

the culture of the Republic of Letters transforms due to contingencies seemingly beyond the control of its citizens. Even the *salonniers* cannot help but be what they are. Change simply is. That may be true, though I do not believe it. Perhaps the lure of biography, both for scholars and everyone else, is that the messy details of “life” are easier to recount than the complicated processes of human agency that we barely comprehend.

Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel, eds. *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005, x + 302 pp. + 11 illus. \$129.00. Review by JONATHAN BURTON, WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY.

The eleven essays comprising *The Republic of Letters and the Levant* seek to “document some of the various links between the visible area of the Levant and the invisible Republic of Letters in Europe” (4). The Republic of Letters, of course, existed nowhere beyond the intellectual and epistolary relationships of a group of like-minded early modern scholars. Nevertheless, it has conventionally been seen as a small and exclusively European community sharing an erudite neo-Latin culture and ushering in the Age of Enlightenment with their free-thinking and secularism. The volume under review sets about expanding the narrow geographic spaces associated with this non-geographic republic, and thus acknowledging the place of the East in the formation of Enlightenment thinking. Yet while we learn of Dutch, English, French and Florentine figures who pursued eastern knowledges through their correspondence, travel, and manuscript collecting, this volume has virtually nothing to say about the participation of Levantine scholars in a broader Republic of Letters. Instead, one contributor goes so far as to argue that no “reciprocal current” of interest existed, an argument belied by the work of both historians and literary scholars including Jack Goody, Jerry Brotton, and Maria Rosa Menocal. Thus, where Goody makes a case for the eastern lineages of allegedly European cultural formations such as democracy and capitalism, the essays here generally go no further than demonstrating an interest among European intellectuals in eastern scientific and religious, and geographic writings. The single exception is Maurits H. van den Boogert’s essay on Ibrahim Müteferrika, a Hungarian convert to Islam who operated the first printing

press with moveable type ever to be operated by Muslims. This essay alone presents a history that argues directly for Levantine participation in the Republic of Letters.

The strength of this collection lies more in its archival discoveries than in its ambitious arguments. Thus while several of the contributions do not synthesize into argument the materials they present, there is nonetheless a wealth of fascinating material presented, often in impressive detail. Thus, Zur Shalev's essay on "The Travel Notebooks of John Greaves" includes photo plates of pages from the notebooks, testifying to "the wide gap between the messy reality of travel and the ideals of methodised observation and data collection" (78). Where some of the other essays do not clearly indicate the upshot of their findings, Shalev presents the notebooks to argue that "Greaves viewed Istanbul and Alexandria just as he did Leiden, Paris, and Rome, that is, as an active seat of learning and not as a petrified repository of ancient monuments and wisdom" (78). The ensuing essay by Peter N. Miller offers a corroborating argument drawn from an examination of the ledgers of Nicolas Fabri de Pieresc. Pieresc, Miller argues, "was as responsible as anyone else of his generation for the great advance in European learning about oriental languages that occurred in the seventeenth century." (103). Furthermore, his Levant was "part of the living, breathing reality of the early seventeenth-century Mediterranean" (104). Together, these two essays testify to an early version of Orientalism that was not characterized by a view of the Levant as culturally backwards or frozen in the antique past. This is not, however, an approach characteristic of all members of the Republic of Letters surveyed here. The English scientist Robert Boyle's sponsorship of translations of Muslim texts is, according to Charles Littleton's essay, testimony to a greater interest in the Levant's distant past than in its contemporary features. In addition, Littleton turns to the scientist's millenarian interests to explain the apparent contradiction between Boyle's Baconian claims of independence from previous scientific traditions and his interest in translating, compiling and analyzing medieval Arabic texts.

Several of the essays here tell interesting stories: Alastair Hamilton's account of "The unfortunate embassy of Henri Gournay de Marcheville" revisits the history of an embassy plagued with protocol gaffes in order to recognize the efforts of its historically condemned ambassador to draw figures as prominent as Descartes, Kepler, and Galileo to the Levant. In a

second contribution, Hamilton also chronicles the numerous, mostly failed, projects to find a translator of the Quaran in the last decades of the century, in the wake of the 1683 Turkish defeat. If, with his two contributions, Hamilton has a point to make about failure in the history of the Republic of Letters and the Levant, that point is never presented. The problem here, as well as in an essay on Albertus Bobovius and another on Dutch public collections featuring middle eastern manuscripts, is that a great deal of information is presented without adequate synthesis or claims. Thus, a particular letter may be meticulously presented in a photographic reprint, a diplomatic edition, a translation, and in a descriptive bibliography, yet, remarkably, we never learn why this letter is important. This is a significant shortcoming that hamstrings some of the fine archival research presented in this collection. As a result, I finish reading this book convinced of the need to expand our understanding of the Republic of Letters into the Levant, but uncertain as to what such an expansion will produce by way of new approaches to the Republic of Letters, the Levant, Orientalism, or the Age of Enlightenment

Thomas Festa. *The End of Learning: Milton and Education*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006. xiv + 238 pp. \$95.00. Review by JAMES EGAN, THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON.

Festa theorizes that education constitutes a “central trope” for Milton’s political and poetic writing, and *The End of Learning* is a study of both the restricted and extended meanings of “education” in the Milton canon. He reiterates the postmodern consensus that during the English Revolution, Milton thought of political education as tantamount to spiritual reformation, but proposes that Miltonic education ranges well beyond the brief treatment it receives in the early tract *Of Education* (1644). Importantly, Festa argues for the influence of Francis Bacon on Milton’s educational thinking rather than giving primary credit to Samuel Hartlib and other Comenian reformers. Equally important, he challenges Stanley Fish’s limitation of Milton’s historical and possible audiences in *Paradise Lost*, correctly observing that Fish’s reconstruction of the concept of education in the seventeenth century as well as his awareness of “actual historical readers” was often cursory (20). Festa notes, finally, that he will be particularly concerned with Miltonic conceptions of