Rethinking the Scottish Revolution: Covenanted Scotland, 1637–1651.
Laura A. M. Stewart.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. xvi + 392 pp. $110.

Laura Stewart's bold study of Scotland's revolutionary politics of the mid-seventeenth century stops just shy of the disarray of the UK's Brexit vote of 2016, though it does address the independence referendum of 2015. Along the way, it explores and illuminates the rooting of that Covenanting tradition of national awakening that has done so much to shape Scotland's politics, ancient and modern.

An English historian may be forgiven for celebrating Stewart's work as something of a Scottish historiographic reset. Scottish historians working in the shadow of the archipelagic heavyweight next door have often testified to the distinctiveness of Scotland's history and culture by tacitly distancing themselves from the controversies swirling to the south and singing instead the achievements of clan and kirk. By

contrast, Stewart insists that mid-seventeenth-century Scots were fiercely attentive to developments not only at Whitehall and Westminster, as we might have expected with civil war and revolution looming, but above all in London too, as Scottish printers and publicists sought to turn imported information and argument to their own purposes. As well, she steadily compares and connects her analysis and her subjects with the latest assessments of English politics and, above all, English polemics and publicists of the years of gathering crisis. The name that recurs perhaps more than any other in her roster of English scholars of civil war is that of Mike Braddick, and her appreciation of his claims of incremental and situational, rather than ideological, militancy is apparent.

For it is Stewart's altogether plausible case that the peculiar resiliency of the Covenanting machine, a resiliency that allowed Scotland to punch so much above its archipelagic weight, owed enormously to the early Covenanters' determination to ensure that the unity of the Lord's cause and Scotland's was not just a mainstay of polemic: it was to be lived and policed in the tight cohesion of Covenanting war committees, the heart of the military and fiscal machine, with local social establishments. The Covenanters far preferred the adherence of nobles and lairds, shamefaced though these often were, to potentially more determined service from beyond the charmed circles of the prewar elites. The success of Scots outside the months of the Montrose campaigns in avoiding a civil war of their own—when their English and Irish neighbors alike descended into prolonged internecine misery—testifies to the wisdom of that preference. But it was not just social conservatism and a fear of the challenge of burghers and outspoken women that made the Covenanters in power so solicitous of noble goodwill: some impressive interdisciplinary work, above all with Sir Thomas Cunningham's "Thrissel's Banner" of 1640, allows Stewart to show how central to the Covenanter case was the overlap of stern Presbyterian rectitude and an almost chivalric vision of the honor and antiquity of Scotland, threatened as these were by the ill-judged imperialism of the Stewarts' Britannic monarchy.

Not all is to be applauded in this careful account of the way in which a modern state emerged from the drive to set a nation out to war. Dr. Stewart's eagerness to relate her narrative to the sometimes theory-driven formulations of European and English scholars occasionally leaves her prose teetering on the edge of complexity—it is surely no accident that the smoothest chapters are the most Scotland-centered. But it is equally incontrovertible that Stewart's careful unfolding of the great crises of the National Covenant of 1638 and the Engagement of 1648, crises that made Scottish politicians and readers alike ever more observant of what was being said and produced in London, is a model of interdisciplinary and even at times transnational scholarship. Those chapters also show how adept Scots have been at preserving their national identity even as they sought to steer wider courses.

Derek Hirst, *Washington University in St. Louis*