Tommaso Astarita, ed.

A Companion to Early Modern Naples. Brill's Companions to European History
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Despite the vicissitudes of wars and natural disasters which have taken their toll on primary source materials, Naples remains a city whose history struggles under the weight of extensive historiographical interpretations. For this reason *A Companion to Early Modern Naples* must demonstrate an awareness of the sources and their limits, as well as the previous interpretation of that data. The extensive bibliography of the work indicates the authors' strong acquaintance with these sources. But the research does not end with the usual sources and narratives. As Tommaso Astarita notes in his "Historical Introduction," this volume "includes some of the most established scholars [...] as well as members of a younger generation of international scholars." (5) This insures that while traditional interpretations are presented, new questions are being addressed of the sources available, and new hypotheses being formed. Ana Maria Rao, in her concluding essay to the volume, suggests that the "traditional view is nearly reversed: it is the 16th and 17th centuries that mark the golden age of Naples's history, while the 18th century almost seems like the beginning of decline." (480) *A Companion*, then, provides a useful review of the scholarship, but indicates new directions and interpretations for future scholars to explore and verify.

In order to fit the periodization of the series, the contributions in this volume span from 1503 to 1799. This provides a unique and interesting survey of three centuries corresponding to Spanish viceregal and early Bourbon rule. Moving beyond the traditional periodization of Neapolitan history provides the reader with an opportunity to look at distinct periods from a different perspective. In this regard, the fresh eyes of the younger generation is greatly appreciated. *A Companion* provides what its title suggests, a *vademecum* for the historian exploring aspects of Naples at a crucial period in her history. The variety and diversity of the essays provide multiple access routes into the milieu of early modern Naples. It is divided into four parts touching the physical aspects of the city, its economy and politics, the nature of its society and religion, and finally its culture, art, and intellectual life. For those working on Jesuit history in the viceroyalty and kingdom of Naples, this guide fleshes out events that affected the Society of Jesus and its works, and which are mentioned but not necessarily developed in the primary sources.

Part One: The City provides the most basic data on the city itself during this period. Along with the introduction it gives basic information about size, political structures, geography, and self-perception. This section provides the data for

understanding the rudiments of the city during this period. Of particular note are the several maps and illustrations provided by Vladimiro Valerio. While his illustrations serve his contribution, "Representation and Self-perception: Plans and Views of Naples in the Early Modern Period" the entirety of the illustrations in the appendix provide significant data to support the work.

The second part focuses on the economy and politics of early modern Naples. While Giulio Sodano's essay on governing the city brings forth interesting aspects of infrastructure (the role of public health, e.g.), the most engaging article is Aurelio Musi's review of political government. In addition to the review of the uprising of 1547, Musi covers the revolt that included the murder of the *Eletto del Popolo* Vincenzo Starace in 1585. The study presents a more nuanced narration of the events than I had been familiar with from my reading of an account from the early Jesuits in Naples. Musi is typical of the more developed study of events in Naples which provide an important context for the historian of the Society of Jesus.

In Part Three Elisa Novi Chavarria delivers her usual high-quality research and interpretation on women in early modern Naples. Yet the final two contributions to this section engage the imagination the most. Gabriel Guarino's treatment of public rituals and festivals underline an important aspect of this period. Civic ritual defined and celebrated the social harmony necessary to a peaceful and prosperous city. The fact that the Feast of St. John the Baptist was sponsored by the *plebs* of Naples to demonstrate allegiance to the Spanish crown underlines this. The suspension of this feast in 1647 just months prior to the anti-Spanish revolt is also quite significant. (273) On the other side, the presentation of *cockaignes*, floats full of expensive food and even livestock, intended to be "pillaged by the plebs" during Carnival proved to be one of the propaganda tools for the ruling class. It provided both bread and circus for the commoners of the city. While they were initially brought to the Piazza Mercato (a more popular part of the city), later in the period they were moved to the square in front of the royal palace "where they started to be pillaged under the Viceroy's balcony, at his given sign." (274) This practice would be abolished by the Bourbons in 1778 because increased poverty in the city led to out and out looting. (275)

David Gentilcuore returns to the question of epidemic disease and public health. In a stimulatingly written contribution, Gentilcuore employs the theatrical piece *La spada della misericordia* (1657) by the Oratorian Francesco Gizzio as both a primary source as well as an outline of how the city responded to the pestilence. While epidemics occurred with catastrophic results (especially in 1656), more surprising were the actions taken by city officials to prevent or mitigate them. In addition to the charity hospitals, the city provided free doctors in poor sections of the city—not only to provide health services, but also

to monitor those areas for any signs of impending plague. Even the subsidies to grain and bread intended to stave off the weakness of famine which often contributed to the spread of an epidemic.

The final part of the book addresses culture, art, and intellectual life. Visual art, architecture, music, literature and natural sciences are all treated. Patronage also receives appropriate attention. J. Nicholas Napoli's discussion of visual arts notes a synthesis of styles in the eighteenth century and the very significant "blurring of the distinction between fine and decorative art." (328) This reality remains visible in the beautifully inlaid marble designs so common in Neapolitan churches.

Anthony Deldonna's treatment of musical culture also contributes to better understanding artistic preparation in this area. The rise of conservatories growing out of orphanages for the poor became a key instrument for identifying and preparing local musical talent. The conservatories later opened to tuition-paying students and helped generate a class of musicians that would enrich the city's cultural patrimony through the end of the period.

A Companion to Early Modern Naples as a comprehensive work will become a required guide for historians beginning research on this beautiful city during this important period of its history. It may prove more valuable if treated as a reference work rather than a monograph, and will be helpful for those using Jesuit primary sources from the province of Naples. Any library supporting such research should have this volume on its shelves.

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