacks, or of the ways Swift's evolving interests as a pamphleteer informed *Gulliver's Travels*, could have furthered in-text dialogue with Clement Hawes and others on the nature of colonial modernity. The Patriot-Whig leanings in Haywood's fiction might have been clarified through discussion of her early theatrical career and of the Pope-Swift circle's hostility towards her. Chiefly, though, I felt the need for a more thorough definition of critical terms, preferably through deeper mining of Hobbes and biopolitical theory, from the top. Loar's coda on political enmity reviews theoretical refinements upon Agamben and on the concept of liberalism that would have been welcome earlier. One wishes that Loar's important study of political theater in early prose fiction—about which he is deeply learned—had placed more of its own interconnections at center stage.

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Brian C. Lockey. *Early Modern Catholics, Royalists, and Cosmopolitans: English Transnationalism and the Christian Commonwealth*. Transculturalisms, 1400–1700. Burlington: Ashgate, 2015. Pp. 376. $129.95 (cloth).
doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.19

Cosmopolitanism is the principle that all humanity constitutes a single community based upon some natural, divine, ethical, or philosophical commonality. In medieval Europe, the belief in a unified Christian commonwealth under the authority of the papacy relied on a religiously based cosmopolitanism that theoretically superseded other worldly loyalties and which compelled Christians—particularly monarchs—toward correct behavior. As Europeans redrew the boundaries between temporal and spiritual governance during the Reformation era, they had to reconsider whether there was, in fact, any such universal community of humankind. With the Catholic worldview disrupted and the ecclesiastical hierarchy on the decline, on what would a single, universal community now be based and who would restrain temporal power gone awry? What authority could restrain tyranny?

In *Early Modern Catholics, Royalists, and Cosmopolitans: English Transnationalism and the Christian Commonwealth*, Brian C. Lockey traces how Catholic and Protestant English authors participated in debates over such issues during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, after Henry VIII's break with Rome. In doing so, he attempts to construct a bridge between the medieval, Catholic Christian commonwealth and the eighteenth-century vision of secular cosmopolitanism imagined by Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Immanuel Kant. The many political and religious tracts, fictional works, letters, and translations Lockey analyzes in this text experiment and hypothesize about who might act as a sort of imperial overseer to

https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.18 Published online by Cambridge University Press