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Ciriacono, Salvatore. Luxury Production, Technological Transfer and International Competition in Early Modern Europe

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Si *Marguerite de Navarre's Shifting Gaze* n'offre pas une lecture entièrement originale et actuelle de l'*Heptaméron*, l'ouvrage s'appuie néanmoins, il faut le dire, sur une remarquable connaissance du texte et de ses significations. Toutefois, cette nouvelle étude comporte certains déséquilibres évidents. Elle reste surtout appauvrie dans son ensemble par sa dépendance quasi-totale envers les études américaines et les ouvrages publiés en France avant les années 1980. On y comprend mal l'omission (ou la méconnaissance?) des travaux extrêmement importants sur les femmes-écrivains à la Renaissance, parus sous la plume de chercheurs francophones, dont Évelyne Berriot-Salvadore, Diane Desrosiers, Frank Lestringant, Dominique Bertrand, Marie-Claude Malenfant, Jean-Philippe Beaulieu, Éliane Kotler (sur l'implicite justement!), Michel Jeanneret et Éliane Viennot. Cet angle mort sur tout un pan de la critique récente sur l'œuvre de Marguerite de Navarre reste assez inexplicable, étant donné la richesse des publications en français dans ce domaine depuis une bonne trentaine d'années.

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Ciriaco, Salvatore.

Luxury Production, Technological Transfer and International Competition in Early Modern Europe.

Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2017. Pp. 277 + 16 ill. ISBN 978-3-96023-117-2 (hardcover) €33.

The first sentence of this volume is a tad tautological and is perhaps not the most compelling way to draw the reader in: "Though written at different times, and in response to different occasions, the essays in this book aim to offer a convincing and coherent approach to the interpretation of the topic referred to in the title" (7). The lack of a clear sense of what the volume is about is continued in an opening paragraph which tells the reader simply that these collected essays are the fruit of the author's lifelong work originally motivated by a project on trade relations between Italy and France. However, I would strongly urge the reader to persevere. Such an opening, indeed, belies the great range of interesting topics covered in the thirteen papers collected in

this volume: diamonds and their Venetian entrepôt, Chinese and Iranian silks, Japanese clocks, the production and trade of white lead, Mediterranean olive oil and raisins, migration and technological transfer, and so on. The author is wide-ranging in his knowledge and generous in his detail.

Although Venice is the subject of many of the chapters, a distinguishing feature of these essays is their inclusive and often specialized analysis of countries near and far. As Peter Burke cautioned us in 1993: “[h]istorians of Europe will never be able to say what is specifically western unless they look outside the west.”¹ Ciriaco has no hesitation in broadening his, and our, global gaze from Venice and the Low Countries to Iran, China, and Japan (the latter rarely being incorporated in the luxury discourse), and, in the case of diamonds, taking us from India to Antwerp as well as Venice. Nor is the gaze merely between major centres. The chapter on Preveza in the Mediterranean basin is instructive in reminding us of the many peripheral ports and cities that played vital roles in the supply of olive oil, timber, raisins, wool, and raw silk to Italy and, later, under the Ottomans, expanding local agricultural production to potatoes, tobacco, and maize. Material production, trade, and technological transfer, Ciriaco stresses, “is a historical process continually influenced by international events, each single geographical region finding itself profoundly effected [sic] by shifts not only in its internal social structures and institutions but also within geopolitics as a whole” (15). In this regard, his chapter on “Migration, Minorities, and the Transfer of Technology” challenges many assumptions regarding standard associations of Protestantism and capitalism, or Judaism and capitalism, and Western social models versus those of Islam.

Ciriaco’s focus is on production and supply chains in the period in which the desire for, and the production of, luxury goods became firmly embedded in the world economy—the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (although in a couple of essays the chronology stretches into the nineteenth). Whilst dealing with many and various objects of the luxury trades, Ciriaco is, therefore, less concerned with the meanings embedded in these objects. However, though not a book on material culture *per se*, it will be of great interest and use to those in that densely populated and rich field of study, for the essays are peppered with fascinating details. We read, for instance,

1. Peter Burke, “*Res et verba*: Conspicuous Consumption in the Early Modern World,” in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 148.

that the importation of European mechanical clocks to Japan brought about a clash between two opposing systems of time. Japanese time even obeyed a social hierarchy whereby the hands of samurai clocks were in the form of the blades of their swords. Of similar interest is the explication of the central role played by the Armenians in the silk trade and the ways in which their networks between Asia and Russia meant that French, Dutch, British, and German silk manufacturers obtained quantities of raw silk from Astrakhan via Moscow: a development that saw a decline in Italian supremacy in this trade.

This volume is the fourteenth in Leipzig University Press's Global History and International Studies series and is elegantly produced, but there is a scattering of typos. Whilst the Introduction has been translated into English, two of the essays remain in their original French, and it would perhaps have been useful to translate them also so that all essays in the volume could be assured an Anglophone readership. I also found myself wishing for a more direct linking between each of the chapters—often a problem with collections of previously published work. This meant that some chapters repeated debates and discussions already alluded to in the Introduction.

Above all, however, what we are treated to in this volume is the fruit of more than forty years of wide-ranging reading and research. The Introduction is one of the clearest summations of the approaches taken to luxury and consumption studies I have read, and each chapter both illuminates and often challenges the existing historiography of its respective theme. It is touching that Carlo Poni, the great pioneer of economic sociology, is mentioned as a colleague and inspiration guiding the original approach taken by Ciriaco in his career. I hope Poni read those words before his death in July 2018. For the rest of us, this volume deserves a close and attentive reading.

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