

inality and creativity, does an excellent job of restoring to Pontano the fame that he enjoyed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, not only as a poet and a politician, but also as a philosopher.

Shulamit Furstenberg-Levi, *Scuola Lorenzo de' Medici*

*Scientia Kircheriana: Die Fabrikation von Wissen bei Athanasius Kircher.*

Tina Asmussen.

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Tina Asmussen's book on the German Jesuit polymath Athanasius Kircher examines the mechanisms of knowledge production in Kircherian science. Asmussen draws on Kircher's publications, those of his assistants, and his extensive correspondence to examine the method of collection, distribution, and marketing of knowledge under the Kircher label. The book is made up of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, acknowledgments, an appendix, a comprehensive bibliography, and an index. Kircher was controversial in his own day, with opinions on him varying from *Germanus incredibilis* to charlatan. Nonetheless he enjoyed success and recognition then and since. Goethe admired him and more recently interest in Kircher has grown. Asmussen looks at the mechanisms through which Kircher as an author is integrated and commodified, and his name used as a label for knowledge production.

The first chapter covers Kircher's Rome. He arrived at the Jesuit Collegio Romano in 1633 and lived almost exclusively there until his death in 1680. In Rome he was embedded in a network of collaborations and dependent relationships: Jesuit institution, courtly, political, intellectual, and cultural interests. Rome's many courts and the recurring change of ruling dynasties with the election of new popes led to a dynamic alliance of loyalty and dependencies. Rome was also an international stage and home to many diplomats, ambassadors, and visitors on the grand tour. From 1651 the Collegio Romano had a museum where Kircher showed exotic or antique objects to a select public and performed experiments on and skillful demonstrations of entertaining magnetic, pneumatic, and hydraulic machines.

Chapter 2 looks at Kircher's network, covering agents and patrons in the German territories and the Netherlands—book agents, confessors, printers, and publishers. It explores the influence of the European courts in generating and circulating knowledge. Jesuit confessors at courts served as Kircher informants and communicators of the diverse rulers' wishes. Kircher sent his works and curios to them and was astute in dedicating books or chapters of books to important persons. The broad marketing of his works is an example of publication management as a mirror of Counter-Reformation and Jesuit politics. His correspondence covered all of Europe, Africa, South America,

and Asia. He corresponded with scholars, clergy, princes, emperors, and popes. Kircher displayed the letters he received from important people in his museum and included them in his publications. His access to Jesuit sources, the communication channels of papal diplomacy and Roman merchants, and news from the many visitors and pilgrims in Rome made him one of the best-informed persons of his age.

Chapter 3 explores how Kircherian science worked and explains the construction of the author figure Kircher from his museum and his books. In the new scientific academies around 1660 empirical science was promoted and experiments conducted, whereas Jesuit science was more directed toward accommodating the interests of the patrons. Kircher's experimental practices differed from those of the Royal Society's Robert Hooke and Robert Boyle. With Kircher the spectacle itself was more important than the end result. While Boyle wrote so that the reader "might . . . be able to repeat such unusual experiments," those described in Kircher's books required additional instructions and demonstrations. When Hooke looked through the microscope he produced elaborate illustrations of what he had seen, whereas Kircher's look through the microscope was imprecise. Kircher's science was well suited to the courtly context where being the guardian of a secret was an important social distinction.

Chapter 4 weaves the separate threads together to give a full view of the complexity of the Kircherian knowledge machine. It shows the importance of Rome in the manufacture of knowledge, the networks where this knowledge circulated, and the perception of knowledge as a secret in establishing the Kircherian label. Kircher's name developed as a productive resource. It stood not just for a person but also for the Jesuit order, for large-format, richly illustrated publications, for arcane knowledge, for new and wonderful objects, and for noble and scholarly correspondents.

Asmussen's book is a valuable contribution to the history of knowledge of early modern academic culture and not only shows Kircher as an agent but also analyzes the conditions that formed his figure and person. Asmussen's enthusiasm for and deep familiarity with both the person and the subject matter shines through. She suggests that he stands for a type of science that is never fully original, never fully uncontested, and not pioneering, but that nonetheless has a certain appeal and charm.

Deirdre Grannell, *Independent Scholar*