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Azzolini, Monica, and Isabella Lazzarini, eds. Italian Renaissance Diplomacy: A Sourcebook

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Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

Azzolini, Monica, and Isabella Lazzarini, eds.

Italian Renaissance Diplomacy: A Sourcebook.

Durham Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Translation, 6. Durham: Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, Durham University / Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2017. Pp. x, 308 + 1 map, 6 ill. ISBN 978-0-88844-566-7 (paperback) \$30.

In the mid-fourteenth century, the Italian city states recognized that “flexible political action” was essential in legitimizing their power, which gave rise to the beginning of “permanent” diplomacy and the emergence of resident ambassadors (1). An unprecedented number of public written communications resulted from these changes in the governing nature of Italian cities. In this rich volume of fourteen short essays and abundant published and unpublished diplomatic correspondence, Monica Azzolini and Isabella Lazzarini enable their readers to travel across the globe with the ambassadors and envoys who took the roles of messengers, delegates, orators, mediators, translators, and intelligence gatherers. *Italian Renaissance Diplomacy: A Sourcebook* shows that diplomacy is not only political; it also encompasses a socio-cultural study of the spaces and the people who created relations of many means to resolve conflicts and protect the interests of the state. Lazzarini, Brian J. Maxson, John E. Law, Azzolini, Christine Shaw, Serena Ferente, Trevor Dean, Elizabeth Horodowich, Timothy McCall, Sean Roberts, and Alessandro Arcangeli each contribute outstanding short introductions and historical prefaces to the translated primary sources. Surveying the Renaissance period between 1350 and 1520, this compilation of diplomatic correspondence “illustrates the richness of diplomatic documents” not only in studying diplomacy but also in investigating other important historical inquiries, such as gender, sexuality, medicine, ritualized ceremonies, games, and leisure time. These essay topics reveal the socio-political life of the Italian states as a testament to an intertwined world connected through war, diplomacy, and cultural exchanges.

Azzolini and Lazzarini organize this volume in three main parts: “Diplomacy,” “Politics,” and “Society and Culture.” Each section takes a specific thematic approach in several chapters. Part 1 is a collection of letters and

instructions that outlines the embassy processes as well as the responsibilities, rights, and official duties of the ambassadors and the envoys. The “final reports” of the ambassadors reveal how their visits and missions were legitimized through ritualized ceremonies involving oration and gift exchange. In the second part, the contributing authors explore the role of ambassadors in negotiating boundaries of war and peace, which required both political and social decisions. The increasing interconnectedness among states and communities called for gathering intelligence and reciprocal dialogue. In this respect, the elite women of courts also played an important role through correspondence and communication.

While the first two parts of this volume overlap and concentrate mostly on the political role of the individuals and governing powers, the last part is unique in its approach to the socio-cultural significance of the diplomatic correspondence. By focusing on topics such as travel, trade, medicine, astrology, crime, games, and material culture, reported as part of conducting diplomatic missions, the contributors show that the early Renaissance period was an age of curiosity, encounters, and cross-cultural trade. Italian states relied not only on ambassadors but also on material culture as means of representing power, respect, generosity, and reciprocity. The interaction between Italian governing powers and other entities such as the Ottomans, French, Germans, and Russians left its mark on the architectural monuments, artistic movements, and scientific discoveries even beyond the Renaissance period.

The Italian city states such as Venice and Florence have long been a major part of the discussion on diplomacy in the early modern period. Many scholars have explored the innovative aspects of the resident ambassadors and dragomans. But in this volume, the editors encourage their readers to consider that the history of diplomacy and the study of diplomatic correspondence should not be limited to political history. Azzolini and Lazzarini in their introduction argue that “diplomacy has never been a politically neutral field of historical research [... and] that diplomacy is not exclusively an institutional tool” (1). Using Renaissance Italy as a case study, the editors aim to motivate researchers in exploring diplomatic letters and reports outside the political arena. As the letters and reports explored here are written by the elites and those in the position of power, the challenge for a researcher who undertakes a socio-cultural approach is to fill the void of the unrepresented groups. However, the contributors have successfully shown that diplomatic letters can

be an investigative tool in understanding a world intertwined through political alliances, and negotiations as well as cross-cultural relations. Food shortages, climate changes, local factions, morality, and disease control are just some of the issues faced by the Renaissance world that can be researched from the correspondence discussed in this selection of primary sources, now translated into English. The diverse selection of scholars and topics in this sourcebook makes this volume a valuable guide not only for researchers of Italian history but also for those who aim to study the politically and culturally connected world of the Renaissance period.

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Barbier-Mueller, Jean Paul.

Ma Bibliothèque poétique. Deuxième partie : Ronsard (tome II).

Genève : Droz, 2017. 551 p. ISBN 978-2-600-01945-3 (relié) 129.60 \$US.

Jean Paul Barbier-Mueller, grand bibliophile, s'est éteint en décembre 2016. Depuis 1973, il s'était attelé à collationner les livres qu'il avait acquis depuis l'adolescence. En 1990, il révélait déjà au public l'ensemble des ouvrages de Ronsard et de *Ronsardiana* qu'il avait réussi, à force de persévérance et de passion, à réunir dans sa bibliothèque genevoise (*Ma Bibliothèque poétique : tome II-1*, Genève : Droz, 1990). Depuis, il était parvenu à l'augmenter à la fois en volume et en qualité, car on découvre dans ce second volume près de 130 ouvrages, individuels ou collectifs, littéraires ou musicaux, publiés par le grand poète Vendômois, entre 1547 et 1630.

Par rapport au répertoire publié en 1990, celui-ci s'enrichit d'une soixantaine de titres, parmi lesquels se remarquent un exemplaire de la *Nouvelle Continuation des Amours* (Paris : V. Sertenas, 1556, n° 7bis), la deuxième édition séparée de *La Franciade* (Paris : G. Buon, 1573, in-4), un abondant corpus de pièces célébrant la paix de 1559 (n° 8 à 12), et quelques plaquettes des *Discours* relatifs aux Guerres de religion (à la fois autorisées et publiées par G. Buon, et pirates, n° 13-22). De cet ensemble, il ne manque que des pièces devenues introuvables sur le marché du livre ancien, et qu'on n'a la chance de consulter que dans les fonds patrimoniaux de certaines bibliothèques