Defining the Architect in Fifteenth-Century Italy. Exemplary Architects in
L. B. Alberti’s De Re aedificatoria
Liisa Kanerva
Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, Helsinki, 1998 (165 pages)
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Taking as its starting point the definition of the figure of the architect in the Italy of the
Quattrocento, this book also has the merit of providing a critical interpretation of De Re
aedificatoria, the architectural treatise written by Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472). The
analysis is based on the exempla and the exemplary figures cited by Alberti, considering them
as expressions of western literary culture, as well as of the manner in which the figure of the
architect was viewed at the start of the Renaissance.

It is Leon Battista Alberti who is seen as the one who brought the universal approach of
the humanistic scholars to architecture. As a writer, musician, painter, mathematician, scientist
and athlete, he came closer than anyone else to the ideal Renaissance man. His De Re
aedificatoria is the first and the most remarkable architectural treatise of the Renaissance. He
manages to crystallize the prevailing ideas on proportion, architectural orders and urban
planning of the time. The full treatise was first printed in Florence in 1485 and marks the
transition between a nostalgic, archaeological approach and an intellectual and experimental
view of architectural design. His purpose was to describe the built-up environment as a whole,
by means of a series of principles and rules, defining the theoretical and practical scope of the
figure of the professional architect and his social status.

In her book, Liisa Kanerva examines De Re aedificatoria in the light of the exempla, the
representative episodes that make up an educational and rhetorical tool, following an approach
widely used in classical and mediaeval literature. Her analysis is split up into five chapters:
1. Introduction, 2. Exemplum in De Re aedificatoria, 3. Exemplary figures introduced by

Liisa Kanerva’s intent is to define the way the Italian architect was viewed in the
fifteenth-century. Her approach is based on the hypothesis that: ‘the variety of exemplars in
architecture Alberti introduces in De Re aedificatoria is parallel with the actual situation in
the fifteenth-century field of architecture’. In the course of her analysis, she comes up against
the problem of the meaning of certain concepts in our western society that have, in fact, been
defined by Renaissance treatises: ‘the concept of the architect in the modern sense of the word
as well as the concept of the artistic creativity were emerging in the fifteenth-century field of
architecture, they were still lacking a specific terminology’ (p. 165). De Re aedificatoria was
indeed a groundbreaking text – the only architectural treatise published in the fifteenth century.
The author’s approach to the interpretation of the figure of the architect implies an attempt to identify, within a foundation treatise, the definition of concepts that, by their very nature, are only at an embryonic stage in this work.

For Kanerva, architecture is ‘traditionally defined in terms of styles’ (p. 9). Such a premise cannot be applied either to the contemporary situation or to the early Renaissance period during which the assimilation between architecture and styles was gradually being established. On the other hand, from the end of the nineteenth century, avant-garde movements have denied both the definition of style in the field of art history and the use of styles as points of reference for design purposes. In turn, critics have aimed to contrast the traditional study of types to that of individual qualities, seen as the features of each work and of each individual artist. Lastly, designers and planners have called for an individual freedom of expression, as opposed to the use of quotations from the past.

By linking the history of architecture to a matter of styles, the role of the architect is misunderstood and appears to be ‘fixed, self-evident, and a-historical’ (p. 9) in view of a mistaken conviction that considers the architect as ‘an artist who develops architectural styles by creating individual edifices’ (p. 9). By applying to Alberti’s treatise an approximate definition of the figure of the architect (a ‘person who is trained as a conceiver of building’, ‘one who designs buildings with a view to aesthetically as well as functionally satisfactory results’, a ‘middleman between the client and those who execute buildings’), the author can only admit that without a clear distinction between planning and execution processes, in fifteenth-century Italy it proves to be particularly difficult to recognize the figure of the architect: ‘a phenomenon which did not really exist’ (p. 11).

However, it turns out that it is in the fifteenth century that both the occidental visual culture and the modern concept of a project were born – i.e. the relation between the building and its representation, which affirms itself thanks to the progress of perspective and to the works of great architects such as Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446), Bernardo Rossellino (1409–1464), Donato Bramante (1444–1514), Michelozzo di Bartolomeo (1396–1472), Luciano Laurana (1420–1479) Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439–1502), Giuliano da Sangallo (1445–1516), Biagio Rossetti (1447–1516), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Antonio Averlino Filarete (1400–1469).

