

Indeed, in many ways the book serves as a dynamic introduction to seventeenth-century Dutch culture more generally. Pettegree and der Weduwen balance broad discussion of the size and scope of the book industry, of thousands of texts and millions of pages of print, with intimate portraits of particular people, places, and institutions. While readers might debate some of the book's grander claims, such whether or not the Dutch Republic was "the most interesting experiment in civilization conducted in the western world" (6), the authors have persuasively positioned the Dutch book industry at the forefront of seventeenth-century European publishing innovation, marketing, and production.

Michael J. Sauter. *The Spatial Reformation: Euclid Between Man, Cosmos, and God*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. \$89.95. xv + 327 pp. Review by ALESSANDRO GIOSTRA, DEPUTAZIONE DI STORIA PATRIA PER LE MARCHE, ANCONA.

The achievement of what the author defines "a fully Euclidean sense of space" (3) determined a transformation of European culture. That is the main argument developed in this work, that is an analysis of the evolution of geometrical visions of space, starting from the second half of the fourteenth century. That 'Spatial Reformation', which accompanied the cultural change in the modern age, lies in the application of an idealized conception of space to the universe as a whole. The revolutionary character of that innovative approach is due to the fact that Medieval natural philosophy attributed the three-dimensionality of space to the heavenly realm alone. Moreover, even if the *Elements* formed part of the Greek works studied by scholars since the end of the twelfth century, Scholastic thinkers mostly considered the first six books of Euclid's masterpiece, dealing with planar geometry; the other three, indeed, concerning spherical geometry, received a proper attention only in following centuries. Patristic and Scholastic cosmologies were characterized by a hierarchical view, grounded on a kind of triadic and circular interaction: Creator-creation, creation-humanity, humanity-Creator. The uniformity of Euclidean idealized space, surely a basic point of the *Elements*, clashed with the cosmological hierarchy

emerging from Scriptures. Since the early translations of the *Corpus Aristotelicum*, the biblical structure of the universe was reinforced by the common belief in the Aristotelian clear-cut distinction between the celestial ether and the elementary zone. As an example of the humanization of space, the production of celestial globes began in the Fifteenth Century, and it was not so much affected by the transition from the Geocentric to the Heliocentric planetary model during the Scientific Revolution. A relevant novelty belonging to the new conception of space just consists in the inclusion of terrestrial globes, and, in the next century, of earth's surfaces. In the author's mind, the adoption of the spatial homogeneity formed integral part of the progressive emancipation of humanity from God and the above-below perspective that largely dominated in the Medieval Age. Then, following the diffusion of Non-Euclidean geometries in the nineteenth century, the relevance of Euclid, and, as a consequence, of his spatial homogeneity, started declining.

Among the earliest expressions of the need to adopt a different view on space, Nicholas of Cusa's philosophy proved very effective, because of the convergence of mathematics and humanist culture in a broader view. The indetermination of the cosmic dimensions was connected with Cusa's idea of a universe deprived of a center, and such an arrangement rejected the closed Medieval world, characterized by precise boundaries. Thus, the state of learned ignorance, belonging to humans, proposed a different geometry, fitting with human intelligence.

The rise of Euclid in the Renaissance impacted the scientific community, and it became a key factor for understanding space as a human construction, and for exerting a deep influence upon various areas of learning. One can find a clear instance of the new vision of space in Raphael's *School of Athens*, to be deemed an emblem of the Fifteenth Century art as a whole. In that fresco, portraying Hipparchus and Ptolemy face to face, with Euclid in between, reflects the idea that celestial and terrestrial dimensions entirely depend on human beings, who rely on Euclidean geometry as the only way to interpret the world. Among the several artistic witnesses of Renaissance, and of its tendency towards an innovative spatial representation, Albrecht Dürer's engravings deserve a special consideration. Having travelled in

Italy, Dürer's production can be seen as a synthesis of the major trends of Italian Renaissance, his attempt to fully involve science in art being probably his most successful innovation. According to the author, the German artist's engravings highlight an impossible coexistence with a religious vision of space. To put it more simply, in his *Melancholia*, *Jerome in His Study*, *Knight*, *Death and the Devil*, "although spiritual beings are depicted in each one, in no cases does the divine seem to have a legitimate place" (88). Particularly significant are the brooding angel and the putto in *Melancholia*, as they are no more placed as celestial intelligences mediating between God and humans. So, their being displaced and located amid everyday scientific instruments, stands for a further step towards the definitive achievement of a human sense of spatial homogeneity.

