shot through with ambiguity. For not only does the margin inflect the meaning of its core, blurring the boundaries between primary and secondary; as the example of Anna Stanisławska demonstrates, it can also sometimes be difficult to determine which was written first, the actual text or the commentary. Depending on inflection, self-commentary may be commentary on the text (like gloss, elucidation, or exegesis) or commentary on the self, both of which are often inseparably linked. As a matter of fact, commentary gives the text—and the mind of the author—an extension both in time and space, so that even a comment on a historical person can be shown to function as a form of self-commentary (Julius Caesar, in the case of Montaigne).

When the author becomes his own reader, the reader is inevitably drawn into the text. The essays assembled in this book investigate the wide array of effects this may entail and the very different purposes it may serve. For some authors, like Alberti or Filelfo, self-commentary is simply a means of stabilizing the text's meaning and ensuring its proper reception. By adding an extra dimension to the text, writers may display their erudition, justify their linguistic choices, and—especially if they are young or female—muster additional authority. At the other end of the spectrum, some self-commentaries imply extensive cross-referencing, connecting seemingly unrelated texts or suggesting unorthodox rapprochements that question the models they defer to and, indirectly, the very notion of genre. The juxtaposition of incompatible elements, like the comic and the heroic, erudition and playfulness, appears in several essays of the collection. Aptly labeled "interrogative humanism" (224) by Harriet Archer, this practice shows authors to be meditating on the contingency of poetic practice and anticipates a form of metacriticsm *avant la lettre*.

Based on a conference at Durham, the book features fourteen extensive, profoundly researched contributions, each of which includes a copious bibliography, divided into two sections: "Texts" and "Studies." It is nicely framed by Venturi's introduction and the corresponding afterword by Richard Maber. It also includes nine illustrations, an *index nominum*, and notes on the editor and the contributors. Flawlessly printed, this hard cover is a fine book in every respect and pays tribute to the high standards of the series.

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The Book of Books: Biblical Interpretation, Literary Culture, and the Political Imagination from Erasmus to Milton. Thomas Fulton.
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021. x + 374 pp. $75.

The far-reaching impact of the vernacular Bible on early modern English political discourse is now well established, thanks to the work of scholars like Christopher Hill,

Debora Shuger, Kevin Killeen, and others. Yet direct and sustained attention has less often been paid to the political impact of biblical paratexts—annotations, prefaces, marginalia, woodcut illustrations, and the myriad other accompanying materials guiding the experiences of early English Bible readers. For Fulton, biblical paratexts are key discursive venues in which humanist scholars and theologians employ a range of interpretive methods to address issues of political authority, order, and governance. These politicized paratexts draw in turn the attention of literary artists, who interact with biblical paratexts to explore the same political issues in their poems and plays.

Chapters typically divide according to different versions of the English Bible, which correspond roughly to the reigns of different English monarchs, and generally speaking, each chapter sketches the wider religious and political context of a Bible/monarch before turning to the paratextual engagements of a single author. Despite his focus on the English context, Fulton is sensitive to the connections between England's evolving biblical and political cultures and leading Continental figures in the humanist and Reform movements. Hence chapter 1 focuses on Erasmus, whose rhetorical readings of Paul's epistles in his 1516 New Testament annotations were partly inspired by John Colet's lectures on Romans at Oxford, and whose reading of Paul's call to political submission at Romans 13 as relevant only to early Christians living under pagan tyrants, and by implication irrelevant to Christians living under (supposedly) righteous monarchs, persistently shaped English theories of political obedience and divine kingship, from Tyndale's *Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528), a major focus of chapter 2, to Milton's *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659), addressed in the final chapter.

Other English-Continental connections emerge in chapter 3, which explores revisions to the 1537 Matthew Bible by minor theologian Edmund Becke, who cast Edward as a new Joshua receiving the English Bible figured as Mosaic book of the Law in an introduction to the text. Fulton then turns to the Strasbourgian Martin Bucer, whose political advice book *On the Kingdom of Christ* (1550) prescribed a plan for implementing Mosaic Law in England. Later chapters consider the influence of biblical paratexts on English literary writers. Chapter 5 connects Elizabethan nationalist-Protestant glosses on Revelation in the Geneva Bible to book 1 of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (1590); Spenser "asserts a nationalist reading of Revelation's allegories in a world where many different readings vied for ascendancy" (166). Chapter 6 situates Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1604) in the religious culture of James I's court, finding in the play an ironic treatment of the godly ruler's balance of justice and mercy, ideals depicted as allegorical figures flanking the monarch on the frontispieces of many Elizabethan bibles. The last two chapters focus on Milton, one exploring his imitations of the 1611 Authorized KJV's minimalist marginalia in his 1648 Psalm translations, the other highlighting his hermeneutic and theological differences with Tyndale.

The book is thoroughly researched and impressive in scope, but it lacks clarity, focus, and originality. There is no central argument, and many of the individual chapters do not propose or meaningfully advance arguments either, leaving the reader uncertain regarding what is at stake or where the discussion is bound. In addition, the immense bulk of biblically informed political and theological treatises addressed alongside the biblical prefaces and glosses begs an unanswered question—what counts as a biblical paratext?—even as it undermines claims for the distinctive influence of conventionally defined paratexts on a given author's work. Fulton claims, for instance, that "Spenser's allegory in *The Faerie Queene* is deeply structured by the presentation of church destiny in the notes of Protestant Bibles," but the claim seems more or less arbitrary once a slew of other likely sources are introduced, including well-known treatises by Luther, Bale, and Broughton.

Finally, questions regarding the materiality of the book are treated superficially or not at all—a shame, given all the great images of rare books included from holdings in the Folger, Beinecke, and British Library. How might we theorize, for instance, Charles I's personal psalter as a physical object, with its purple velvet covering, silver spangles, and embroidery of silver, gold, and pearl? Fulton professes an unabashed enthusiasm for his subject in the book's introduction, but it's hard to share his enthusiasm when the most made of Milton's ink-splashed, food-stained, tear-soaked, burn-holed KJV is to suggest that it was "heavily used, as if with intense but messy utility" (213). Right.

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Pan-Protestant Heroism in Early Modern Europe. Kevin Chovanec. Early Modern Literature in History. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020. vii + 284 pp. €83.19.

This rich and thoughtful monograph focuses on several key heroes of early Protestantism, using these heroes' textual configurings to reveal the Reformation's fundamental transnationalism. Countering the claims that Protestantism tended to generate national and nationalist identities, Chovanec argues that a transnational Christendom was a strong competing Reformed discourse. Studying William and Maurice of Orange in the sixteenth century, and then Frederick of Bohemia, Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, and Oliver Cromwell, Chovanec investigates the complex and contentious textual discourses, cultural tropes, and political debates framing these leaders of the pan-Protestant cause. Clearly written for early modern (English) literary scholars, Chovanec's study broadens our knowledge of the terms, scope, and range of these coreligionist bonds.