In the section of the book, dealing with an analysis of the figure of the Albertian architect, Liisa Kanerva pinpoints what she considers to be the characteristic ethical principles: ‘endowed with engineering inventiveness rather than artistic creativity’; ‘from the modern point of view, the Albertian architect has a peculiar relationship with Nature’; ‘the Albertian architect does not operate with space’ (p. 144). Such conclusions are, however, in marked contrast with Leon Battista Alberti’s actual works. Even if we limit our view to his contribution in terms of adapting classical features to Renaissance structures through the use of architectural orders, columns, pillars and architraves, it is still impossible to state that Alberti wished to devise a method that worked independently of space. Architecture has always expressed itself first and foremost through its most compatible means: the definition of the qualities of three-dimensional space.

In her critical investigation of the historical and mythological figures – as cited in the treatise, and analysed in the first three chapters of the book – Liisa Kanerva provides a thorough investigation of the literary sources of the treatise. In examining the origins of Alberti’s
exempla and the exemplary figures in them, the author analyses them by subdividing them into three main categories: Ancient Rulers, Classical Architects and Nature. The names of the Ancient Rulers include Nero, Semiramis, Numa, Julius Caesar, Octavianus Augustus, Solomon and Moses. The Classical Architects comprise Archimedes, Daedalus, Chersiphron, Callimacus, Dinocrates and other Unsatisfactory Architects. As far as the Nature category is concerned, the classification is further subdivided into Medieval Nature and Renaissance Nature, viewed as teaching sources. In fact, the relationship between Nature and the architect in De Re aedificatoria is always that of the master and a pupil. For each figure referred to by Alberti in his exempla, the author provides a brief critical overview by means of the Renaissance, classical or medieval literary sources that she has accessed. It is clear that Liisa Kanerva has read very widely in preparation for her analysis, as indicated by her extensive use of notes and quotations (a total of 594 in 151 pages) as well as by the bibliographical sections. The bibliography in the book is divided into four sections: Renaissance sources, classical and mediaeval sources, contemporary sources, and manuscripts. The section of the book dealing with the critical examination of literary sources for the treatise is undoubtedly the most interesting and distinctive contribution that this book makes.

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**Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust: The Collection and Consumption of Curiosities**

Janell Watson

Cambridge University Press, 1999 (x + 227 pages)


I remember, as a child, going with my mother to visit a friend of hers who had recently moved. We found the road, but realized that we were unsure of the number of the house. On seeing a front window full of knick-knacks, we simultaneously exclaimed: ‘That’s it!’ We were right. My mother’s friend was so wedded to her knick-knacks that they went before her, so to speak, and were a sign of her identity. Balzac took the same idea and built it into a theory of the complementarity of human beings and their environment. In *Le Père Goriot*, the condition of the boarders reflects that of the boarding house and *vice versa*. Having created the Maison Vauquer, Madame Vauquer, the landlady, becomes the creature of her environment, caught up in a kind of vortex. As the fortunes of the inmates decline, they are consigned to higher levels in the building, with old Goriot himself dying, penniless, in the attic. In *Literature and Material Culture from Balzac to Proust*, Janell Watson traces carefully this ‘interpretive schema of homology, by which dwellers and dwelling space coexist in a mutually influential interrelationship’ (p. 148). Material description, in the work of Balzac, as indeed in that of Dickens, took on a role of unprecedented importance in the novel, acting, as it did, to move the narrative on.
So much is well known. What, however, has not hitherto been so coherently put together is the subsequent pattern of the relationship between things and people, in the 50 years or so following on the death of Balzac in 1850. The torch passed to Théophile Gautier, who, in his theory of Art for Art’s Sake, made an impassioned plea for beauty as anti-utilitarianism. His treatment of objects on the borderline between the real and the unreal conjured up the world of the fantastic, as in the novella, *Le Pied de momie* (1840), where a mumified foot, used disrespectfully by the protagonist as a paper-weight, comes to life in a hallucination, is re-attached to its 3,000 year-old Egyptian princess and is replaced, in ‘real life’, by a small, green figurine.

