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# Sauter, Michael J. The Spatial Reformation: Euclid between Man, Cosmos, and God

Sheena Jary

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Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

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la revue *Lustrum*. À travers le parcours « périégétique » qui nous mène de l'époque classique au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, la production de l'École de Gaza (Jean de Gaza, Procope, Choricus) et les *progymnasmata* de la période médio-byzantine (Nicéphore Basilakès, Jean Géomètre, *et al.*) ont toutefois été occultées, une lacune qui témoigne du peu de documentation critique entourant la réception et la pratique des manuels rhétoriques au Moyen âge. On cherchera également en vain les *Progymnasmata* de Libanios, auteur probable d'un florilège de 30 *ekphraseis* constituant l'une des plus importantes sommes d'*exempla* hérités de l'époque tardo-antique. En dépit de ces oublis, l'exercice synthétique que propose cet ouvrage constitue une contribution majeure aux études de réception des traités de rhétorique antiques et ouvre la voie à l'étude de la pratique de ces exercices dans les grandes œuvres de la littérature occidentale.

OLIVIER SÉGUIN-BRAULT

Université McGill

**Sauter, Michael J.**

***The Spatial Reformation: Euclid between Man, Cosmos, and God.***

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. Pp. xv, 327 + 35 b/w ill. ISBN 978-0-8122-5066-4 (hardcover) US\$89.95.

What began as a study of public clocks and time in the eighteenth century became, instead, a critical assessment of the rise and fall of Euclid's *Elements* in Europe between 1350 and 1850. Michael Sauter's *Spatial Reformation* takes an anthropological approach to the intellectual history of early modern thought, placing emphasis on the idea that "if geometry truly formed human minds, then to read Euclid was, implicitly, to reform humanity" (47). Sauter argues that the intellectual significance of Euclidean space in early modern Europe is inseparable from the history of spatial thought and material culture, because the production of objects was central to how people imagined unseen spaces and places—both in terrestrial and extraterrestrial realms. Sauter's *Spatial Reformation* is dense with information and detail, but the passion that infuses the text makes it a wonderfully enjoyable read.

Sauter identifies a thematic constant that he argues began in the fourteenth century and ended in the nineteenth: the rise of humankind and the decline of God

which, from an anthropological point of view, identifies early modern material culture as a site of spatial reformation. The primary cause behind the shift in emphasis from God to human was the re-emergence of geometric space, whose homogeneity threatened the foundation of Christian hierarchical space. Sauter acknowledges the breadth of early modern scholarship on the mathematization of space and instead focuses on the tension between homogeneous space and the interconnectivity between God, self, and the cosmos.

In the Introduction, Sauter explains that, by the twentieth century, Continental philosophy had incorporated non-Euclidean space so fully that Euclid's three-dimensional space lost its historical significance; when homogeneous geometric space was supplanted by non-Euclidean space in the field of mathematics, modern thinkers quickly lost sight of the cultural significance of Euclidism which, as Sauter argues, advances the belief that to read Euclid was—"implicitly"—to reform humanity. Sauter also mentions that contemporary scholars have paid careful attention to the historical significance of literary texts but have failed to recognize how central literary texts were to readers in the production of the space in which humanity existed; humanity's production of space via literary text is what Sauter calls "space making," which he defines in tandem with Euclidism. Sauter closes the Introduction with a few concerns over the postmodern treatment of early modern intellectual history, to which he returns in the Conclusion with greater detail. The six body chapters are arranged chronologically, beginning with "From Sacred Texts to Secular Space," which discusses the channels through which Euclid's vision of space "diffused" between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. Sauter also introduces the argument that homogeneous space lent European thinkers a new understanding of the "unseen" ways by which space challenged the western triadic structure. The second chapter, "The Renaissance and the Round Ball," focuses on how the construction of terrestrial and cosmographical globes in Aristotelean space contributed to evolving arguments aimed to reconfigure humankind's position in space. Chapter 3, "Divine Melancholy," explains how the rise of homogeneous space demanded new perspectives on the divine; Sauter draws on Albrecht Durer's painting, *Melencolia I* (1514), as a point of reference for his account of early modern thinkers' revisions to medieval beliefs about God. The fourth chapter, "Eden's End," expands upon the significance of changing views on space, which shifted their focus from Renaissance cosmology to seventeenth-century geography. "Modest Ravings,"

