



Jean-Louis Fournel. *La cité du soleil et les territoires des homme: Le savoir du monde chez Campanella*

La cité du soleil et les territoires des homme: Le savoir du monde chez Campanella by Jean-Louis Fournel

Review by: Peter Carravetta

Renaissance Quarterly, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Summer 2013), pp. 594-596

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#) on behalf of the [Renaissance Society of America](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/671596>

Accessed: 16/08/2013 17:02

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press and Renaissance Society of America are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Renaissance Quarterly*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

Jean-Louis Fournel. *La cité du soleil et les territoires des hommes: Le savoir du monde chez Campanella.*

Paris: Albin Michel, 2012. 360 pp. €24. ISBN: 978-2-226-20903-0.

The appearance of this great study of the political thought of Tommaso Campanella by one of France's major interpreters of the Italian Renaissance is a welcome event, as it elevates the Calabrian monk to the rank of a major interpreter of the discourse of early modernity. The fame achieved by *The City of the Sun* has too often precluded a reading of Campanella's other writings, and in particular his political thought. The connection between utopia and history has not been explored sufficiently, the author claims, reminding us that, strangely enough in a utopian text, little is actually invented, so that rather than seeing it as presenting something "outside" of a "common space," or "outside of time" (44), it behooves us instead to read utopias as political treatises. But Campanella introduces a new grammar, and to grasp that requires a veritable *attraversamento* of his gargantuan production, with key texts being, besides the *Monarchy of Spain* and the *Monarchy of France*, the *De Politica*, the *Monarchy of the Messiah*, and the *De optima republica*.

Fournel tells us that the geography of history is not to be understood as concerned simply with spaces out there to be measured and labeled, as most historiography recounts the early modern period, but as the interpretation of social realities that bear an existential, symbolic, and theological valence, and which play directly into the discourse of history. It requires that we reflect upon the lived universe of the explorers and their patrons, and the manner in which those experiences were immediately translated into the rhetoric of empire. Fournel suggests that Campanella attempted novel triangulations in the *Realpolitik* that informed the balance of power of the monarchs, religious leaders, and protocapitalists against the background of the epoch-making paradigm shift from a Mediterranean-centered *oecumene* to an oceanic, global world picture.

A key theme is the relationship between his prophetic vision of a Universal Monarchy and the variety of conceptions of empire available in his era (54). But to understand this, the first thing to dispose of is our acritically accepted notion of a linear world history: for the prophetic thinker, the political unity of the world he sought is, paradoxically, impossible, given the “effective reality” of conflicts and centrifugal forces that the new geographical discoveries generated (42).

From this stems the relevance of conceiving the nascent discipline of geography as a “geosophy” (58). This is a very contemporary intuition, as it entails seeing beyond measurement, economics, and possession, and searching instead for what we could call a wisdom of the territory. By grasping the dynamic subdivisions of actually lived-in environments, each with their own localized utopic projections, we uncover a more concrete continuum of geopolitical forces. Campanella was keen on details in these microcosms, or heterologies, replete with their dreams and failures, alert to their immediate impossibilities and yet convinced that it is through human communication, through language rather than force, that multitudes can coexist (65).

Fournel also tackles the much-debated topic in Campanella studies concerning the relevance of Machiavelli in his worldviews. Campanella displays an acute understanding of power relations and what ought to be done to advance the cause of the crown. He believes that the papacy should not be considered just one among many contending political forces (though he doesn't deny that it is also that), or as *instrumentum imperii*, but as affording a regulatory principle insofar as a community does need religion (as Vico will confirm), taking the word etymologically, as an inclusive bonding element for the variety of communities that make up the political realm. But Fournel also shows how for Campanella the papacy can also be conceived as “deterritorialized” (156–57): in other words, for reason of state there must be substituted a reason of the political. In his advice on how to take Holland, or subdue the natives in the New World, the Dominican monk holds that the key for the betterment of the community as a whole is love, not violence — the word and not the sword, *prudencia* and not solely *astuzia*.

The rest of the book fleshes out these premises by focusing, through a rich interweaving of contemporary sources and recent studies, on Naples as the sociohistorical navel of Europe, Columbus as what I would call a Viconian *figura*,

Holland as the fulcrum upon which the destinies of the superpowers of the era turn, Italy as the heart of what makes Europe what it is in the first place, the *translatio imperii* in the unification of Spain and France, the politics of the thalassocracies, the role of Ottoman Turks, the sexuater politics enacted by the Spaniards in the New World, and a concluding reflection on the towering figures of Machiavelli and Luther as the two herms of modernity and across whose threshold Campanella spun his visionary politics. This is a truly remarkable book that ought to be translated into Italian and English (perhaps with an added theme index) to facilitate the circulation of its wealth of insights.

PETER CARRAVETTA
SUNY, Stony Brook