Things, or more precisely *bibelots*, objects characterized by Janell Watson as being ‘without use-value’ (p. 1), veered off in the direction of autonomy, in the hands of Flaubert and the Goncourt brothers. These writers shared a desire for less direct personal involvement in the fictional worlds of their creative invention and distanced themselves from the anthropomorphic habitats of Balzac. Objects were moved by them from the background to centre stage. From being the static correlative of personality (as with Madame Vauquer), possessions became mobile commodities, which could be passed from person to person and eventually sold in the marketplace from which they had originated. Family portraits, giving the pedigree of many of the personages in Balzac’s *La Comédie humaine*, were replaced by objects, such as the *coffret* in Flaubert’s *L’Education sentimentale*. This piece of silver had major affective significance for Frédéric Moreau, who was shocked to find it in the apartment of the mistress shared by both himself and the husband of his ideal love. Later, he was appalled that it should have been bought at auction by another, wealthier, flame of his. Janell Watson argues convincingly that the sense of instability thus created ‘mirrors the cultural effects of the replacement of the monarch by the amorphous forces of the market’ (p. 26). Zola’s Nana took one step further towards the twentieth-century concept of in-built obsolescence by smashing the *bibelots* given to her for her birthday: she makes no purchases, but rather receives gifts, which will have no sentimental or fetishistic value for her and which she may either dispose of or destroy.

The distance spanned is well pin-pointed by Janell Watson, in her comparison of the cluttered antique-shop in Balzac’s *La Peau de chagrin* (1831) and the disordered artist’s studio of Coriolis in the Goncourt brothers’ *Manette Salomon* (1867). The progression is essentially one from antiquarianism to aestheticism, but with the vital distinction that the antique dealer’s collection becomes a simile for the protagonist, Raphael. Whereas the artist’s studio, in *Manette Salomon*, is presented without the mediation of the characters: there is no narratorial voice explaining to the reader how this chaotic atelier provides visual stimulus for the painter. This is despite the fact that, later, when Coriolis marries the eponymous heroine of the novel, she gets him to tidy up his studio and thereby stiles his creative inventiveness. This suppression of connecting rhetoric and the consequent lack of subordination of things to people explain the attraction of catalogues, in preference to novelistic plot, for Edmond de Goncourt (the older and longer-lived of the two brothers). As would become clear from the case of Oscar Wilde, it was not enough to be an artist: one had also to live like an artist. Hence, the development of the maison-musée, of which Gustave Moreau’s house on the Rue de la Rochefoucauld is an example which this book might have adduced, along with the writer’s home, so characteristically inventoried by Edmond de Goncourt in *La Maison d’un artiste* (1881).
work paved the way, conceptually, for *A rebours* (1884) by Joris-Karl Huysmans, ‘the founding novel of decadence’ (p. 133). *A rebours* is organized, not by plot, nor by the interactions of human characters, but by material things in physical space. The house serves as library, museum, decorator’s showroom and sanatorium. Thus, in *Jean Santeuil* (written between 1885 and 1900), Proust was entirely justified in claiming that the changes wrought in the relationship between people and their furnishings over the preceding 50 years were such that Balzacian descriptions of interiors were no longer possible.

Is it, however, as simple as that? Each age can look back and compare ‘then’ and ‘now’. Janelle Watson wisely takes a broader overview, pointing out how the supposed correlation between taste and class is subverted in *A la recherche du temps perdu*, where the aristocratic Madame de Guermantes is shown to have bourgeois furnishings, while Swann and Madame Verdurin, both from the ranks of the bourgeoisie, are seen to manifest more refined taste in matters of interior decor. She rightly reminds us that Gilles Deleuze saw Proust’s masterpiece as the narrator’s apprenticeship in reading and deciphering signs. In other words, however perversely, things – in the world of Proust – can still be decoded, whether through the eyes of the modernists (opposed to lists and inventory-like descriptions) or through those of the post-modernists and post-structuralists for whom the non-canonic, fragmentary form of the catalogue is attractive. And they go on having this power, notwithstanding the strictures of Jean Baudrillard in relation to the late twentieth century, when technology has led to mass production and when functionalism has replaced anthropomorphism. It is true that the *nouveau roman* minimized plot and foregrounded the autonomy of things, although narrative made a comeback in the French novels of the last decades of the twentieth century, with a particular resuscitation of interest in autobiographical writings. It is also true that the old hierarchies privileging people over objects have been occluded, although the sense of nostalgia for the past, identified by Baudrillard, may not necessarily be as free-floating and disconnected as he suggests. Other constellations are evolving, which it will take time to track. But that concerns another period and one that is beyond the remit of Janell Watson. That she charted the cultural history of the nineteenth century in so thought-provoking a way, using the vehicle of the *bibelot* to guide her readers through the protean relationship between things and people, which anticipated the detachment and alienation characteristic of the twentieth century, is more than sufficient cause for our indebtedness to her.

