

In studying such material it is useful to know where a sheet was produced and by whom, in order to determine the exact sequence in which works appeared or the impact that they had. Such a task is far from straightforward, for many of the broadsheets and pamphlets appeared anonymously. It is to Faust's credit that by drawing on the expertise of specialists she has been able to attribute a number of previously anonymous works to specific German printers. Unfortunately, in a few cases she failed to recognize pertinent information. For example, the artist who signed his name with the initials G. I. S. (see no. 28) was most likely the Nuremberg draftsman and engraver Georg Jakob Sartorius (Nagler, *Die Monogrammisten*, II, no. 66). Similarly, the artist J. v. D. Heide[n] (see no. 132) was the prolific Strasbourg engraver-publisher Jacob von der Heyden (Hollstein, XIII A, p. 80), who may also have been involved in the production of no. 137. Johannes Praetorius's pamphlet about an unidentified type of spider (see no. 77) is listed as a unique copy with no references to secondary literature, yet in Dünnhaupt's bibliography of Praetorius's works five copies are listed with nine references to secondary literature.

Such omissions are inevitable in a work of such scope and detail, and noting them is in no way intended to detract from an otherwise splendid bibliography, which is clearly conceived, carefully researched, and superbly printed. The fact that it is in German need not deter potential English readers, for the pictures themselves often convey the most essential information. This is a work that should be part of the collection of any large university library.

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Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli, vol. 1, 1444–42 luglio 1458. Ed. Francesco Senatore.

Naples: Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici, Fonti per la storia di Napoli Aragonese, 1997. xx + 709 pp. + 6 illus. IL 150,000.

The deliberate destruction of much of what was left of the Angevin and Aragonese records by retreating German troops in September 1943 prompted the late director of the State Archives in Naples, Riccardo Filangieri, to promote the reconstruction of the registers of the Angevin chancery from published sources. This series, which now comprises 43 volumes and is still continuing, led to the idea of publishing diplomatic correspondence emanating from Naples and written by Venetian and Milanese ambassadors so as to partially fill a lacuna in the history of Naples from the Aragonese period onwards. Seven volumes have already been published in the Venetian series (*Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane da Napoli*, 1991–94), which publish documents from 1471 to 1790. The Milanese series begins with the volume under review and is the only one that focuses exclusively on the Aragonese period, since the Venetian dispatches for the fifteenth century perished by fire in the sixteenth century (except for a handful of them and the 1471–73 copybook of the Venetian ambassador, Zaccaria Barbaro, published in its entirety because of its rarity as the first volume of the Venetian series). Both series are being published under the auspices of the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici with the financial backing of the Commune of Naples.

The two series differ from the traditional model of editions of diplomatic documents, which normally include the two-way correspondence, instructions, and dispatches, as well as a selection of other papers relevant to the embassy such as treaties, memoranda, and inserts. The leading function of the traditional edition was the reconstruction of diplomatic relations between two states through their diplomatic records. In the two series mentioned above, this objective is secondary to the primary concern of providing as much information

as possible about Neapolitan society in all its aspects, for which the dispatches form an unrivaled source. The Venetian series tries to accomplish this goal by a mixture of full or partial publication of documents, interspersed with summaries of matter not relevant to Naples and sometimes Venice, but with the inclusion of the Senate's instructions and inserts to make the dispatches more intelligible.

