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husband Ivan III; he sought to raise his political prestige through the intensification of cultural contacts with Western European countries. However, I am not convinced that, culturally, Muscovy became part of the European *oikumene* from the end of the fifteenth century and adopted contemporary intellectual trends. On the contrary, recent studies have proved that until the second half of the seventeenth century the transmission of European ideas and texts into Russia had a sparse and unsystematic character, while most Muscovite scholars were not at all attracted to humanism, natural sciences or European Renaissance philosophy. Thus, Matasova's general conclusion that fits in with a trend in post-Soviet Russian scholarship to picture early modern Muscovy as part of the European Renaissance cultural world seems questionable. Traditional Byzantine and post-Byzantine artistic and literary tastes remained dominant until the reign of Alexei I and Peter the Great, that is, until the second half of the seventeenth century – which in turn makes extremely rare and singular examples of European influences on early modern Russian thought even more attractive.

Overall, despite some minor methodological inaccuracies, the book presents a detailed and thorough account of Muscovite political and cultural life of the fifteenth century, and thus definitely deserves to be made more accessible to the international reader. This broad image is depicted through the life of one person. Its truly interdisciplinary approach combines historical and philological methods, gender and translation studies: Matasova's study offers valuable and basic reading for everyone interested in the history of the Muscovite state, Greek emigres after the fall of Constantinople, and the reception of Renaissance culture in early modern Russia.

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OVANES AKOPYAN

Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents, Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xxii + 264 pp. £20.00. ISBN 978-0-19-882301-8.

Well-paced, engaging, and insightful, Akkerman's pioneering study of female agents of the Interregnum (late 1640s–1660), provides a fascinating, welcome and much-needed analysis of the forgotten female emissaries of espionage. Early in the monograph, Akkerman notes that there has been a gendered 'archival silence of she-intelligencers' not solely because the very nature of being a successful spy is to go under the radar, but because historically, researchers as well as spy masters have doubted the credibility of female agents. Akkerman addresses the 'invisibility' of these agents astutely and sensitively, and reveals that in their own time these she-intelligencers were operating 'as de facto single women'; 'as soon as any of them attached themselves to a man, they stopped intelligencing' (225).

Sir Thomas Palmer, an early modern politician, published a treatise on travel, in which he addressed the fundamentals of intelligencing and determined what made an 'honest' agent. 'Honest' agents were 'to be expert in the Tongues', 'to be secret above ordinarie', 'to be able to endure all things',¹ and most pertinently for us here, 'to keepe themselves from being known for intelligencers'. Akkerman's agents adhere to

¹ Thomas Palmer, *An Essay of the Meanes how to make our Travailes into forraine Countries the more profitable and honourable*, (London, 1606), 5.

many of these principles, especially to the last of these. While Palmer suggests that intelligencers were not as important in times of war, Akkerman acknowledges that it was war, the English Civil War in this case, that afforded women opportunities that had previously been unavailable. As Akkerman writes, 'women in espionage were not an extraordinary phenomenon in the mid-seventeenth century' (25). Across the early modern period, women such as Charlotte de Sauve and Isabella Hoppringle had long been employed as agents, but finding the evidence is a long and complicated process. The archives are unkind to an impatient interrogator, but Akkerman's determination and patience has led her to painstakingly piece together accounts of 'she-intelligencers', and this study provides a methodology which can be applied to female agents outside of the Interregnum. As Akkerman states, 'there are, doubtless, many more women waiting to be uncovered' (26).

The book comprises seven chapters, each providing a case study of a single agent, or indeed, group of agents. It is clear that the impressive wealth of transnational research has been expertly collected. The author's proficiency in cryptography, codicology, palaeography and linguistics permeates throughout. A lesser author would have been more speculative, not drawing so heavily on the rich but complicated sources that have been repeatedly overlooked or, in some cases, misread. In addition to exhibiting her own expertise, Akkerman details the skill set required by the early modern agent: from hiding letters in one's hair and clothes; to making invisible ink (who knew artichokes were so versatile?); creating ciphers; and mastering the much-coveted practice of letterlocking. Materiality studies is still a buzzword in historiography and literary study, and *Invisible Agents* tackles its fundamental concepts adeptly. In *Invisible Agents*, we accompany Akkerman as she examines the materialism of the archival footprint of her case studies. She investigates how information was written, folded, hidden, read, circulated, utilised, and destroyed.