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**Public Health Policies in the European Union**
Edited by W. Holland and E. Mossialos
Ashgate, 1999 (398 pages)
£50.00, hardback, ISBN 0-7546-2072-7

How the treaties of Maastricht and Amsterdam will affect public health policies and the delivery of health care in member states is a timely and relevant question. As it is generally
understood that decisions on the organization of healthcare delivery and on the financing of healthcare expenditures belong to the member states, the two major questions are therefore: what will be changed and will healthcare systems that present such diversity continue to retain their specificity?

European healthcare systems can broadly be divided into two groups, those founded on a Bismarckian model and those founded on a Beveridgian model. In Bismarckian systems (e.g. Germany, the Netherlands, France, Spain) the healthcare budget is funded by employers’ and employees’ contributions, and access to care used to be based on some connection between the beneficiaries and the labour market. Healthcare financing in these systems is separated from other budgets, which is a way of stating that health belongs to a sphere separated from the rest of public interventions. In Beveridgian systems (e.g. the United Kingdom) healthcare is financed by taxes, and the beneficiaries are whoever is a resident of the country. Furthermore, trade-offs are possible between public budgets, a fact that reflects the concept that health may be promoted by interventions other than those connected to the healthcare system (e.g. education, housing etc). The recent evolution of Bismarckian systems has made them look more and more Beveridgian, because the benefits of healthcare have been progressively disconnected from their original links with the labour force (not surprisingly at a time of high unemployment). At the same time, medical progress and the availability of new and expensive medical technologies, combined with a reduction in funding from employers and employees (due to unemployment) and limitations on public deficit (due to the European treaties), have created a gap between the public demand, including that part of the demand that is supply-induced, and funding capacities. While Beveridgian systems can propose setting priorities in healthcare goods and services provided free to the public (i.e. limit the public provision of healthcare to a pre-defined ‘package’), Bismarckian systems have tended to increase the out-of-pocket costs or the part of supplementary insurance schemes without actually limiting (at least explicitly) availability. This may be due to differences in legitimacy, in Beveridgian systems the decision is made by parliament, whereas in Bismarckian systems the decision would be in the hands of employers and employees’ unions, whose legitimacy varies widely between countries.

The book edited by Holland and Mossialos is a helpful guide to the maze of treaties and European laws, commissions, councils and committees. It also gives a well-organized and systematic presentation of public health policies in the member states.

The EU can identify public health priorities but ‘the development of health policies is the responsibility of each EU member state’. This sentence explains why the book had to be divided into as many chapters as EU countries, and why there is a need for a comprehensive list of public health policies undertaken Europe-wide.

Each state is presented in a separate chapter, each one written by a different author. The authors all belong to top academic institutions and most of them have acted as advisors in their countries’ Ministries of Health. In that sense, they have both the expertise and legitimacy to present public health policies in EU countries. This expertise and the academic affiliation is an asset that results in the high informative quality of each chapter, but is also partly a liability because these descriptive and detailed texts do not always provide the readers with a critical view of the successes and failures of public health policies in EU countries.

It would also have been helpful to the reader if each author had followed roughly
the same guidelines, whereas here, some chapters give a very full presentation of both healthcare and public health policies, while others only present public health policies, separated from the general context of the health delivery system (the length of chapters varies from 10 to 40 pages and is proportional neither to the size of the population nor to the size of the healthcare spending). The most interesting chapters are those that have incorporated a critical view of the healthcare system in relation to the implementation of public health priorities.

