Trade and Nation: How Companies and Politics Reshaped Economic Thought.
Emily Erikson.
New York: Columbia University Press, 2021. xii + 298 pp. $140.

In this fascinating and rigorously written book, Erikson offers a renewed explanation of an old dilemma: why an epistemological revolution in economics happened in England over the seventeenth century and not elsewhere. Drawing on an impressive corpus of oeuvres and employing machine learning and network analysis techniques, the author situates the origins of this paradigm shift in the clashing relations that involved the state and a growing group of merchants. A quantitative and computational analysis sets the book apart from other works that have already offered a vast palette of explanations on the same phenomenon (international trade; nation- and state-building; international competition and emulation).

The book is divided into six chapters; each deploys either a quantitative or qualitative account. Chapter 1 introduces a corpus made up of roughly 6,585 titles written between 1580–1720. The author goes into detail and tells how the data was amassed and codified. These are rich chunks that teach the reader much on the use of machine learning and data analysis. Chapter 2 approaches the main debates from a qualitative perspective: bullionism and the balance of trade. Chapter 3 reveals the core of the thesis: how marginalization from formal institutions finally set the path to public opinion. Chapter 4 concentrates on network analysis to cluster individuals/corporations and sets of interests. In contrast, chapter 5 tests the main argument using vector autoregression time series. Chapter 6 offers a qualitative test, putting England in comparison to the Dutch Republic since in the latter "only a modest, incremental increase" of book publications happened (203).

Isolated from state power institutions like the parliament (which came to be gradually under the control of landowners) and facing huge corporation opposition, merchants resorted to public opinion to influence policymaking. This was the main reason why, different from Continental monarchies (France) and republics (Holland), merchants acquired a central role in the book market (30 percent after the Glorious Revolution). In the frame of this intellectual revolution, medieval moral issues were progressively replaced by empirical concerns and discussions on national commerce.

It was in the public sphere, as Habermas called it a long time ago, that merchants attempted to convince their fellow nationals that their books, pamphlets, and papers expressed a general and not merely a private set of interests. Nonetheless, Erikson adjusts Habermas's conception of public opinion, which, according to her, sets a deep line between private and state spheres but at the same time leaves out a crucial actor: corporations. In fact, corporations strongly sought to influence and generate a favorable opinion of their particular interests.

Apart from the convincing thesis, some other arguments are hard to agree with. In particular, in the conclusion Erikson upholds that Adam Smith reincoporated "philosophical and moral concerns into a literature on trade that had largely left these matters by the wayside" (251). Scholars who work on the European Enlightenment would hardly share this opinion. To mention only an instance: the debate on luxury. The author would have changed her mind had she read Hirshman's classic *The Passions and the Interests* (1977). Perhaps this is also due to the fact that Erikson radically keeps apart trade oeuvres from a philosophical corpus. Historians may be surprised not to find two scholars whose works would have been essential for Erikson's book: Deirdre McClosky's widely cited trilogy *Bourgeois Dignity* and Joel Mokyr's vast scholarship on why England got rich.

In contrast, historians will find in Erikson's book a rigorous attempt at explanation. In a time where cherry-picking and microhistory largely prevail in historical scholarship, Erikson shows how to reconcile quantitative and qualitative techniques. Finally, it is worth remembering that, despite not using machine learning or network analysis, Jean-Claude Perrot (*Une histoire intellectuelle*, 1992) was one of the first to have approached early modern economic literature from a quantitative perspective. His insights, produced in the 1980s, would have offered Erikson a larger comparative perspective.

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The Mythological Origins of Renaissance Florence: The City as New Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem. Irina Chernetsky.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. xiv + 216 pp. $99.99.

This well-written and beautifully produced book presents the first comprehensive study of one of the Renaissance's most fascinating moments in the appropriation of pagan and Christian antiquity: Florence's self-representation as a successor to Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem in the fourteenth and fifteenth century. While several articles and monographs have already been dedicated to the way Florentine humanists and artists generated prestige for their city by highlighting its Roman origins, Chernetsky's book is the first to discuss the theme alongside with the city's self-image as a New Athens and New Jerusalem.

The book stands out for its successful attempt to discuss both written sources (poetry, histories, and art treatises) and visual sources (paintings, drawings, and statues) in a coherent scholarly narrative. To tackle the problem of how the diverse city images correlate, Chernetsky seeks to understand them against the background of the Florentine occupation with lineage and genealogy. In the thirteenth century,