

THE

Volume XLVII, No. 2

Summer 2016

SIXTEENTH CENTURY JOURNAL

The Journal of Early Modern Studies



Incontri di Civiltà nel Mediterraneo: L'Impero Ottomano e L'Italia del Rinascimento.

Alireza Naser Eslami.

Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2015. 184 pp. 56 color + 19 b&w illus. €25.00.

ISBN 978-88-222-6364-3.

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This slim and handsomely produced book derives from a conference held in Genoa in 2013 that focused on relationships between the Ottoman Empire and the various Italian states in a loosely defined "Renaissance" period. It has to be said from the outset that it is something of a disappointment. Most of the nine substantive articles are very short, with little space to develop an argument. Some seem so committed to stressing "positive" links between Italy and the Ottoman Empire that they slip into oversimplification.

This is particularly the case for the first two contributions. Giovanni Ricci's brief overview of diplomatic and political relations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries makes some fair points about how readily the Ottoman Empire was fitted into the power games of Italian rulers as a participant and even possible ally, but concludes with an ill-judged (and ill-informed) polemic against English-language historiography, which he seems to believe remains committed to a "clash of civilizations" model. Gabriella Airoldi's piece on Genoese relations with the Islamic world from the Middle Ages onward underlines the factionalized nature of Genoese politics and the Genoese tendency to run their overseas possessions through quasi-private companies, which undoubtedly created the possibility of pursuing multiple, even contradictory, policies. There are, however, some rather odd statements: for instance she quotes medieval Islamic writers who claimed that the Genoese were of Arab descent in a way that (no doubt due to the compressed nature of the piece) implies she shares that view and generally minimizes the conflictual side of relations. The third historical article by Franco Cardini is a chronological outlier, covering the final years of Venice's wars against the Ottomans (despite the title of the piece, the focus is very much of the years 1715–18, and Prince Eugene of Savoy's victories in Hungary get much more coverage than do the Veneto-Ottoman confrontations at sea). Cardini claims that this was the last crusading conflict against the Ottomans; unfortunately, he does not go into any detail on what happened for the last time in this war that marked it out in that way.

The remaining pieces are art historical in focus. Marco Spallanzani reviews an inventory dating from 1583 listing Ottoman ceramics owned by the Florentine Salviati family and tries to identify similar pieces in modern collections. He notes, however, that Turkish ceramics rarely figure in sixteenth-century Italian inventories of the period, in contrast with Chinese or local Italian products. Anna Contadini considers decorative motifs in textiles and other media. While motifs with obvious Islamic roots were much employed in Italian renaissance contexts, she suggests that by that stage they had largely lost their "exotic" connotations and become part of a wider stylistic vocabulary that could be drawn on in eclectic combination with ones from other sources. Giovanni Curatola examines depictions of Turkish carpets in Italian Renaissance paintings. Initially confined to religious settings (particularly linked to the Virgin Mary), by the beginning of the sixteenth century they had also become markers of secular status in portraits. He also notes visual references to Turkish textiles and dress styles in other art of the period. Luigi Zanghieri contributes a rather sketchy piece on gardens, noting the Italian role in the transmission of plants such as the tulip to western Europe in the late sixteenth century and briefly describing the characteristics of

Ottoman gardens (though there does not seem to have been any transfer of Ottoman garden design westward in this period).

The two longest contributions are also art historical in nature. Aygül Ağır considers the architecture of the Venetian and Genoese establishments in late Byzantine and early Ottoman Constantinople/Istanbul, listing the key buildings (especially churches) and illustrating the traces that these have left on the modern cityscape. This flows into Alireza Naser Eslami's detailed consideration of architectural contacts between Italy and the Ottoman Empire. He points out that the "classicising" artistic vocabulary dear to Italian Renaissance architects always contained a space for late antique models on the lines of the Hagia Sophia, which made the appropriation of themes drawn directly or indirectly from Ottoman buildings by humanists such as Filarete easier than might have been imagined. Major artistic figures such as Leonardo and Michelangelo were prepared to consider working for Ottoman rulers. Some scholars have even suggested that Leonardo visited Istanbul; he certainly produced a typically self-promoting job application to Bayezid II stressing his engineering skills and sketched plans for a bridge over the Golden Horn. For his part, Michelangelo dabbled in "eastern" clothing styles and was prepared to consider a Turkish option when he fell out with Julius II over the latter's tomb. Interestingly the period in which the Ottoman Sultan appears to have been part of the range of patronage options open to Italian artists seems to have ended around the 1530s for unexplained reasons. It is also clear from Eslami's account that, although influence on building designs moved in both directions, the physical movement of architects and artists (actual or contemplated) was almost exclusively west to east. The only architect of Ottoman origins active in an Italian context mentioned by Eslami is a certain "Achmet the slave," credited with designing the hydraulic systems of the Villa Doria at Fasolo and its gardens.

Achmet's fate is a reminder that the distinctly elitist social and cultural links on which the present volume focuses do not represent the totality of connections between the Ottoman Empire and Renaissance Italy. Arguably the biggest source of cross-cultural links between them in terms of the numbers of people involved was the capture and trading of slaves across the religious divide in the Mediterranean world. The slave markets of Algiers and Malta, Istanbul and Genoa (not to mention the processes that filled them) sit awkwardly with well-intentioned attempts to transcend uncomfortable aspects of the past. One does not have to subscribe to a "clash of civilizations" model, however, to wish that the present volume had been a bit more prepared to address how these aspects complicated the story it wishes to tell.



The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin. Ed. Sarah Knight and Stefan Tilg.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 632 pp. \$150.00. ISBN 978-0-19-994817-8.

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The handbook is divided into three disconnected components: (1) "Language and Genre" links philological debate with literary analysis and rhetorical investigation; (2) "Cultural Contexts" insists on pedagogy and education, scientific fields of study, and confessional and sociological categories; and (3) "Countries and Regions" progresses from the nations that produced a noticeable quantity of Neo-Latin publications to those that generated far fewer Latin writings in terms of quantity, but where creation in Latin was key to the