The success of public health policies depends largely, in my view, on the positive and negative incentives that the healthcare system creates for both the professionals and the public. In other words, systems that allow specific rewards for professionals who reach health targets (such as immunization rates) or that consider specific payments for prevention are likely to be more successful in implementing public health policies than others. This is also true on the patients’ side; systems that allow some degree of financial rewards (for example provisional reimbursement on dental care for adults, only if the patient has reasonable dental hygiene) may have a leading edge. Because the use of incentives to promote public health policies may be a challenge to the concept of equity, a second volume of the book could possibly go deeper into the comparisons of public health policies, their successes and failures and the identification of a common base and irreducible differences.

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**Nordic Region-Building in a European Perspective**
Edited by Harald Baldersheim and Krister Ståhlberg
Ashgate, Aldershot, 1999 (192 pages)

This book discusses the forms of cross-border cooperation and region-building in the European North on several levels, ranging from rather crude case descriptions, mainly from the Nordic Countries, to clearly more sophisticated testing of theoretical arguments concerning internationalization on the local level. Despite the wide variety in the volume’s narrative styles, focuses and differing perspectives, its main story is surprisingly coherent and readable. However, the book has one major shortcoming: the articles compiled in it would have been worth publishing much earlier than in 1999.

By the year of printing, large parts of the book had already passed their immediate and – due to their emphatically descriptive character – most obvious relevance. Entire chapters were written in 1994. They constitute rather accurate, but by no means in-depth, reviews of the state of the developments in several North European areas of regional cross-border cooperation at that particular moment. The primary problem with these chapters is that, seemingly, not too much has been done to revise them since the year they were written.

The longer the time lag, the more rewriting of original texts tends to be needed or a more extensive set of complementary notes has to be added by the editors. A concluding discussion of the changes and transitions that have unfolded in the structure of Nordic regional
development during the second half of the 1990s indicates some of the main features in the developments but does not link them too closely to issues described in the case presentations.

The Nordic countries, with their local and regional structures of decision-making and spatial development, are not too well known internationally. This is a major reason for publishing information on these topics in its most updated and correct form and, alas, the concluding chapter, with its updated but brief appraisal of institutional reforms, cannot be regarded as satisfactory. What persistently catches one’s attention is that the chapters describing the case regions do feature cross-border cooperation and its institutional backgrounds in the European North mostly as used to be done prior to the widening of the EU in 1995.

This is naturally somewhat annoying, particularly to a Nordic reader. Years after the ‘birth’ of EU15, we had to read analyses of developments in Europe based on EU12, with occasional footnotes marking the accession of Austria, Finland and Sweden. Now the Nordic writers seem to do almost the same. This time it is only the rest of the EU whose developments are deliberately detached from the ones in the North. Moreover, the effects of the changed Nordic composition of the EU, with three of the Nordic Countries now as its members, are not caught within the time horizons of the texts. The widening, with its consequences, is referred in some of the chapters as a future development. By the date of publication this ‘future’ had de facto turned into history, with Interreg II Community Initiative period 1994–1999, as an example, drawing towards its end.

The different chapters’ different time horizons also cause other problems. They are connected, first of all, to institutional changes and administrative re-structuring having taken place while the book has been processed. Developments in the intermediate level between the bipolar state/central administration and municipal/local self-government – typical for all four Nordic countries discussed in the book (Iceland has been subject to no more than rudimentary remarks in some chapters) – have been reviewed in a two-page section in the concluding chapter. It is more than obvious that not all of even the most central issues that brought about the transformation, even those of elementary importance in one’s attempts to understand it, can be captured in such a brief description. This is particularly true as this part of the book is separated from the chapters featuring the concrete regional cases and situations.

That the institutional transformations are left without particularly firm linkages to the steps of development described in the case studies is particularly regrettable, as the regionally based institutions are, in many cases, elementary for the strategic planning as well as organizing and management of regional cross-border cooperation. This, however, may not be the most fundamental problem, given an international reader’s perspective on the issue. What, instead, should have been avoided at the editorial stage is the mixing of features from the different steps of administrative reforms. Some of the chapters refer to situations and practices before those reforms, whereas some refer to situations after them.