The Milanese series, on the other hand, is more daring and perhaps innovative as conceived and directed by the Mezzogiorno's leading historian, Professor Mario Del Treppo, whose thorough knowledge of archival sources both in Italy and Spain has been demonstrated in his numerous publications. Faced by the enormous mass of correspondence between Milan and Naples, one of the longest series in the State Archives of Milan, itself the holder of the largest deposit of diplomatic papers in Europe for this period, Del Treppo concluded that the integral publication of the more than 21,000 letters was impractical and not necessary given the principal objective of the edition. Yet, as he explained in the preface, the selection of dispatches particularly rich in details about the "king, the court, the city, kingdom," was difficult because dispatches, unlike the celebrated Venetian "relations," practically unique to Venice, lacked the latter's synthetic quality. Moreover, dispatches written daily concentrate on a great variety of matters as affairs evolve according to a particular moment, and do not lend themselves to neat little segments that can be torn from the general context. Rather than chop them up, it was decided to publish the selected ones in their entirety with very few exceptions. In addition, the editor of this volume, Francesco Senatore, included in his selection some key dispatches from other Milanese series and other archives (Florence and Siena especially) in order to fill gaps in the Neapolitan series between 1444 and 1454. Only the first volume presents this problem. Subsequent volumes—II (1458–59), III (1460), IV (1461–62), and V (1462–65)—will have to make space for so many Milanese dispatches emanating from Naples during the Angevin invasion of the kingdom that there will be little room for dispatches of other ambassadors.

More problematic, however, is the decision to focus the edition on key periods of Neapolitan internal events, such as the reign of Alfonso the Magnanimous, and the first and second baronial revolts (1459–65, 1485–87). It seems, then, that the entire period of the troubled relations between Ferrante and Galeazzo Maria Sforza (1466–76) will be skipped entirely on the ground that these dispatches concentrate more on foreign affairs than on internal matters. Having read a great many of them, I would be reluctant to make that judgment. They contain in fact a great deal of information on Ferrante's court and life in the kingdom and reveal the intrigues of Ippolita Sforza, married to the heir to the throne, Alfonso, who acted as a spy for her brother along with some royal officials. And the diplomatic maneuvering of that decade reveals not only the internal weaknesses of both states and the germination of seeds for their debacle at the end of the century, but also the largely unsuspected geopolitical acumen of the king, who is in my view the only real statesman in Italy after the death of his mentor, Francesco Sforza. It is really nearly impossible, as it is even today, to disentangle internal from foreign affairs, which adds to the problems faced by the editors. It is true, of course, that the leaders in this decade lacked the vitality and informed judgment of the preceding rulers, Alfonso and Francesco Sforza, who with their double marriage alliance sought to deter the prosecution of French claims over their respective states. For this reason, it is unfortunate that the criteria for the selection made necessary skipping entirely Francesco's instructions to his ambassadors, recognized as masterpieces of diplomatic discourse already in the fifteenth century, a time in which the fundamental lines of this policy are repeatedly formulated and defended.

Purists among diplomatic historians (not that many these days!) will lament the necessity

of any selection because strictly speaking, the importance or relevance of a particular dispatch varies from one historian to the other. Publishing documents especially selected to illustrate the society of a particular kingdom or region disrupts the continuity of a diplomatic series. In the ideal world, all the material should obviously be published. Actually we have ceased being in that ideal world for at least the last couple of generations, as funding for humanistic studies has diminished along with the interest of younger historians to publish correspondence illustrating “sterile” diplomatic games as opposed to studies of “material culture” in an entire society. From this perspective, we should be grateful that younger scholars in Italy and England are interested in enterprises of the kind as we have also seen in the cooperative Anglo-Italian edition of Lorenzo de’ Medici’s letters. In the United States, such editions would be out of the question; if considered at all, the documents would have to have English translations, more than doubling the number of volumes, as I know from personal experience.

Fully cognizant of these unavoidable limitations, Del Treppo has attempted to blunt their effect by adopting two ingenious and innovative but partial solutions. There will be an additional volume containing an analytical inventory of all documents contained in cartelle (files) 195–215, (1450–1466) of the *Potenze Estere-Napoli* series in the State Archive in Milan so that researchers will know at a glance what has been omitted. If they wish to consult the omitted documents, they can now do so without traveling to the archives by borrowing on interlibrary loan the microfilms of these documents and of some two million complementary documents of the same period in other European archives and libraries, comprising the *Ilardi Microfilm Collection of Renaissance Diplomatic Documents ca. 1450–ca. 1500* in Sterling Memorial Library at Yale. Such consultation is facilitated by viewing (and downloading) the index to the collection on the Internet (<http://www.library.yale.edu/Ilardi/il-home.htm>), or its printed edition in *The French Descent into Renaissance Italy 1494–95: Antecedents and Effects*, ed. David Abulafia (1995). It should be added for the sake of completion that the index will reveal that there are two additional files in the *Potenze Estere-Napoli* series to be consulted, numbers 1249–50, which contain additional, undated documents for the second half of the century. If, some day, these films were to be digitized, then one could see the documents on a terminal screen without using interlibrary loans as was done in 1992 for the Columbian records at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville.

