Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins, eds.

Specialist Markets in the Early Modern Book World. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2015.

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Specialist Markets offers a rich and fascinating topic for an edited volume on the early modern book trade. In his introduction, Richard Kirwan sets out the broad areas to be covered: high risk speculation, in particular the cultivation of markets for new specialist products; the supply of existing specialist markets; “print on demand” the commissioning of specialist works to meet particular needs; and subsidized specialization—not for profit publication. Although the term market specialism is tricky to define with precision, and is in some respects problematic, Kirwan’s four categories offer the reader a useful framework in which to locate the nineteen very different case studies presented in the collection.

Without exception, the contributions are impressive and deal with a colorful diversity of subjects. Chapters cover the printing of news in the Netherlands, Milan, and Frankfurt; the heavily illustrated *Historia Indiae Orientalis*, 13 vols. (Frankfurt, 1597–1628); Valverde de Amusco’s medical textbook *Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* (Rome, 1556); differently arranged versions of Petrarch intended for distinct markets; polyphonic choir book editions for the Spanish market, music printing in eighteenth-century Italy, and the production of song pamphlets and broadsheets in sixteenth-century Augsburg (though the latter, it turns out, was far less specialist than we might have imagined); military handbooks and treatises; foreign language publishing in London and the Netherlands; printing Greek classics, the importation of specialist books into England and the New World; texts driven by the requirements of universities; as well as texts sponsored as part of missionary programs such as the *Katekhsis*, the first ever Rusyn-language publication—printed on a Jesuit press in Trnava in 1698, or indeed texts, Catholic and Protestant, intended to assist in the process of conversion in the Ottoman empire.

Given the uniformly high quality of the chapters, it seems almost discourteous to highlight particular contributions over others. Yet, there are two chapters that, for me at least, seem to offer particularly exciting or important contributions to the field. The first is Neil Harris’s “Poetic Gymnasium and Bibliographical Maze: Publishing Petrarch in Renaissance Venice” which examines multiple versions of Petrarch’s *Canzoniere* issued on the presses of Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari in Venice around the middle of the sixteenth century. It is not only Harris’s skillful bibliographical investigation of a complex series of publications that is striking here, but also his attempts to apply—with sensitivity—modern consumer culture theory to a Renaissance case study. We hear that Giolito

tailored the printing of texts to different markets, and attempted to “blanket out rival productions and thus to transform a general market [for Petrarch] into a specialist one” (174).

The second exciting contribution comes from Andrew Pettegree, “Tabloid Values: On the Trail of Europe’s First News Hound.” The chapter examines the Antwerp newsman Abraham Verhoeven, an innovator who eschewed the dominant and rather dry newspaper model of the early seventeenth century—most often characterized by its several pages of densely packed text reported in the order in which the news had been received. Against this, in the 1620s, Verhoeven looked to connect the partisan, illustrated tradition of sixteenth-century news pamphlets with serial publication. His *Nieuwe Tijdinghen* did just that, and more—putting the biggest news stories first, using headlines to offer the gist of a story, as well as employing illustrations—not least on the title page. Yet, such innovations ultimately failed to reward their innovator. In 1629, the *Nieuwe Tijdinghen* was wound up; Verhoeven’s final years in the mid-1630s proved miserable. For Pettegree, Verhoeven’s over-specialism in news, and his failure to diversify into other markets, were at the root of his failure. If Verhoeven has not been entirely neglected by scholars, none have done as much as Pettegree to reconstruct his output or to contextualize its significance. The chapter takes the reader on a thrilling journey, not just of Verhoeven’s career, but also of how it was uncovered. Pettegree recounts the stages of his research in many of Europe’s most important research collections, careful work which quadrupled the number of Verhoeven’s known publications.

Without doubt, what will be of most interest to readers of this journal is likely to be Paul Shore’s excellent chapter on the Trnava press. Yet, in the end, the importance of the volume lies in its breadth rather than any individual contribution. It draws attention to many distinct specialist markets which formed part of the early modern book world, and indeed the particular strategies publishers and printers went to supply and engage them. What shines through most clearly across all the case studies are the tough challenges many print shops faced in turning a profit. Of course, whether through hyper-specialization, or a diversified portfolio of interests, printers were sometimes successful, by acumen or luck, but the book trade has always been an incredibly risky enterprise. The editors, Richard Kirwan and Sophie Mullins, should be congratulated on bringing together such a marvelous and thought-provoking collection of essays.

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