Despite all the criticism, this book is well worth reading. It gives a broad view of cross-border cooperation in a multinational European region that, since the 1950s, has been more open to many elementary forms of integration and interaction than the EU will probably be for years. The internal dynamics of the region are still weakly known, even if it has had its own distinctive European and global role to play, from the medieval Hanseatic League to the Cold War balance of terror and further on to the Nordic Dimension of the European Union. Thus, a book able to give structured ideas of the ‘cement’, the actors and processes on the local and regional level
doing their important share in the build-up of functional multinational entities in the North, is highly welcome.

Other shortcomings related to the time lag and hence outdated information can be largely mended. Recent research reports, such as *When the Policy Regimes Meet*, published by Nordregio, provide updated information of regional development and policy institutions in all Nordic Countries and an overview of the experiences of the Structural Funds period 1994–1999, seen from the viewpoint of the Nordic EU Member States, Denmark, Finland and Sweden. A reader particularly interested in cross-border cooperation in and around the Nordic Countries can easily update the information provided in the case presentations on the electronic *European Border Regions Database* (http://boreas.ifg.dk/).

The bottom line to be stressed here, however, is that this book does provide a reader with firm grounds for such updates.

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**Bringing Chemistry to Life – From Matter to Man**

R. J. P. Williams and J. J. R. Frausto da Silva

Oxford University Press, 1999 (548 pages)

£75.00, hardback, ISBN 0-19-850546-9

The authors’ aim in this book is to provide graduate students and teachers with a knowledge of the connection between physical and biological sciences and to explore the logic of the evolutionary progression from the primordial formless inanimate matter to modern man, the highest form of life we know about. The authors have previously published, *The Biological Chemistry of the Elements* and *The Natural Selection of the Chemical Elements* describing the elementary content of living organisms, the physical chemistry of their use and how their functions have evolved. In this new book, they describe the different aspects of the physics of life (forces and energies, order and disorder, compartmented systems, changes and development), the evolution of the planet Earth, the chemistry of living systems and the evolution of life from the anaerobic prokaryotes to the human brain. Each chapter is well documented and contains useful physical, chemical and biological data.

From the title and the aim of this book, one expects to find an exposition on the chemical transition from inanimate matter to life. Unfortunately, only few pages out of the 548 are specifically dedicated to the chemistry of the origins of life. And yet, recent discoveries allow partial reconstruction of the scenario. Primitive terrestrial life probably originated about 4 billion years ago from the evolution of organic molecules in liquid water. Organic matter might have been formed in the primitive atmosphere or in hydrothermal submarine vents. A recent collection and analysis of micrometeorites from Antarctica suggest that a large fraction of prebiotic organic molecules might have been brought by meteoritic and cometary dust grains out of the atmosphere. Among these organic molecules processed by liquid water, some began
to transfer their molecular information and to evolve by making a few accidental transfer errors. Unfortunately, the relics of such molecules have been erased by plate tectonics, the unshielded solar ultraviolet radiation and by life itself. The earliest morphological fossils occur in 3.3–3.5 Ga rocks from Australia and South Africa and there is isotopic evidence of bacterial carbon fractionation in even older rocks from Isua, Greenland, dated about 3.8 Ga. Better preserved fossils may possibly be found on other planets harbouring liquid water even if their environment was not strictly identical to that of the primitive Earth. Biologists have shown that bacterial life on Earth can adapt, with time, to various extreme conditions. Life has continued to develop very well in water that is very acidic, alkaline or a strong brine solution. It has also survived and flourished in water at high pressure and at temperatures as high as 110°C. A flourishing biosphere has been discovered a kilometre deep below the surface of the Earth. Geological observations collected from Martian orbiters suggest that liquid water was once stable on the Mars surface, attesting to the presence of an atmosphere capable of decelerating carbonaceous micrometeorites. Mars perhaps keeps a frozen record of the very early forms of a terrestrial-like life. Europa, a moon of Jupiter, has an icy carapace. However, cryo-volcanic flows at the surface point to a possible water subsurface region that might harbour a basic life form. New planets have been recently discovered beyond the solar system, thus enlarging the number of possible bioniches.

