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Richard C. McCoy. *Alterations of State: Sacred Kingship in the English Reformation*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pp. 192. \$29.50 (Cloth).

[1] Richard McCoy's *Alterations of State* offers a lively, concise, and well-documented account of some of the most familiar and significant landmarks of English Reformation history, including the royal supremacy of Henry the Eighth, the "cult" of Elizabeth, and the execution and "martyrdom" of Charles the First. McCoy revives a number of well-known disputes over sacred kingship, or what Milton called a "civil kinde of Idolatry," in part by stitching together varied kinds of cultural evidence. These include the royal tombs in Westminster Chapel, paintings of Raphael and Rubens, religious tracts of John Calvin and Martin Bucer, and literary works by John Skelton, William Shakespeare, Andrew Marvell, and John Milton. What unites these disparate materials - and allies this book with the recent work of literary critics such as Jeffrey Knapp, Huston Diehl, and Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt - is McCoy's attention to the profound cultural resonance of Reformation controversies over Christ's real presence in the Eucharist.

[2] *Alterations of State* begins by describing medieval devotion to Christ's real presence in the sacrament of the Mass, a doctrine officially formulated at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. Against this high water mark, McCoy then charts a receding tide of faith in the "local presence" of the divine, a loss that stirs up recurrent "desires for a lost real presence" (156). The first chapter, entitled "Real Presence to Royal Presence," proposes that the advent of the Reformation forced a "migration of the holy" from Christ's real presence in the Catholic Mass to the "animating and redemptive royal presence" of the Tudor monarchs (15). Subsequent chapters then detail a series of struggles to preserve various incarnations of this "state religion" against the attacks of skeptics such as John Bale and John Milton. The book closes on the barren shore of our own times, reading "our abiding distress at 'the cease of majesty'" through the English public's powerful sentiment on the occasion of Princess Diana's death (156). Yet McCoy proposes a characteristically modern compensation for the loss of both real and royal presence: the internalization of sacred space, and "the meeting of minds over time" (85). The individual imagination thus becomes the place of true communion.

[3] In its conceptual structure, *Alterations of State* synthesizes two important approaches to the decline of "traditional" religion and the eventual desacralizing of sovereignty. The first is that of Eamon Duffy, John Bossy, and Roy Strong, among others, who have examined ways in which the ceremonies of Tudor "state religion" may have compensated for England's loss of Catholic rituals such as the Mass. Stephen Greenblatt also popularized this approach within literary studies, examining theatrical productions as surrogates for outlawed Catholic rituals. McCoy's second approach is more anthropological, drawing on theories of ritual place articulated by Jonathan Z. Smith and Claude Levi-Strauss. McCoy follows Smith's assertion that sacredness is first and foremost a "category of emplacement" (3). Discussing Thomas More's reaction to Lutheran heresies, for instance, McCoy argues, "taking holy things out of their place threatened the entire cosmic and social order" (14).

[4] Though both of these paradigms have been justly influential, their combination has two potential drawbacks. First, both the compensatory model of kingship and the anthropological focus on emplacement implicitly link Reformation skepticism about "real presence" to broader historical trends of secularization. This approach tends to cast reformers only in their anti-ceremonial capacity, glossing over their many attempts to relocate the sacred within newly defined boundaries. For instance, Protestant rituals such as the Lord's Supper had tremendous cultural significance, effecting a "migration of the holy" within the religious sphere, as Huston Diehl has recently argued. A second, related problem is that a broad theory of "traditional" emplacement versus skeptical "challenges" may not account for migrations of the holy from one particular kind of "place" to another. That is, it may be possible to draw finer theoretical and historical distinctions among the many items that McCoy places under the rubric of "local presence," including ritual objects such as ceremonial wafers and saintly relics, ritual spaces such as chapels and tombs, and the living bodies of sitting sovereigns.

[5] Perhaps the most productive question that the book raises is whether the migration of the holy necessitates its loss. As McCoy acknowledges, the view that sacredness is indissolubly linked to "emplacement" conflicts with some of the specific "dislocations" that the book presents. For instance, McCoy describes how James moved Elizabeth's casket to a less prominent position within Westminster Chapel. However, Elizabeth's remains gained a sacramental aura "despite and ultimately because of her grave's dislocation" (83-84). Similarly, after the execution of Charles I, the dead King's reflections in the Eikon Basilike became both a political weapon and "a memorial more enduring and vibrant than any shrine" (104). McCoy's close readings thus suggest that dislocation need not lead to desanctification. However, the larger conclusion that McCoy draws from these successful relocations is that the final resting place of "sacred space" is the human mind (85). Quoting Hazlitt, he asserts that the mind's theater trumps both real and royal presence, allowing "a relation to a reality as vivid and 'as real as our own thoughts'" (156). McCoy loosely connects this post-Enlightenment version of interior space with Early Modern Protestant notions of the "force and efficacy" of a Eucharistic conjunction. However, he also affirms that what "sounds like religious transcendence" is a function of "merely human conjunctions" (85). In this way, the book finally seems to link internalization to a purely secular attitude towards Eucharistic conjunction, implying that the "migration" of the holy entails its loss.

[6] More broadly, McCoy's reliance on Hazlitt's descriptions of the power of the human mind may signal the dangers of reading Protestant inwardness through the lens of later developments such as Enlightenment skepticism and the Romantic embrace of imagination. For Protestant thinkers such as Calvin and Hooker, to deny the local presence of the divine is not to license the mind's wholesale withdrawal from communal religious structures; nor is it irrevocably to sever human perception of the divine from the material world - points taken up in recent books by Ramie Targoff and Deborah Shuger, respectively. Protestant beliefs about inwardness and about Eucharistic "conjunction" therefore begin to lose their historical and theological specificity when they are assimilated to a post-Enlightenment paradigm that splits subject from object, rendering meaning entirely a function of human imagination or reason. A relation to reality (or to divinity) that is only as real as "our own thoughts," is one that Milton, for one, would most likely have viewed as Satanic, not redemptive.

[7] However, McCoy's focus on sacred place brings attention to many of the most pressing issues surrounding post-Reformation sovereignty, including a "deeply ingrained religious conception of politics" (132). Particularly valuable in the chapter on Shakespeare, for instance, is McCoy's investigation of the close relationship between religious and political uses of the word "conjoined." Moving from Plowden's writings on the king's two bodies, to the eucharistic writings of Calvin and Hooker, to King James's first speech to Parliament, McCoy brings a tremendous variety of cultural evidence to bear on Hamlet's description of the potential power of his father's ghost: "His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones/ would make them capable" (70). This richly contextualized reading of the phrase, "form and cause conjoined," is characteristic of *Alterations of State*, which manages to distill a tremendously broad range of materials into a concise history of sacred kingship.

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