focusing on different aspects of (religious) literary scholarship from late Renaissance writers to the seventeenth century, like Spenser and Milton, and setting them against the backdrop of older texts and concepts by, for example, Plato and Augustine.

Furthermore, this volume presents an overview of the development of the thinking of a particularly devoted and engaged scholar, who set out to establish a role for her specific form of scholarship. Starting in her twenties, as a dedicated resistance operative, a champion of freedom and peace, Røstvig continues to fight for space for some fundamental attributes of (primarily) Renaissance literature that have unfortunately much been obscured under the pseudo-scientific terminology of ‘numerology’. Maren-Sofie Røstvig’s arguments show the often disregarded realities of Renaissance studies and seek to establish a balance between symbolic and numerological structures, both lines of thought that today’s scholarship often finds rather marginal, while at same time steering clear of any risk of being considered unwarranted. The early modern world is indeed a foreign country, and sometimes today’s scientific thought and analytical thinking prevent us from seeing the complete historical context. Perhaps we should follow Røstvigs advice and “learn to adjust our own vocabulary to Renaissance usage” (27).


It was unsurprising that Elizabethan Catholics, increasingly persecuted and marginalized at home, would turn to a long-established sense of a pan-European Christian commonwealth as a source of solace and identity. As Brian Lockey explains in his intriguing book, this provoked both tensions and opportunities. It was crucial for leading English Catholic figures, men like Edmund Campion and Robert Persons, to insist upon their fundamental loyalty to the Tudor regime but they also subscribed to a theological and, perforce, political worldview in which the papacy was entitled, indeed duty-bound, to criticise
individual rulers: and even, as with Elizabeth I, excommunicate them and produce a climate in which the concept of overthrowing an alleged tyrant might be legitimate. Could English Protestants have meaningful interaction with this way of conceptualising Europe? That is precisely what Lockey argues in his book: and he makes a compelling case.

A very different sense of commonwealth emerged in post-Reformation England. The monarch was established as the supreme ecclesiastical authority, religious uniformity on the regime’s terms was deemed mandatory and, as the phrase went, this realm of England was an empire. For good reason, scholars have traced how this sense of English nationhood developed, and its expression in literature has been a keen focus of this work. It was not, Lockey argues, the only construct of commonwealth available, however. English Protestants may not have wanted anything to do with the pope, and they may have seen limited value in old exempla like Archbishop Ambrose of Milan rebuking the Emperor Theodosius back in the fourth century, but there was still value in a more universalist, cosmopolitan understanding of commonwealth that transcended national boundaries and in which the conscience of the monarch could be prodded. Lockey refers to this as the secularization of an older theological/ecclesiastical model and he is not slow to identify the ironies it provoked.

In the fictional work of Anthony Munday and Sir John Harington, for instance, Lockey locates a “secular version of the papal or episcopal overseer, responsible for correcting an errant or tyrannical sovereign” (8). The tales were set long ago and far away, of course, but contemporaries were presumably attuned to the resonances. That Munday should develop this concept is perhaps unexpected, though as Lockey explains, Munday’s precise religious sympathies remain elusive. For all the rabid anti-Catholic polemic, some scholars have discerned some indicators of Catholic sympathy. This hand has probably been overplayed, but it is still striking that Munday, throughout his works, spent so much time dwelling on transnational themes. Harington clearly had some sympathy for Catholic exiles and supported a fledgling understanding of religious toleration (though referring to these inclinations as ecumenical seems rather anachronistic) so dialogue with an earlier concept of commonwealth is less remarkable. Harington does, however, appear to have sailed close to the wind upon occasion. In his 1596 A New
*Discourse of a Stale Subject*, the notion of an external, higher power being entitled to criticise and correct an errant monarch does bear some resemblance to notions of papal supervision and intervention. It would seem that ways to “rein in untrammeled sovereign power” (149) had not gone entirely out of fashion.

Another component of this hybrid understanding of commonwealth was faith in transnational cooperation and oversight. We find sympathy for this, according to Lockey, in those sections of Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* which touch on the concept of equity and the mechanisms that can sustain or restore natural justice, and particularly in the writings (and workaday career) of Philip Sidney. The unusually well-travelled Sidney kept up enduring correspondences across Europe and adopted an idealistic approach to pressing geopolitical issues. He was eager for England to come to the assistance of persecuted Protestants abroad and, during the 1570s, led the unsuccessful charge to establish a Protestant league. This all fed into his fiction with, for example, Euarchus of Macedonia in *The Old Arcadia* striving to establish a pan-Hellenic alliance and, in *The New Arcadia*, a universalist agenda which “cuts against the grain of English national formation” (170). Good riddance to the pope, of course, but Sidney’s transnational dreams bear, for Lockey, “an uncanny resemblance to the vision of universal papal government promoted by his enemies” (21).