This book represents a valuable tool for students owing to the useful data it contains. Because of the lack of a unifying theme, however, this appears like pieces of a patchwork. The reader who wants to approach the story of life, especially its origin, will probably feel frustrated.

Andre Brack

This book establishes how much the picture of the Prophet Muhammad in European consciousness has been distorted over the centuries. The misunderstandings about Islam, and thus about Muhammad, were brought on by the Crusades and were kept up by Christian and other authorities. In the Middle Ages, Christianity always considered Islam as a permanent threat. Thus, the occidental representations sought to deter and to terrify, and we find the same caricatures, the same stereotypes up to this day – in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* for instance. In this novel, which Minou Reeves analyses in great detail, the Prophet assumes indirectly the name of Mahound, by which he was designated eight hundred years before. In 12–14th Century Europe, Muhammad or Mahound appears as a heathen idol worshipped by the Arabs, as the Devil himself, and Muslims appear as the forces of Satan on earth. Even Dante’s *Divine Comedy* gives the Prophet a very defamatory image, and as did the French ‘humanist’ François Rabelais in *Pantagruel*. In Martin Luther’s eyes, Muhammad was the
Anti-Christ. Champions of reason in the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire, fell into the same anti-Islamic fanaticism.

However, Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* provides us a very different image since, in this opera, the Turkish Pasha becomes the symbol of Enlightenment. And moreover, through the writings of Hegel, Goethe and Carlyle, Muhammad was established within the new tradition of hero-worship as one of the great spiritual men of history. Incidentally, Reeves neither points out Napoleon's veneration for the Prophet nor the fact that he became Muslim for a time during his Egypt campaign.

In the 19th Century the age-old feeling that Islam represented a fearful threat to the West vanished, and was replaced by a deep sense of longing for the unknown and the exotic world of the Orient. Muhammad's reception in Europe, we can see, is at the same time a story of confrontation and of fascination. In Byron and Goethe's poetry, as in orientalist painting, Islam became a highly sensual religion. Sufism – Islamic mysticism – especially fascinated writers and later many orientalists. They laid stress on the spiritual dimension of the Prophet, and on his purely religious, and not worldly, motives in preaching Islam. But in the 20th Century, Islamic fundamentalism and Iran's Revolution resuscitated the old fear of Islam.

Reeves provides us with much enlightening information about the political and cultural context of each period, so that we understand better Europeans' views on Muhammad. However, she pays too much attention to 20th century history and, as an Iranian, to Iran's Revolution (pp. 261–270) and to Rushdie's novel. In evoking Lamartine (pp. 208–210), she surprisingly does not mention the famous panegyric he addressed to the Prophet in his *Journey in Turkey*. Nietzsche's *Also Sprach Zarathustra* seems to have been inspired by the Qur'an rather than the Gospels, of which it has been said the work is an intended parody, but this Qur'anic model is only an ironic vehicle to declare that God was dead. Yet it is possible that Nietzsche borrowed his idea of the Ubermensch or 'Superman' from the 'Perfect Man' (*al-Insa ˆn al-ka ˆmil*) whom Muhammad personalizes in Sufism. Incidentally, Sufism may have inspired some unorthodox Muslims (p. 222), but it has been also the ideal of the greatest 'doctors of the Law' ('ulama'). It should be noted that indexes of names and places would have been very useful.

This book is not an apologia for Muhammad. It claims only to rehabilitate his image in Europe by showing his true personality. Therefore, Minou Reeves has dedicated the first part of the book (pp. 9–71) to a biography of Muhammad, (with the help of P. J. Stewart). Perhaps the most useful statement about the Prophet, as the author reports, is that expressed in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, which demonstrates that in spite of the attempt made by writers to rid themselves of the persistent influence of medieval thinking on the modern perspectives of Muhammad and Islam, Muhammad was still subconsciously measured against the purely Christian distinction between what is religious and what is secular, what temporal and what spiritual. 'Because Muhammad was great as a leader, his influence was important in all these spheres and it is impossible for any occidental to distinguish within his achievement between what is religious and what is non-religious and secular' (*ibid.* Chapter 2, p. 130).

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