Early on in this study, Akkerman explains why defining the role and remit of a spy or intelligencer is tricky and evasive. She provides a helpful explanation of her own working definition of the two – 'A spy, at its most basic, is one who sees, one who gathers information. An intelligencer makes information intelligible' (5) but Akkerman emphasises that these roles often overlap, interlock and interlace, much like the many folds of the letters her agents consign.

Another point that Akkerman is keen to highlight is that these women agents of the Interregnum used more than their sexuality to unlock secrets. These women are not half-drawn parodies of hallmarked Bond favourites, nor are they early modern Mata Hari's. They are more than their feminine wiles, more than vengeful antiheroes, and more active than our previous notions of passive eavesdropping servants. They are contemplative individuals. Akkerman does not argue that the agents 'conquered a patriarchal world in proto-feminist fashion' (13). Instead, *Invisible Agents* offers a more sophisticated examination of female spies of the Interregnum, exploring their networks of secrets, allegiance, patronage, actions, weaknesses and motivations. Some spies were motivated by fear, money, or the notion of protection, others by an urge to be of assistance to their cause – whether it was religious, or political. Theirs is not an elegant tale; it reeks of fear, strength, ingenuity, and conspiracy. You can almost sense the perspiring palms.

Ultimately, Akkerman's remarkable and thrilling study leaves the reader wanting more. This is not because the author has failed to deliver, or leaves unanswered

questions in her meticulous case studies, but because the subject matter is so rich that more questions deserve to be asked and need to be explored, especially within espionage, identity, and polemological studies.

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DANNIELLE SHAW

Michel Hochmann, *Colorito. La technique des peintres vénitiens à la Renaissance*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. 395 pp. 25 b/w + 164 colour illustrations. €150. ISBN 978-2-503-55537-9 (hb).

Michel Hochmann's book is a long-awaited and comprehensive investigation of *colorito*, or the art of colouring. This was the most distinctive characteristic of Venetian Renaissance painting, whose secrets artists tried to grasp and reproduce for centuries. In 1795, academicians of the Royal Academy of Art in London jumped at the chance to obtain a handbook of dyes and pigments allegedly dating to the Renaissance period, yet they discovered it was an opportunistic hoax. It was not until about sixty years later that Charles Eastlake and Mary Merrifield uncovered reliable medieval and early-modern treatises on the art of painting, the analysis of which largely concerns Hochmann's publication.

Scholars have come to realize that primary sources are rarely objective due to the intellectual agendas of earlier authors. A famous example is Giorgio Vasari who, in his *Lives*, championed Florentine *disegno* (drawing, the ability to draw and create the design) against Venetian *colorito* stating 'era un peccato che a Vinezia non s'imparasse da principio a disegnare bene' (15). To the contrary, we now know that Venetian painters drew extensively from *disegno*, as Hochmann demonstrates in Chapters 1 and 2. Here, he documents the use of drawing, combining studies by Hans Tietze, Erica Tietze-Conrat, and Carmen Bambach with evidence from recent technical examinations, including the often overlooked discoveries by Giovanni C. F. Villa and Gianluca Poldi. An informative range of examples is presented, from preliminary drawings and painted sketches to wash drawings and cartoons, including the investigation of transfer techniques. Pouncing – the technique of transferring an image from one surface to another – in particular, is effectively explained using high-quality images. Notable are a rare quattrocento cartoon of the *Virgin with the Child* by an anonymous artist (Chambéry, Musée des Beaux-Arts, ills. 24–25) and a breath-taking macro detail from the drawing of a *Madonna and Child* by Jacopo Bassano (Montpellier, Musée Fabre). Infrared reflectography is used to enhance the analysis and discussion of the role of underdrawing and Giovanni Bellini's *Young Woman at Her Toilette* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) is illustrated with a superb half-page reproduction (ill. 26). This material is not innovative, but it does provide the groundwork returned to in later chapters. While this earlier section would have benefited from more consistent treatment of comparative analysis (artists such as Raphael or Andrea del Sarto are mentioned in passing), readers will appreciate the richly quoted sources and the concise organization of the material.

Chapters 3–7 form the backbone of this volume through an informative discussion of materials and techniques, i.e. supports, media, binders, varnishing, pigments, and their application. Hochmann achieves an appropriate balance of content, combining