In the seventeenth century, the attention of mathematicians was mostly devoted to terrestrial geography, and that cultural change privileged the human dimension, and not the divine one. By the half of the century, a more natural human being became the new protagonist of learning, and that shift entailed the decreasing importance of biblical mythology. An example is offered by Sebastian Munster's *Cosmology*, where an illustration shows the human 'state of nature' in naturalistic terms. Furthermore, the human condition portrayed by Munster is postdiluvian, and that aspect implies also a refusal of biblical time. Munster forms part of that group of intellectuals who paved the way to a more general reshaping of European thought. They were able to go beyond cosmology and religion in order to channel their ideas into the anthropological realm.

The spatial reformation culminated in the modern political thought, in which the exclusion of God performed an essential function. Surprising as it may seem, Thomas Hobbes refused Euclidean geometry, although he admired Euclid's logic. Since his early works, indeed, the philosopher from Westport based his own philosophy on material bodies and rejected idealized geometrical concepts. He was engaged in a broader rejection of Platonism, and, more specifically, the anthropological and political consequences of spatial homogeneity led him to oppose the idealized Euclidean geometry. "In the absence of a leviathan, neither social peace, nor even the most basic forms of knowledge existed. Neither God nor Euclid offered any hope; only

the leviathan was humanity's savior" (151). Bodies in motion were the only reference point, and that presupposition came into conflict with the immobility of space established by Euclidean geometry. The limitation of geometry to matter had, as a logical consequence, the belief in the power of the leviathan, the only reality able to join human atoms and the political society. That is the reason why Hobbes' reflection proves to be another instance of the extent of the influence exercised by the homogeneity of space in anthropological questions.

The anthropological consequences of the spatial reformation include the function of Heliocentrism in establishing an extraterrestrial perspective. It replaced the common terrestrial dimension and privileged a kind of imagination exploring a possible extraterrestrial life. Then, in the early nineteenth century, Euclid started declining because of the advent of Non-Euclidean geometries that prompted a return to a two-dimensional spatial sense. In the author's mind, the distortion of our historical view by postmodern thought is with considerable certainty the most relevant outcome of this new approach to the interpretation of space. Recovering the 'fluidity' of the space-temporal dimension, and evaluating modern history by focusing more on spatial homogeneity should be the primary task of contemporary thinkers.

All things considered, the perspective from which this research is conducted, possesses a high degree of originality. Despite the enormous complexity of modern cultural history, the author has managed to reduce different aspects of thought into the basic principles of geometrical conceptions' development. A couple of considerations should be made about the subjects treated in this book. A certain laicization of culture, connected with the evolution of mathematical disciplines, certainly formed part of Western history. It should be noted, however, that a decisive element for the affirmation of homogeneous space is represented by the Christian dogma of divine creation out of nothing. Homogeneity brought about the progressive end of the earth-heavens dichotomy, and that scientific advance is strictly linked to the abandonment of the Aristotelian pantheist world, an ongoing process which began in Medieval Scholasticism. According to Christian revelation, the world is a creature ruled in every part by the same natural laws. Though, broadly speaking, Medieval cosmologists kept their trust in the Aristotelian arrangement of the universe, the dependence of the

world on divine will opened the way to the universal quantification of phenomena. Science pertains to quantities, and the quantitative spatial homogeneity has also got a Christian origin, as we can read in *Wisdom* 11.20: "But you have disposed all things by measure and number and weight." In conclusion, as regards to contemporary science, no geometrical assumptions can eliminate the rationality of an all-encompassing metaphysics and/or theology establishing the sameness of the world as a coherent whole of related phenomena.

Ângela de Azevedo. *El muerto disimulado. Presumed Dead*. Edited by Valerie Hegstrom. Translation by Catherine Larson. Critical Introduction and Notes by Valerie Hegstrom and Catherine Larson. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. viii + 327 pp. \$120. Review by NIEVES ROMERO-DÍAZ, MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE.

This fine edition, which is also the first translation of Ângela de Azevedo's play *El muerto disimulado*, couldn't arrive at a better time. Not only are seventeenth-century Iberian women writers now a common subject of study in Spanish programs across the country, increasing interest is being paid to Spanish *comedia* written by women, as we witness more of their plays being staged in the last fifteen years than at any time in recent history. This is not the first time, however, that Hegstrom and Larson have come together to work on a project such as this: Their superb and now classic bilingual edition of María de Zayas and Sotomayor's *La traición en la amistad. Friendship betrayed* from 1999 was the beginning of a collaboration that has produced a second bilingual publication, equal in quality, if not superior, to the previous one. Finally, Azevedo is receiving the much-deserved attention that for centuries has been denied to her, in a superb edition that leaves no detail behind.

The bilingual edition opens with a co-authored introduction that provides the reader the perfect background: from an overview of theater and women playwrights in Early Modern Spain and its empire, to the most comprehensive notes on the edition and translation. With the popularity of *comedia* in the so-called Golden Age, we now know that women, too, wrote plays, though many didn't get to see them in