

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Biagioni, Mario. Viaggiatori dell'utopia. La riforma radicale del Cinquecento e le origini del mondo moderno.

Francesco Quatrini

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## Book Reviews / Comptes Rendus

**Biagioni, Mario.**

***Viaggiatori dell'utopia. La riforma radicale del Cinquecento e le origini del mondo moderno.***

Studi Storici Carocci 323. Rome: Carocci Editore, 2020. Pp. 246. ISBN 978-88-430-9936-8 (paperback) €26.

Mario Biagioni's *Viaggiatori dell'utopia* provides a new and updated historical account of several sixteenth-century intellectuals belonging to what is commonly known as the Radical Reformation. The title of this book includes in a nutshell the most important marks of the nonconformist Christians examined in its pages. They were *viaggiatori*, or "travellers," in the most authentic sense of the term, as they were religious exiles, forced to leave their country and to travel throughout Europe to avoid persecutions from the three major Christian confessions. They were also travellers in a broader intellectual sense, as they were moving across several fields of human knowledge to pursue a precise goal, namely finding the means to amend both religion and society. Relying on the concept of realistic utopias as described by historian Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Biagioni describes these "travellers of utopia" as deeply aware of the religious and societal issues of their times and eager to overcome them. In turn, the ideas they conceived and advocated for this purpose marked their broader significance for the history of the early modern period. Biagioni provides his readers with convincing reasons to believe that these intellectuals contributed in different ways to laying the foundations of the Enlightenment and modernity.

The book is divided into five chapters. The first focuses on the lives of Italian reformers from the early sixteenth century, such as Pietro Carnesecchi, Bernardino Ochino, and Lelio Socinus, forced to move abroad to avoid the persecution of the Roman Church. Biagioni describes the lively religious context of Italy before the Council of Trent, when many were hoping for a reform of the Roman Church. After Trent, however, those who had embraced the Reformation had only two viable options: either conceal their true ideas, living as Nicodemites, or leave Italy and move to safer regions and cities. Many of those who opted for exile moved to different cities in Switzerland and thus, in the second chapter, Biagioni examines the circle of non-confessional Christians

in Basle and the birth of the debate on religious tolerance after the burning of Michael Servetus. The third, fourth, and fifth chapters then examine three famous religious nonconformists who lived in the second half of the sixteenth century: Fausto Socinus, Francesco Pucci, and Christian Francken. The examination of their lives and beliefs gives Biagioni the chance to enlarge his discourse to less-known figures who belonged to the network of these intellectuals, and to consider both the sources and the reception of their views. The five chapters of *Viaggiatori dell'Utopia* thus offer a comprehensive picture of the religious, societal, and intellectual context of early modern Europe, focusing especially on the sixteenth century but also making references to the following decades, far into the Enlightenment. For instance, after providing an updated account of the life and thought of Fausto Socinus, Biagioni adds a section discussing the relationship between the intellectual movement known as Socinianism and the history of seventeenth-century philosophy. Similarly, while analyzing the life and thought of Francesco Pucci, Biagioni considers the reception of his ideas in seventeenth-century Germany and makes a comparison with the kind of religious universalism as conceived by Pierre Bayle.

*Viaggiatori dell'Utopia* makes therefore an important contribution to the history of nonconformist Christianity and to the history of European ideas in the early modern period. It has many strengths that make it fit both for a non-specialist audience, unfamiliar with the history of those whom Leszek Kolakowski called the "Christians without a Church," and for those scholars who intend to make further research into early modern Christianity. Indeed, Biagioni did not examine these nonconformist Christians as singular and independent entities, but rather as parts of a strictly intertwined network in which their paths intersected several times and their ideas were mutually linked. Therefore, anyone who wishes to study the mutual influences among these intellectuals and the reception of their views will find in *Viaggiatori dell'Utopia* a far-reaching source of information. Biagioni has also the merit of skilfully reconstructing the lives and ideas of these religious exiles through a clear and straightforward style that carefully leads readers into the sixteenth-century religious and political context as if they were witnessing events that marked the lives of the people examined. While analyzing sources in minute detail, Biagioni never loses sight of the broader societal and intellectual context in which the writers' ideas developed, providing the reader with a lively picture of the debates occurring throughout Europe in the sixteenth century. Finally,

and perhaps most importantly, this book will certainly foster the contemporary debate on the relationship between religion and modernization. Biagioni's comparisons between the views of people such as Socinus and Pucci and renowned philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza and Pierre Bayle are clear proof that the boundaries of the history of philosophy should be enlarged to people who are far from being considered as philosophers. Indeed, as Biagioni writes in the final pages of his book, the theological debates prompted by the Reformation allowed the circulation of new ideas among both common citizens and intellectuals from different socio-cultural backgrounds, who though less known now were certainly influential in their time and contributed in different ways to the socio-cultural-political transformations that gradually led to the establishment of modern societies.

FRANCESCO QUATRINI

Queen's University Belfast

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**Christie-Miller, Ian.**

***72 in His Name. Reuchlin, Luther, Thenaud, Wolff, and the Names of Seventy-Two Angels.***

Boston : Academic Studies Press, 2019. 82 p. + 41 ill. ISBN 978-1-6446-9244-8 (relié) 99 US \$.

Ian Christie-Miller a eu le courage, il y a quelques années, de se confronter à l'édition d'un manuscrit du franciscain Jean Thenaud (1474?–1542?), le *Traicté de la Cabale*, un texte complexe écrit par le moine pour l'enseignement de François I<sup>er</sup>. Avec son nouveau livre, il reprend et développe quelques éléments abordés dans ce précédent travail. Le premier chapitre présente rapidement les quatre auteurs qui seront étudiés : Johann Reuchlin (1455–1522), Martin Luther (1483–1546), Jean Thenaud et Philipp Wolff, qui fait paraître en 1555 un *Spiegel der Juden*. C'est dans le deuxième chapitre que se trouve examinée la valeur des lettres et du nombre soixante-douze, à travers Reuchlin, Jean Pic de La Mirandole, Giustiniani. Cette question des soixante-douze noms de Dieu ne se limite pas au domaine religieux du monde judéo-chrétien ; elle doit être reliée à d'autres domaines du savoir, et par exemple à la stéréométrie : il suffit de