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Saiber, Arielle. Measured Words: Computation and Writing in Renaissance Italy

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the common source of the other two was Niccolò Cabeo, as Raphael suggests, this just shows how they were betrayed by their traditional bookish method of teaching what they had been taught without understanding it.

Fortunately for the course of science, Galileo's legacy did not lie with readers such as these. Instead, it lay with the "ideal" readers, who sought to confirm and extend his work with mathematical demonstrations and experiments—Baliani, Torricelli, Mersenne, Gassendi, Riccioli, Fabri, Huygens, and Newton. Their contributions have been studied by a host of historians of science, from Antonio Favaro, Alexandre Koyré, and Stillman Drake, to Paolo Galluzzi, Domenico Bertoloni Meli, Dan Garber, and Carla Rita Palmerino, most of whose works are listed in Raphael's bibliography. Historians of reading and the book may find it interesting—though not surprising—that a few seventeenth-century readers of the *Two New Sciences* brought to this extraordinary book traditional scholastic and humanist methods and habits of reading. But those few hardly warrant a revision of the established account of Galileo's legacy.

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Saiber, Arielle.

Measured Words: Computation and Writing in Renaissance Italy.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017. Pp. 280. ISBN 978-0-8020-3950-7 (hardcover) \$65.

There are moments during which we as historians, literary scholars, or students of gender or media studies tend to get distracted in our readings of primary texts. One of these moments is when our authors start to talk about mathematics and geometry. In that case, we often—and too quickly indeed—tend to leave the inhospitable territory of these pages to the further investigation of specialists in the history of mathematics. Not so Arielle Saiber, for after her *Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language* (2005) she has now published another fascinating book on Italian Renaissance mathematics.

In four chapters that may also be read independently, *Measured Words* examines Leon Battista Alberti's *De componendis cifris* (1466), Luca Paccioli's *Degno alphabeto anticho* (1509), Niccolò Tartaglia's *Quando chel cubo*

(1546), and Giovan Battista Della Porta's *Elementorum curvilinearum libri tres* (1601/1610). Yet, *Measured Words* is not merely a Renaissance history of mathematics. Saiber's book rather demonstrates how applied and theoretical mathematics became a kind of language (5), and shows, among other things, how that kind of language was influenced by the advent of printing and how, vice versa, these factors, taken together, have contributed to the invention of modern calculus (9) and the growing status of mathematics in the period in general. Boldly and magisterially, Saiber bridges the gap between literary studies, Renaissance philosophy, the sciences of *computus* (of numbers and proportions or geometry in theory and practice), and the history of printing and type design.

With her remarkable stamina to explore rarely studied "difficult" texts, and with her admirable command of older and more recent scholarly literature on her topic, Saiber thereby demonstrates for instance the intimate relationship between the advent of printing and the designer's task of mathematical proportions of letters—and the ensuing interdependent relationships between form and text.

Such intertwining is by no means easy to understand; in this case, not only Saiber's readable and lucid verbal expositions are of immense help, but also the use of original images edited by her. For instance, when Saiber explains Paccioli's proportions for letters in the context of their "basic" shapes of the circle and the square (96) the reader of *Measured Words* gets to see images that allow him or her to perceive at a glance how computation became a vital feature of the new humanist culture in print; and that the regular typeface of the printed page was once both an expression of the divine order and the dominant mode of expression for and standardization of humanist culture (106). One of the ironies of history is that Paccioli was vilified by the exponents of that very humanist culture, because he did not use the elegances of Latin. As Bernardino Baldi remarked scathingly in his *Le vite de' matematici* (1589), one rather has to gather the gems of Paccioli's inventions from the heap of garbage of his linguistic hotchpotch of Venetian and other dialects (101–02). Yet in spite of such contemporary polemics, Saiber convincingly argues that Paccioli was by no means linguistically incompetent; rather, "Latin lacked many of the everyday practical words Paccioli used, and wanted to use in his writing" (102).

This need for new words contributed to the status of outsider for most of the protagonists of *Measured Words*. Even Della Porta, a true bestselling author

in his time, flopped with his *Elementa* because he created so many fantastic new words for allegedly new geometrical shapes; yet in this case, Saiber argues, Della Porta's inventiveness was geared to his predilection for the marvellous, which characterizes his entire literary production (164–65). In this chapter, one would have wished for a more detailed exposition of Saiber's comparison of a long passage from Della Porta's comedy *La trappolaria* (1596) with the linguistic inventiveness in the *Elementa* (165–70).

A few other critical remarks are apposite. One is that Saiber sometimes tends to lose track of her topic and to get lost in biographic detail (for instance, 40–48, on Alberti's tortuous biography); another is that sometimes there are repetitions (see 142 and 154, on the lack of interest in Della Porta's *Elementa*). Moreover, one would have wished for a cumulative bibliography instead of a listing under five different headings. The index is helpful, but fails to mention Baldi, for example, on page 101. These are, however, minor issues indeed when compared to the fascinating insights that this great book offers to a wide range of readers. Saiber is to be congratulated for her ground-breaking, shrewd endeavour and for her incomparably lively capacity to write on the difficult topic of *computus*.

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Stockton, Will.

Members of His Body: Shakespeare, Paul, and a Theology of Nonmonogamy.
New York: Fordham University Press, 2017. Pp. vii, 178. ISBN 978-0-8232-7550-2 (hardcover) US\$90.

Kuzner, James.

Shakespeare as a Way of Life: Skeptical Practice and the Politics of Weakness.
New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. Pp. 232. ISBN 978-0-8232-6993-8 (hardcover) US\$85.

Much has been written about different forms and manifestations of power in Shakespeare's works, and about marriage, in Shakespeare. Yet weakness, as an