Denley observes that the history of the Studio dominates not only the historiography of education in Siena but also the documentary series maintained by various councils and administrators in the late medieval and Renaissance eras. The commune was much more concerned about who taught what at the university level than at the preparatory level. Such an imbalance is immediately evident when comparing the size of Denley’s own two studies. Nevertheless, he has provided a useful introduction to the role of teachers in this important period of intellectual transition, and the biographical profiles will surely assist other scholars working on Sienese history or the history of education.

University of Massachusetts-Lowell


Did Germany have a Renaissance? The answer depends, of course, on one’s definition of Renaissance; whether one sees it mainly as an era of rebirth of the arts in imitation of the masters of classical antiquity or not. In Germany, the Romans stayed only in part of what is now the Bundesrepublik Deutschland, while a large Germania Libera (as the Romans called it) continued with her rustic but wholesome customs described by Tacitus as an example to his fellow countrymen. The Roman influence on Germanic lifestyle was limited and transitory and therefore a rebirth of classical antiquity could only be a complicated one.

Not even the Italian peninsula had a homogeneous Roman antiquity (and it would be difficult to give precise chronological and geographical definitions of antiquity per se) but in the case of German Renaissance art the potential models needed to be explored in depth and from an extraneous vantage point. Christopher S. Wood has done so and his new book *Forgery, Replica, Fiction: Temporalities of German Renaissance Art* provides some answers and raises many questions regarding the subject.

Having worked among other things on Albrecht Altdorfer, whose beautiful Alexanderschlacht hangs in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich, on Maximilian I as an archaeologist, and (with Alexander Nagel) on anachronism and temporalities in mediaeval and Renaissance artworks, Christopher Wood was well prepared for the task ahead. Fluent in German, he spent considerable time in Germany and Austria in his quest for information that is presented in the book over seven highly interesting chapters. These range from the issue of credulity, over Germany’s relationship with the Renaissance, all the way to a differentiation between forgery, replicas, and the problem of the fictional past and present often attributed to ancient objects by early antiquarians.

Wood also addresses the question of whether Germany needed a Renaissance. The answer seems to be no. The concept of ‘Middle Ages’ did not arrive in Germany until the sixteenth century and it was going to take until the eighteenth century for historians to regard the mediaeval period in a negative way. To German scholars, artists, and rulers such as Maximilian I, antiquity had never been discontinued:
the Roman Empire had simply become the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation with the coronation of Charlemagne at Christmas AD 800. Hence, there was no need of a ‘rebirth’ of an art and technology, which had been developed further in northern Europe and was on occasion imitated in Italy. The church in the Tuscan town of Pienza may serve as an example: Pius II, a great traveller and admirer of German technology and architecture, chose a northern model for the Renaissance town he commissioned and called after his own papal name.

Much space is given in the book to what can perhaps best be described as a ‘history of German proto-archaeology’, although one cannot be too careful with these labels. Work has been done that shows that early archaeologists in Italy, Germany, and elsewhere very often employed methods and made mistakes that were not very different from our own. This history traced by Wood is cross-fertilized by the author’s research in temporalities and anachronisms. These issues need to be considered when discussing the pioneering work of Renaissance historians who were still trying to establish a chronological and methodological framework to create order out of a mass of data that on occasion owed more to fantasy than to fact.

In fact, chronology was a sore point with the artists and scholars of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Even though they were trying hard to understand the sequence of cultures and artworks, they were not always able to distinguish between Roman and Romanesque, to give the proper date to an ancient work of art, or to establish whether its origins were Greek, Etruscan, or Roman – not to mention the problem of a Roman copy of a Greek artwork or that of a Roman piece executed in the provinces. In northern Europe that same problem applies, only the cultures involved change so that, for example, Conrad Celtis was able to report the discovery of a Druid sanctuary when in fact he had come across the mediaeval monastery of Speinshart. According to the author, such episodes are emblematic for an important shift in the way that artefacts were considered. More or less up to the fifteenth century an artwork was seen as old even if it was fairly new, as long as it replaced an older painting, sculpture, or building. What counted was the age of the tradition rather than the age of the material. Therefore an icon of the Madonna painted within the living memory of the church where it was proudly displayed was seen as ancient or even very ancient for being a replica of a replica (and so on) of a painting perhaps originally executed by St Luke. Such notions exist and persist also in non-European cultures, while our modern perception of art goes back to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century and is quite radically different.

After the shift away from the earlier understanding of art had taken place, artists, historians, and archaeologists started to become much more concerned with the material originality of artworks. From now on copies and fakes acquired the lesser status they have kept to this day. To own and to display an original artwork was from now on seen as preferable, even in cases where a good copy of a high quality artwork would have given more pleasure than a less beautiful but original painting or sculpture. Perhaps surprisingly, this notion seems to have established itself earlier in northern Europe, and in particular in the German lands, at a time when copies, for example of antiquities, were still shown proudly in many princely collections in Italy – occasionally even side by side with an ancient original; the original in question most likely being a Roman copy of a Greek work.
Wood’s book, a tour de force from beginning to end, makes a gripping and engaging read. Two things strike one immediately on first picking it up: the University of Chicago Press is kindly taking into account that the scholarly reader most likely to be interested in the subject prefers footnotes to the far less comfortable endnotes. The second feature is the merit of the author who has translated Latin and German sources into elegant and easily understandable English. A difficult feat, gracefully performed.

Florence University of the Arts

ANDREA M. GÁLDY


This is the fourth volume in the ongoing series, Il Rinascimento italiano e l’Europa. As the series editors state, this twelve-volume series (the first five volumes of which are currently in print) seeks to develop ‘una panoramica aggiornata su un ambito di studi ancora ampiamente inesplorato: l’influenza esercitata dalla civiltà del Rinascimento italiano in Europa rinascimentale’ (821). The volume under review, Commercio e cultura mercantile presents twenty-four essays that describe, explore and debate the subject of trade from a variety of perspectives.

After a brief introduction, the work is divided into four unequal sections. The first section, ‘Un panorama in trasformazione’, presents three broadly introductory essays. The essays, ‘L’economia italiana nel quadro europeo’ (Epstein) and ‘Le risposte italiane ai cambiamenti economici’ (Kirk) might initially appear to risk treading excessively common ground. Any such concern proves unfounded, however, and the productive debate achieved between two different interpretations of the same sources is rewarding for the reader. The concluding essay of this introductory section, ‘Un pensiero economico laico?’ (Pesante) asks important methodological questions, both of its reader and of the essays that precede it.

With the broader historical context thus established, the second section of the volume turns to the discussion of the merchandise upon which Renaissance trade was founded. Careful attention has ensured that, although each essay opens with a brief historical contextualisation, the volume as a whole does not fall into repetition. Each essay takes a single commercial object as its focus, and the essays are arranged into logical groupings: the section begins with a discussion of ‘wearable’ goods, wool (Munro), silk (Tognetti) and arms (Leydi); moves through printed books (Perini); the decorative arts, ‘maioliche’ (Wilson), paintings (De Marchi & Matthew); and concludes with what might loosely be described as ‘found’ objects, marbles (Bresc-Bautier), antiquities (Fortini Brown) and, most controversially, slaves (McKee).

Whilst it is not possible to adequately summarize the content of these essays in a brief review, one can comment on their success and contribution to the volume’s wider discussion. All are well written, and each essay balances the need for introductory