Del Treppo makes it clear that the existence of such a collection and its easy availability supported his decision not to publish the entire Neapolitan series of documents. Probably he was not aware that almost three decades ago the late Felix Gilbert made a similar but more radical proposal. Pointing to the above microfilm collection as an example and to the existence of high-quality photocopying machines, he proposed that it was time to consider depositing in libraries microfilmed series of documents with or without transcriptions and notes as alternative means of publication in lieu of expensive and time-consuming multivolume editions (*Historical Studies Today*, ed. Felix Gilbert and Stephen R. Graubard, 1972). This argument has more force now as computers and the Internet are constantly evolving and changing the way historians conduct research and disseminate results. For the time being, however, Del Treppo’s more moderate solution seems to be a safer course.

As for the criteria followed by the editor of the volume under review, they are essentially those employed by the editors of Lorenzo’s letters, which respect normal modern procedures. The textual notes have been kept to the minimum necessary, and since instructions are not published, the problem of different drafts or minutes with their frequent variants does not present itself. Praiseworthy is Senatore’s decision to decipher the dispatches and not rely on the chancery’s deciphered copies because it is known that clerks occasionally

erred in deciphering and even skipped words and passages. He laboriously reconstructed and published photocopies of the keys to two ciphers used by the Milanese ambassadors, Alberico Maletta and Francesco Cusani, which were not included in the volume of Milanese cipher keys recently published by L. Cerioni. The editors of two recent editions of Milanese diplomatic correspondence published by another institute in Rome were not aware of the limitations of the chancery's deciphered copies so that their published texts in essence were those of the clerks, not of the ambassadors.

The 268 documents in this volume cover the kingdom from the third year of Alfonso's reign, but become more numerous from 1450 onwards. They deal with the War of the Milanese succession (1452–54), the Peace of Lodi and the negotiation of the Italian League (1454–55), the negotiation of the double marriage alliance (1454–55), and the military adventures of Jacopo Piccinino, often aided by Alfonso despite his obligations under the League. The dispatches make clear that the marriage alliance was seen both by Alfonso and Francesco Sforza as the chief bulwark against French claims to their states. Alfonso was so certain of this that he discounted the likelihood of a French crossing of the Alps especially in view of the still lingering Anglo-French conflict. Diplomatic historians may be interested in the fact that in June 1453 Naples seems to have become a lively center of diplomatic activity with twenty ambassadors present at court (no. 48). And in January 1456 we read that Ferrante, heir to the throne, requested Sforza to allow his special envoy, Antonio da Trezzo, to reside continually as an ambassador and not permit the post to remain vacant. This is one of the earliest hints of the concept of an office of the ambassador, leading to the institution of a permanent resident embassy as distinguished from a temporary resident embassy (no. 144).

Unfortunately, there is no historical introduction in which the above events could have been outlined together with a brief biographical sketch of Antonio and an assessment of his personality and ability on the ground that these matters are well treated in the literature and much of this information is supplied in the notes. The bibliography, however, lists only publications repeatedly cited and abbreviated in the notes and one has to consult carefully the notes as well as the index of names and authors to find other publications. On the other hand, other well-constructed indexes of place names and documents included in this big volume, as well as brief summaries preceding each document, lighten the labor of consultation. Finally, photocopies of six documents are included to illustrate the various scripts and chancery styles. In brief, Senatore has done a commendable job of editing, especially in view of the constraints dictated by the criteria of selection and the relatively fragmentary documentation in the early years of Alfonso's reign. And some of the questions that would have been treated in a historical introduction will be discussed at length in his forthcoming monograph, *“Uno mundo de carta”*: *Forme e strutture della diplomazia sforzesca*, now in press.

