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LIESBETH CORENS, *Confessional Mobility and English Catholics in Counter-Reformation Europe*,

Oxford 2019, Oxford University Press, 240 pp., ISBN 978-0-19-881243-2.

Comparisons between early modern Protestant and Catholic migrations are still scarce and Liesbeth Corens's new book represents a significant contribution to this branch of research. It also stands out in putting more emphasis on the laity than earlier research on the English Catholic expatriate community had done. The author's interpretation of Catholic diasporic militancy in terms of agency certainly calls for further more nuanced attention in the future.

The institutional backbone of English Catholic migrants on the continent consisted in a network of colleges and both male and female religious houses that sprang up in the Low Countries, close to the North Sea coast, whose archives and published old printed books constitute an indispensable source basis. Significantly, however, Corens attempts to move beyond an institutions-centred perspective in this new book: she foregrounds diaries, letters and travelogues by lay people in order to offer a more nuanced view of what she refers to as post-1660 English Catholic confessional mobility.

In the Introduction, Corens distances herself from the term 'exile', which she sees as a reductionist label connected with victimhood and passivity. She does not dismiss the term altogether but uses this critique to shift attention to the agency of the expatriate Catholics and explains that she prefers the term 'confessional mobility', which she understands as a broader umbrella term for a practice rather than a mere label for people. I find this quite problematic, since recent research on early modern migration has stressed the multicausality of migration processes. For example, the migrants must have considered their economic possibilities and circumstances. Research into texts published by early modern migrants has also shown that they had broader interests and concerns than the term 'confessional mobility' suggests. Moreover, while Corens critically examines the term exile, she makes little comment about another term she frequently employs, namely expatriate; this term is indicative of a temporary condition but has also, at certain times, gained the connotation of an elite, more visible segment of migrants, and would deserve some more careful, historicized attention. There are further discrepancies already in the introductory part of the book: Corens criticizes territoriality and the national framework adopted by most studies of

pre-modern migration in Europe, yet her focus on the English Catholic diaspora seems to let that national perspective in again through the back door, only somewhat moderated by her occasional comparative passages (which are limited to western Europe).

The book is structured in three parts, which focus on Distance, Mobility and Orientation, respectively, and are further each divided into two subchapters on particular types of mobile Catholics: The Exile, The Fugitive, The Educational Traveller, The Pilgrim, The Intercessor and The Record Keeper. This typologically-organized book design places greater demands on a clear argumentative line and I think Corens may have underestimated this aspect. The reader has to search very attentively for hints of her overarching arguments.

In the subchapter on The Exile, Corens outlines the Catholic conceptualization of mobility, which emphasized the examples of early Christian missionaries and apostles and referred to the idea of a dominant, triumphant universal Church. Like many other Catholic communities, the English migrants placed themselves imaginatively at the forefront of the broader church struggle for renewal. This allows Corens to stress the English exiles' agency over their victimhood, as they engaged in publishing, teaching, preaching, praying, etc. These migrants' various heroic narratives and diverse styles of self-representation as supposed leaders of the church renewal certainly deserve further comparative research in the future.

In the subchapter on The Fugitive, Corens draws attention to the legal aspects of migration, to the phenomenon of migration permission and related concepts of loyalty and resistance. She analyses the role of the king in granting people licenses to leave and the use of such licenses by social elites. We do not learn about the situation of ordinary people. It would, for example, be relevant to know whether fees were charged when people appealed for leave or when such permissions were bestowed (or in fact both).

The next two subchapters, the Educational Traveller and The Pilgrim, raise concerns about the central focus of the book, since both the phenomenon of the so-called *Grand Tours* and pilgrimages represent travel rather than migration and have already previously enjoyed much scholarly attention. These two subchapters together constitute Corens's chapter on mobility and thus form the central part of her book, which suggests a reduced concept of mobility (namely travel) rather than the broadened concept the author seemed initially to have intended. If we accept *Grand Tour* as an integral part of mobilities research, then elite men become rather overrepresented (although a few examples of understudied female versions of educational travel are known across Europe but rarely researched). While early modern academic travel conducted by middling sort men did indeed, occasionally result in migration, especially during the tumultuous time of

the Thirty Years War, elite educational travels were only loosely connected with formal education and any search for work opportunities abroad.

The subchapter on Pilgrimage draws attention to the Marian shrine of Sherpenhevel and explores how it featured in the English Catholic imagination. Corens dwells on the metaphor of pilgrimage as a spiritual journey and transformation in religious imagination. She is convinced that 'in order to understand the English Catholic expatriate situation, we should think of peregrinations, pilgrimages, and redemptive journeys, as much as exile' (p. 131).

Another social type of English expatriate Catholic is introduced in the chapter *The Intercessor*. While its relation to mobility is rather vaguely defined and could have been further developed, Corens tries to reformulate the influential concept of 'local religion' elaborated by William Christian to capture the lived religion of the dislocated, dispersed English Catholics. The chapter points out the role of women and confraternities in long-term mission and their ambition to convert England through intensive prayer.

This sense of mission also resonates in the last chapter, *The Record Keeper*, in which Corens underlines that expatriate historians (and their helpers, often women who collected and copied material for them) were mainly concerned with constructing a narrative of mission and martyrdom in England. In this narrative, they emphasized past missions and martyrs as well as the future-oriented project of restoring England to Catholicism. Curiously, as a consequence, they wrote themselves and their contemporaries out of their very own master narrative. Nonetheless, the direct link between the social type of a record keeper and mobility remains rather vague and insufficiently articulated.

I certainly see the book as an important achievement. It moves beyond established perspectives and invites readers to view the English expatriate community in new contexts (for example as a virtual, imagined community). Its use of social types as guides to the expatriate experience is novel and thought provoking. However, this very structure also makes the unity between the chapters rather fragile. More frequent and explicit ties to overarching ideas and clearer argumentation throughout the book could have compensated for this lack of bonding between the individual chapters, which stand for various social types of expatriates. Readers may sometimes be puzzled with vague formulations, such as 'expatriates were never neutral, never unproblematic' (p. 192). Greater care should have been taken over the quality of the reproduced images (p. 41), which does not reflect well on a publishing house of such high renom  as Oxford University Press

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