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Leonardo's Paradox: Work and Image in the Making of Renaissance Culture

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Situating Conciliarism in Early Modern Spanish Thought
Situer conciliarisme dans la pensée espagnole de la première modernité

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Jesuits ministered to the Christian community as an extension of Catholic reform, cautiously avoiding any efforts to convert the Muslim population.

Although the missionary work of European mendicants and Jesuits is the primary focus of the *Companion*, several authors acknowledge the evangelizing efforts of non-Europeans. Christensen refers to indigenous people as “spiritual conquistadors” (27) in Mexico, Wilde notes that the Guaraní wrote sermons in Paraguay, Strathern highlights the role of local proselytizers in Africa, and Županov references the work of Brahman catechists in India. It is false to assume that only ordained Europeans in religious garb spread the Christian gospel in the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Indigenous peoples performed missionary roles as preachers and teachers, and in several notable cases were even recognized as martyrs. These aspects of global Catholic missions are not sufficiently treated in the *Companion* and deserve more attention in future research.

Each essay includes a brief survey of mission historiography specific to the geographic region under discussion, although there are no accompanying maps of mission zones or images of religious artwork, both of which would have served as helpful visual aids. The *Companion*, despite a few minor shortcomings, will be welcomed as a useful tool for scholars seeking to expand their understanding of mission history and for undergraduate students enrolled in world history courses. The global spread of Christianity was an integral part of the early modern period, and one that is better understood when historiographic silos are broken down. This is exactly what the *Companion* offers, and it does not disappoint.

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Keizer, Joost.

Leonardo's Paradox: Work and Image in the Making of Renaissance Culture.

London: Reaktion Books, 2019. Pp. 232 + 65 ill. ISBN 978-1-78914-069-9 (hardcover) £25.

In his latest book, Joost Keizer explores Leonardo da Vinci's lifelong fascination with words and images. Examining the artist's notebook writings and annotated drawings alongside his oeuvre, Keizer argues that it was the ongoing assessment

of the relationship between words and images that served as the foundation and subsequent driving force behind Leonardo's work.

Chapter 1 treats Leonardo's theories on words. Keizer's visual investigation of Leonardo's writings—which illustrates that the artist enjoyed using multiple hands, and continuously scratched out, rewrote, and annotated his thoughts—is strong evidence for his case that the artist's dislike of the unalterable and invariable nature of printed text manifested itself in his notebooks. Keizer's lucid analysis of the faux inscription on the trim of the Virgin's robe in the National Gallery's *Virgin of the Rocks* makes for a convincing argument that Leonardo held painting to be a universal language. Although the trim's gold inscription is illegible and abstract, it is nonetheless a form of visual speech that may be understood by all. Unlike culturally coded language and text, the imagined script transcends time and space and thus survives on its own.

Chapter 2 explores Leonardo's contrasting notion of painting. Keizer details how Leonardo's view of painting as a non-replicable within a world of artificiality led to his conception that a painter had but one task: to think like nature and to paint with its mind. To make his paintings appear as natural as possible, he relied upon light and shadow—what art historians today characterize as his *sfumato* technique. Yet, according to Keizer, Leonardo never set out to invent a technique. Rather, he used smooth transitions from light to dark to hide traces of his intervention and materials. Herein lies the paradox: while Leonardo celebrated the craft of writing because it bore an individual's unique style, he found fault with paintings that exhibited references to a particular style. Unfortunately for Leonardo—who spent his life stressing that soft contours and colouring were necessary to make paintings appear as natural as possible—a style unavoidably did develop around his work, and was copied by his contemporaries and pupils.

Chapter 3 centres on Leonardo's attempts at uniting words and images. Keizer employs the artist's allegorical drawings to explore how he created images that could be read as words. In his allegories, Leonardo abstained from using commonly depicted themes in favour of creating ones with wholly new attributes. However, in doing so, he contradicted himself. Although he criticized language for being specific to culture, Leonardo's allegories required translations—his practices were thus at odds with his theories. Keizer's study of the artist's *Pleasure and Pain* does well to underline this point. In the drawing, Pleasure holds a reed, which, Leonardo noted (in a passage to the left of the

image), represented laziness and vanity. Yet this meaning would have been lost on Leonardo's Milanese audience, for it was only in Tuscany that reeds were used to support beds—in which, according to the artist, vain dreams were to be had.

In the last chapter, Keizer focuses on differences in words and images by studying Leonardo's treatment of time. A critical evaluation of Leonardo's *Madonna of the Yarnwinder* persuasively demonstrates how Leonardo successfully combined multiple moments of time in a single frame. Rather than rely on text to account for the various moments that he included in the image, Leonardo used a wooden spindle to tie together Mary's childhood of spinning, Christ's infancy, and his prophetic future as a sacrifice upon the cross. By illustrating how painting could simultaneously depict both the past and the future through the visual language of objects, Leonardo made recourse to textual explanations unnecessary.

Keizer's text is not the first to treat Leonardo's interest in words and images. Both Robert Zwijnenberg and Jörg Bittner have written on this subject. Zwijnenberg has argued that words and images were central to Leonardo's understanding of the world's complexities while Bittner has claimed that they provided him with a path to making art with autonomy. Diverting from these two arguments, Keizer suggests that Leonardo recognized that some of his activities were contradictory but relied upon them for ongoing mental stimulation. Keizer makes no attempt to synthesize a conclusion for all of the artist's written and painted works and their relationship to imagery. Rather, his work sets out to develop a basis for readers to better understand the genesis and progression of this relationship. Ultimately, Keizer's richly illustrated work does very well to lay bare an artist's attempt to straddle the spheres of originality and artificiality in a world that praised invention and novelty, as modelled on past cultures.

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