The greater abundance and frequency of dispatches after 1458 would provide a better illustration of the kind of material relating to internal matters so often mentioned by the ambassadors, but here there are few examples, taken somewhat at random from this volume. Some of them have been published earlier or were previously known. The volume opens with a well-known, anonymous description (1444) of the city and kingdom of Naples, full of information on the government, officials and lords, budget, taxes, etc. (no. 1); construction work in the port of Naples and the arch of Castelnuovo (nos. 85, 120); attempts by Venice to poison Sforza's food (no. 87); Alfonso's surprisingly current information about affairs in France and England supplied by various informers (nos. 131, 134); his cavorting with his mistress, which did not stop him from consorting with a courtesan, who openly complimented the sexual prowess of the duke of Milan over that of the king, who

was 62 (no. 211); but Alfonso was capable just a few months before his death at age 63 of cutting a ram (*castrone*) in half with only one swing of his sword, a feat he performed twice to the amazement of his courtiers (no. 233). There are also various dispatches describing the well-known earthquake of December 1456 in Naples (nos. 173–79, 181, 184), and several ones recounting the other scourge of the age, the plague (see especially nos. 19, 251). Of interest to historians of agriculture is Alfonso's requests for a recipe to produce the famous Lombard prize cattle and cheeses, which Sforza readily supplied (nos. 154, 160, 193, 199). The omitted two-page feeding program included in the correspondence (already published) could have been republished here because of its exceptional value in being the only such recipe discovered to date that had survived since the Roman Empire. These few examples will give an idea of the great variety of information contained in the diplomatic correspondence of the age.

The ongoing publication of the Milanese and Venetian series of dispatches from Naples, together with the more well known edition of Lorenzo's letters, and with a projected set of volumes containing the diplomatic correspondence between Milan and Mantua, all seem to point to a long-wished revival of the publication of archival sources so useful for many areas of research. If similar projects can be organized for the publication of dispatches emanating from Rome in this period, much of what has been written on papal actions and on the history and culture of Quattrocento Italy in general will have to be revised in much the same way that art historians are constrained to reevaluate major aspects of Michelangelo's art after the cleaning of the Sistine Ceiling. Readers of this journal in particular would acquire new perspectives on the practice of religion before the appearance of Luther, especially as Professor Giorgio Chittolini and his students in Milan proceed with their work to publish sources documenting the disposal of church benefices in Lombardy and northern Italy. It is conceivable that cooperative enterprises between younger historians on both sides of the Atlantic could be organized to take advantage of current advances in photocopying, computerized transfer of data, and the microfilm collection mentioned above. It would be an unrivaled opportunity for the training of graduate students and younger scholars.

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The Mammoth and the Mouse: Microhistory and Morphology. Florike Egmond and Peter Mason. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. 245 pp. n.p.

The premise of this methodological investigation is, as the title implies, to bridge what its authors perceive as two important trends in historical practice of the last twenty-five or so years—and they make no bones that the intellectual terrain they travel has been framed by the journeys of Carlo Ginzburg, to whom the book is something of a paean. On the one hand they wish to “raise the specific above the level of the trivial”—the specific understood as the Ginzburgian idea of the microhistorical—without “reducing comparison to the level of the nondescript.”

Seeking such morphological comparisons or “family resemblances” between cultural practices in disparate times and places can be a useful way of identifying patterns and researching their possible connections. Through this, the authors alert us to the fact that generalizing teleologies and taxonomies in history—such as “medieval” and “modern” or “learned culture” and “popular culture”—can be disabling and tend to demote or even disqualify particular processes and particular groups. It is not a new insight but nevertheless a point well made, complemented by the rider that questions of signification cannot be