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Mytho-Poetics at Work

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occasion to *Marzoco*. Peccato, as Italians suspicious of foreign-language historians of their country, might say.

Rengien C. Rittersma, *Mytho-Poetics at Work: A Study of the Figure of Egmont, The Dutch Revolt and its Influence in Europe*, Brill: Leiden, 2018; 416 pp.; 9789004345850, €151.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Dannielle Shaw, *University of Groningen, The Netherlands*

The figure of Lamoral, Count of Egmont (1522–1568), has long been a controversial character in early modern studies. Once the head of a powerful, noble and wealthy Dutch family, Egmont is best known for, or, rather, his (spoiler alert) public beheading in Brussels is best known for having sparked the Dutch Revolt. Unsurprisingly, the Dutch Revolt, which ultimately led to the independence of the Netherlands, is front and centre of *Mytho-Poetics at Work*, although the monograph's chronology covers an ambitious 200-year period of Egmont reception history. It is testament to Rengien Rittersma's abilities as a writer that he manages to skilfully cover two-centuries-worth of reception history without leaving the reader feeling short-changed.

In *Mytho-Poetics at Work*, Rittersma attempts to address how the Count of Egmont, 'an alleged freedom fighter', became an icon in European thought. By using Egmont as an example, Rittersma shows that 'myths serve not only as key cognitive tools for responding to the state of thrownness in an unfathomable universe, but also shape patterns of general human experience' (3). Rittersma also notes that 'myth is distinguished by a multi-layered, metamorphic and, at times, almost auto-poetical tendency', pausing to highlight that in terms of this study, the terms 'myth' and 'afterlife' can be used almost interchangeably.

The monograph is arranged chronologically, in three substantial parts. The first section examines the pan-European aftermath of the Brussels' scandal and draws on evidence from pamphlets, chronicles, newspapers and eyewitness reports discussing the proto-historiographical accounts of Egmont's death. In Rittersma's words, this 'analysis intends to convey the widest possible cross-section of the complexity of the incident's immediate impact' (10). The second section further investigates historiographical sources, whilst the third part explores Egmont's reception and development into myth 'in literary, historiographical, and essayistic accounts' (10).

This book provides an often witty and engaging account of the history, influence, and transformation of a historical figure, situating this within a broader cultural history of Europe. It systematically engages with a plethora of wide-ranging sources and primary materials, and has been meticulously researched. Although the subject matter of this monograph is both complicated and dense, the chapters have been clearly arranged and organized for the reader's benefit. The research in this study is considerable, and Rittersma succeeds in providing a systematic methodology for examining historical figures of myth and the study of mythogenesis. This would be a good text for new scholars to the field of

mythogenesis to consider. The book is very clearly focused on the textual history and mythological afterlife of Egmont, rather than pursuing the visual cultural history or iconographic history of Lamoral. As Rittersma helpfully clarifies, 'this book is concerned with the epoch-typical manifestations of posthumous Egmont, not the extent to which the myth may have distorted the original historical reality' (12).

The general layout of the book is clear and accessible, but there are a few typos throughout, and although this doesn't detract from the scholarly rigour of the volume, for a work priced at €151.00 it does jar a little. There are often grammatical omissions of conjunctions and articles, leading the reader to believe that this book has either been poorly edited, or poorly translated. Regardless of this, however, Rittersma ultimately delivers a complex and convincing monograph which deals expertly and extensively with Egmont's myth, legacy and reception history.

Ivan Sablin, *Governing Post-Imperial Siberia and Mongolia, 1911–1924: Buddhism, Socialism and Nationalism in State and Autonomy Building*, Routledge: Abingdon, 2016; 222 pp., 18 bw illus.; 9781138952201, £120.00 (hbk); 9781138099838, £37.99 (pbk)

Ivan Sablin, *The Rise and Fall of Russia's Far Eastern Republic, 1905–1922: Nationalisms, Imperialisms, and Regionalisms in and after the Russian Empire*, Routledge: Abingdon, 2018; 300 pp., 20 b/w illus.; 9781138317307, £115.00 (hbk)

Reviewed by: Jonathan Smele, *Queen Mary, University of London, UK*

Opening books with price tags as hefty as these, readers will feel grievously short-changed when confronted by a jolting copyediting error in the first sentence of an Introduction (*Governing* 1); and that is far from the last of such egregious oversights. Still, historians of late-imperial Russia and the Russian Revolution, as well historians of Siberia, Mongolia and the Russian Far East and students of imperialism, regionalism, nationalism, internationalism and socialism will find plenty of material to ponder upon in these paired and complementary volumes by Ivan Sablin, a graduate of the Higher School of Economics in St Petersburg, who currently leads a research group on constitutional practices in Russia, Ukraine, China and Mongolia at the University of Heidelberg. Although ostensibly dealing with similar subjects (and there is some geographical and conceptual overlap), the volumes approach events in Siberia, Mongolia and the Far East from two different angles, echoing earlier, contrasting but parallel approaches in the historiography.

The 2016 volume, although markedly different in its findings, is recognizably in the tradition of examinations framed by the collapse of the Russian Empire and its reconstruction as the USSR that were inspired by Richard Pipes's first book (*The Formation of the Soviet Union*, 1954) and given a second wind, albeit a sharp side wind, by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, just as revisionism in Soviet history was in full flood. The key work here was Ronald Suny's *Revenge of the Past* (1993), but the Pipes volume was republished, un-amended and unabashed, in 1997, even as its anti-Bolshevik findings were being broadsided by a new