The second half of the book leaps forward to the later Stuart era. How had these complex articulations of commonwealth and cosmopolitanism developed, and who inherited them? Sir Richard Fanshawe emerges as one key figure, developing the trope of a cosmopolitan figure entitled to counsel and correct the sovereign. Milton, too, is positioned as a keen advocate of tearing down unnatural borders and boundaries, especially in the realm of faith. Whether or not Milton had read Luis de Camões’ *Os Lusiadas* (either in the original or in Fanshawe’s translation) is unclear but, regardless, he seems to have rejected the nationalistic vision it encapsulated. In *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve spend far too much time fixating on the narrow history of the Eden that they have lost: a hallmark of their fallen nature. So, too, do polities become obsessed with narrow interests and local concerns. Far better, for Milton, to have like-minded sovereigns working in consort, backed by an intellectual “transnational elect” (265) of which, needless
to say, Milton saw himself as a key member.

The laurels for radicalism apparently go to Aphra Behn, however. In the two-part play The Rover, much influenced by the writings of the royalist exile Thomas Killigrew, we encounter a transformation of the concept of nationhood as previously understood. The play, on the face of things, evokes nostalgia for the good-old-days of sixteenth-century England when the nation joined battle, on many fronts, with Spain but a “post-imperial perspective” (295) can also be discerned. In a new world of ever-expanding trade it is necessary to see old boundaries dissolve, leaving us with “the levelling effects of commercial forces” (312).

This way, perhaps, lay the future and one of the strengths, and potential risks, of Lockey’s analysis is its chronological sweep. This can lead to long-term historical trajectories which are sometimes just too neat and tidy, and in which causal links and webs of influence are stretched close to breaking point. Lockey works very hard, for instance, to identify a direct route between musings on cosmopolitanism in the sixteenth century and articulations of the concept during the Enlightenment. A fine section of the book, for example, looks at 1590s dramatic portrayals of the globe-trotting Thomas Stukeley. His ability to develop an increasingly expansive view of the world is dependent on the stability of his identity: he is ever-so English. But this Englishness becomes the “window on to a broader transnational identity that ultimately works to dislodge and destabilize national identity itself” (189). This is credible, but the attempt to link such processes to later Enlightenment understandings of transnationalism, to claim the accounts of Stukeley as direct precursors, involves several significant hermeneutic leaps. Can we really see a fully thought-through ideal of the “secular non-coercive universal community” (30) as early as the 1590s? Similarly, making intellectual bedfellows of the Spanish Dominican Francisco de Vitoria (with his thirst for natural justice and understanding of the oneness of humanity) and Kant (with his talk of perpetual peace) is overly ambitious.

None of this diminishes the importance of Lockey’s volume. He is more than reliable on broad topics (excellent, for example, on the tensions between loyalty to faith and secular authority among Elizabethan Catholics) and has a keen eye for revelatory episodes: I found his analysis of the 1579 student revolt at the English College
in Rome particularly worthwhile. Above all, he provides a valuable challenge to a rather monochrome understanding of how literature influenced ideas about sovereignty and nationhood during the early modern period. We often hear about the journey towards a modern, centralised, self-sufficient state but other paths were available and they were taken for rather longer than we might imagine.


In this extensively researched and skillfully crafted study of Parliament’s Protestation oath in 1641, renowned social historian John Walter advances two fundamental arguments. The first, which is the aim of the first two chapters, is that the Protestation was created and intended as a loyalty oath to both Parliament and the “true reformed church.” It sought to secure and continue Parliament’s reform agenda by binding the nation into a Protestant association. The second, developed especially in chapters four and five, is that the taking and administering of the Protestation revealed a level of popular political consciousness that justified violence and legitimized Parliament in its war with the king. Although Walter focuses his study on 1641–1642, he suggests that the Protestation served as a charter of governance and faith for the nation throughout the Civil War. It is these two claims that move the Protestation from the margins of English historiography into the center of the mid-seventeenth century upheavals.

The Protestation was born of fear and anger, specifically over suspicions that the king was preparing to suppress Parliament and free the Earl of Strafford from the Tower (13–14). Mistrust between the king and Parliament was exacerbated by swirling rumors of a popish plot at court, moving John Pym to lay out the idea of an armed association to defend both crown and church. Significantly, two questions arose immediately; one, what was exactly meant by an oath, a word that carried great importance in post-reformation England, and second, was this to be a Parliamentary oath or a national covenant. As Walter