

Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



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Volume 36, numéro 1, hiver 2013

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091189ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20034>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Martinez, M. (2013). Compte rendu de [Hammill, Graham. The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 36(1), 182–184. <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v36i1.20034>

Hammill, Graham.

The Mosaic Constitution: Political Theology and Imagination from Machiavelli to Milton.

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xii, 328. ISBN 978-0-226-31542-3 (hardcover) \$45.

Hammill's *Mosaic Constitution* is a landmark in the field of political theology in early modern studies, if only for its novel point of departure. The constitution referred to in the title is indeed that of the prophet Moses, but it is Moses as interpreted by Machiavelli that occupies the book's central focus. As Hammill explains, in the medieval period the scriptural model of kingship centred on the figure of Solomon as an example of sovereign wisdom and dynastic continuity. But beginning with Machiavelli's analysis in *The Prince*, of the founding of Israel as a polity bound by moral law, the Mosaic constitution becomes a model of what Hammill calls "political making," which early modern thinkers from Marlowe to Milton would draw upon to explore issues of obedience, dissent, and the relation of religion to law and secular life. Hammill calls it "unlikely" to begin a study of political theology—so often focused on the migrations of the holy into the secular realm—with a thinker so effective at demystifying the link between sacredness and political power. But Machiavelli's insight into the Mosaic constitution proves influential on three counts: it connects the founding of a new order to extreme acts of political violence; it posits religion as a necessary political fiction, an additional discourse that compels a community into obedience; and finally, it takes under its purview the biological life of a people, their generative power, linking the ancient Israelite order to modern conceptions of biopolitics.

Hammill will later trace one trajectory of thought from Machiavelli to Hobbes, which would view religion as an instrument to be tightly controlled by the state; he begins another with Spinoza, who views in the supplementary transcendence of religion the possibilities of realizing a democratic politics. In Hammill's reading of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, Spinoza uses the Mosaic constitution as elaborated in the wake of Machiavelli in order to think through the divinity of monarchy and the instrumentalization of religion. Spinoza then posits the theological imagination as a way of binding community not to obedience but to the common, a space of dissensus and toleration. In the rest of the book, Hammill examines English writers who work out the tensions

inherent in the Mosaic constitution as a lesson in obedience, or as a promise of popular sovereignty. This approach produces some innovative and fascinating readings of works such as Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*, in which erotic passion becomes symbolic of the political body at war with itself, allegorizing the religious divisions of Elizabethan England. Drayton's *Moses in a Map of his Miracles* reveals a preoccupation with states of emergency and the exceptional measures power employs in managing the biological life of a populace in time of plague. Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* combines emergency and the sovereign decision with the erotics of marriage and pleasure to envision a "new sense of community organized around the promise of creaturely bonds" (201), shattering the verticality of political authority in favour of an interplay between domestic and properly political forms of governance. The next chapter examines Harrington's "poetics of government," which uses figurative language to articulate a promise of popular sovereignty based on self-regulation as the mechanism for creating a common interest, in contrast to the artificial person of authority in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. The concluding chapter on Milton's *Paradise Regained* is perhaps the most insightful and interesting of the book, showing how the poet inverts the Machiavellian scheme of political making by highlighting domestic economy and governmentality as "a new form of worldly power" (273).

These readings are complex and multifaceted, and it is impossible to do justice to them here. Supporting the argument, for instance, is an extensive theoretical apparatus making good use of the work of Michel Foucault, Carl Schmitt, Hannah Arendt, and Antonio Negri. Due to this complexity, *The Mosaic Constitution* will come across as more of an intervention than an exhaustive study, especially if one opens the book expecting a survey of religious and political culture in the mould of a Patrick Collinson or G. R. Elton. It is, however, rich, detailed, lucidly written, presented with great contextual depth—featuring analyses of minor writers as compelling as those of major figures—and is rigorous on its own terms. Its arguments are bold but presented with great care. A terrific example of this is the way Hammill treats his foreign language sources, presenting both English translations and often, in square brackets, quoted text in its original language. Hammill also at times appears to digress into textual criticism, showing how the texts under study have been modified and amended, but these tangential forays deepen our understanding of his sources and strengthen our confidence in his approach. Overall, *The Mosaic*

Constitution is an inspiring, thought provoking, exemplary work of scholarship that should please anyone interested in political theology, early modernity, and the complex relationship between secular politics and religious faith.

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Kavaler, Ethan Matt.

Renaissance Gothic: Architecture and the Arts in Northern Europe 1470–1540.

New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. Pp. 344 + 80 colour & 120 b/w illustrations. ISBN 978-0-300-16792-4 (hardcover) \$75.

In *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), John Ruskin lamented the “loss of truth and vitality” in late Gothic architecture. This “corruption,” as he called it, affected all nations equally: Germany and France became lost in “extravagance”; England was saddled with the “insanity” of Perpendicular; Italy effloresced into “insipid confusion.” Ruskin was neither the first nor the last to hold this view. The discipline of architectural history has carried this baggage ever since, treating the final, florid manifestations of Gothic like an inebriated guest who has stayed too late at the party.

Nevertheless, the sheer abundance, originality, virtuosity, and formal sophistication of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Gothic suggest that dismissing it as a decadent hangover of obsolete medieval habits represents a serious historical distortion—and a significant scholarly blind spot. This is the error that Ethan Matt Kavaler sets out to correct, with very considerable success, in *Renaissance Gothic*.

The book’s parameters are established right from the start. This will not, we are told, be a book about patronage, political function, or liturgical use; rather, it will be an aesthetic investigation in the Paul Frankl tradition. That methodological framework will not satisfy everyone, but there can be no doubt that Kavaler answers the questions he sets himself with formidable rigour and insight.

No one familiar with Gothic design of the period Kavaler is exploring (ca. 1470–1540) will be surprised that the first and longest chapter is devoted to the question of ornament. The topic is framed within a wide-ranging and