the fifth chapter, explicates the ways in which the secular politics of Hobbes, Rousseau, and Locke drove major conceptual changes to early modern thought as its thinkers engaged with the idea of geometric homogeneous space and humankind's place relative to God and the cosmos. The final body chapter, "Strangers to the World," discusses the implications of post-1650 beliefs about extraterrestrial life and other worlds. Sauter notes that the most important change in anthropology emerged not from Columbus's "uninvited landing," but rather from homogeneity's "victory over All," a sentiment that accounts for the chilling ideologies that fuelled the colonization of the New World (18).

Sauter's concluding remarks are captivatingly relevant, but of these I found his commentary on the postmodern treatment of early modern culture most compelling. Sauter reasons that postmodernity's reduction of homogeneous space to mere terminology erases the unity between material culture and space; he adds that postmodern thought lacks the "apparatus" to understand this unity and so hinders our contemporary understanding of homogeneity's role in humanity's relationship with itself, the cosmos, and with God (221). Outlining the consequences of twentieth-century thinkers' misinterpretations, Sauter directs our attention to writers like Husserl and Derrida, whose misinterpretations of Renaissance culture were due to inadequate knowledge of the cultural heritage and anthropological relevance attached to Euclid's *Elements*. Sauter cites Foucault's *The Order of Things* as a telling example of postmodern misinterpretations of early modern culture. Sauter directs our attention to a painting by Diego Velazquez, which Foucault believed epitomized the erasure of the philosophical subject. Sauter explains that the painting reveals how humanity was "seizing control" of its "mental world" and he views the painting as the complete fulfillment of Euclidean space, a claim that he supports with his observation that, if the painting "jumps beyond its frame (as Foucault argued)," the three-dimensionality of homogeneous space empowers the viewer to "dominate its space" (218). The two-dimensional notion of space in the twentieth century hindered Foucault's understanding of the significance of the painting's ability to project new ideas of space via space making.

Sauter calls on contemporary historians of the early modern period to "bring space back in" to scholarship which, Sauter implies, would require the appropriate apparatus in order to understand the anthropological significance of humankind's ability to produce the space in which God, the cosmos, and the terrestrial realm co-existed with humankind and its social institutions. Sauter's

unexpected detour into Euclidean space may have put a study of eighteenth-century clocks to a standstill, but the outcome is the *Spatial Revolution*—a welcome new approach to the social issues to which both individuals and entire societies were subjected as early modern thinkers mathematized space in ever more intricate ways.

SHEENA JARY

McMaster University

**Smith, Matthew J.**

***Performance and Religion in Early Modern England: Stage, Cathedral, Wagon, Street.***

Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2019. Pp. xiii, 388 + 19 ill. ISBN 978-0-268-10466-5 (paperback) US\$45.

It is easy to forget how much noise and commotion surrounded early modern performances. In a scholarly culture generally focused on the written text, it is useful to be reminded that Shakespeare's plays were interspersed with other forms of entertainment, including songs and jigs, or that dogs and other animals were likely in the audience during many of John Donne's sermons. In this refreshingly broad study of early modern performance culture, Matthew J. Smith attends to this noise, and to the lively contexts in which different dramatic genres were performed, to produce a rich history of the relationship between religion and drama. Following up on several key themes of the "religious turn" in literary studies, Smith adds to ongoing debates about the interaction between religion and theatre in early modern England both by examining a more expansive range of performances in the period and by considering the temporal, spatial, and experiential overlap between these different modes of performance. In addition to a chapter each on *Henry V* and *Doctor Faustus*, Smith also considers boy bishop festivals, Elizabeth I's coronation procession, the Chester cycle plays, Donne's sermons, broadside ballads, and jigs. Smith argues that there is an essential continuity across these different genres. Specifically, he claims these performances all draw attention, in different ways, to their own theatricality in order to invite their audiences to a self-conscious reflection on their active role in creating and interpreting the dramatic action