H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Randolph Conrad Head, Daniel Eric Christensen, ed. *Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Early Modern German Culture: Order and Creativity, 1550-1750.* Studies in Central European Histories Series. Leiden: Brill, 2007. Illustrations. xii + 246 pp. $129.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-90-04-16276-1.

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Published on H-Catholic (August, 2009)

Commissioned by John A. Dick

Not Your Grandparents' Orthodoxy

This volume presents a selection of the best papers from the fourth triennial conference of Frühe Neuzeit Interdisziplinär (FNI), a group that emerged as an explicit scholarly alternative to the larger conferences. FNI is characterized by its tight focus on three nonetheless inclusively-framed areas: all of German early modernity, ignoring the merely formal gap of 1650 that plays such a role in organizing European history at large; Germany in its largest geographical sense; and interdisciplinarity–both in the sense of bringing scholars in different disciplines together for conversation and in encourage its members to make their own work more interdisciplinary. The group has avoided some of the potential pitfalls of interdisciplinary approaches by organizing its meetings around relatively well-defined thematic topics. This volume on orthodoxies and heterodoxies follows earlier collections of the best papers delivered at conferences on order and disorder, cultures of communication, and ways of knowing.[1] Like those volumes, it presents a much more variegated picture of its main topic than prospective readers may initially anticipate; like them, too, this one includes a diffuse assortment of contributions not always united by the efforts of the editors to bind them together; and, as in those volumes, it raises a number of questions not only about research on early modern Germany, but about the very venture of interdisciplinarity itself.

The book's ten essays are preceded by an introduction by Randolph Conrad Head and Daniel Eric Christensen that discusses the essays individually and synthetically in light of the conference's organization terms of "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy." This piece is unusually strong and reflective, and merits readers' attention for the many useful insights it offers about the modalities for employing and emplotting the term, "orthodoxy." The authors note an attempt with this conference to turn away from the modernist epistemologies that organized previous conference themes and introduce "orthodoxy" as a "more contemporary purchase on the experience of historical actors" (p. 5). Despite their recognition that much of early modern research and the FNI conferences hasve been attending to Foucault-inspired ideas about power and knowledge, however, this aim is somewhat less well -achieved in the essays themselves, insofar as many of them are still very heavily occupied with dealing precisely with the constitution of power and the organization of knowledge through culture. Even so, the authors' move to urging scholars to consider the perspective of philosophical and religious studies research on German early modernity is interesting here, insofar as its categories tend to differ strongly with traditional tropes for analyzing the religious and political culture of early modern Germany. Head and Christensen also put their finger firmly on one of the fundamental dynamics of the early modern discourse about orthodoxy in Germany: the basic insecurities it revealed and the self-defeating way that it called attention to its own instabilities. As they note, this transparent moment that reveals the inner machinery of orthodoxy can be exploited by scholars who can draw parallels from the construction of early modern orthodoxies to the definition of their own arsenals of knowledge.

Nowhere is this point better demonstrated than in the book's powerful first essay, by Nathan Baruch Rein,

which pinpoints the emergence of notions of religion as a field separate from politics or everyday life in the resistance theory that responded to the Siege of Magdeburg (1550-1); Rein's perspective is particularly notable for its introduction of questions in religious studies that have had little penetration in theological and historical discussions of the last generation. Markus Friedrich's equally convincing contribution on adiaphorism as a theme in early modern Protestantism makes a similar move away from the purely political or historical analysis of this burning question of mid-sixteenth century to a discursive analysis that rotates around competing definitions of "authenticity" among different participants in the debate. Like Rein, Friedrich notes the specifically "religious" as opposed to theological dimensions of what he terms a "profound process of self-evaluation around 1550" (p. 65). To conclude this very coherent first section of the book, entitled "Epistemologies," Claire Gantet's essay treats the marginalization of dreams as sources of knowledge in sixteenth-century Germany.

Part 2, "Practices," coheres somewhat less effectively due to the wide variety of subjects. Thomas Kaufmann analyzes the borders around the notion of respect for non-Christians and confessional others in early modern Europe, discussing the cases of Turks, Jews, and non-Lutherans; Susan Hammond treats the "Lutheranizing" of Italian madrigal texts that were edited for German audiences; Hildegard Keller studies the mobilization of the older notion of divine covenant by Heinrich Bullinger for purposes of explaining the Swiss confederation's history of resistance and by Jakob Ruf for attempting to create a wider notion of confederational unity; and Robert von Friedeburg tackles the still thorny question of the relationship of the German political constitution(s) to the German nation via a discussion of references to a princely jurisdiction as a fatherland (*patria*), a usage that defined not only subjects' obligations, but also, increasingly, their rights. While each essay is important in its own right, the reader does not leave the section with a strong notion of what separated "orthodox" from "heterodox" practices, either via individual cases or as a general principle. I also found it somewhat surprising that these essays did not take up the term "secularism" more squarely, insofar as they all address practices often included in its definition: from religious tolerance to emerging patriotism to the reappropriation of confessional ideals in different contexts without undue concern about their original meanings.

The third section of the book, "Limitations," is similarly diffuse, although the essays show clear parallels. Here, Ashley West reads a series of paintings by Hans Burgkmair that challenges the exemplarity of its own narrative focus; Benjamin Marschke re-reads the court practices of Friedrich Wilhelm I as a re-working of courtly ideals; and Claudia Benthien discusses the quality of silence as a speech act in baroque drama and wordlessness as a divine statement. A better subsuming context for these contributions might have been ambiguities or contradictions, for seen from that perspective, we see a remarkable series of orthodox principles that are not quite what they appear and indeed undermine themselves: heroic painting that constitutes itself through disturbing images of suffering, a court that rejects contemporary principles of court culture, and quiet that speaks. This section does the most to reveal the sort of fissures of orthodoxy the editors hint at in their introduction.

Having attended the conference myself, I can attest that this volume offers its readers much more than a limited selection of conference proceedings–these papers were among the best at the conference and are strong contributions in their own right. In terms of its own aims, FNI's work has always very effectively bypassed two of the roadblocks to this sort of work: the apparent chasm in the middle of German early modernity presented by the Thirty Years' War, and the tunnel vision of history and culture created when they are viewed through the prism of the modern nation-state. The many still unsurmounted problems of interdisciplinarity, however, will be easily apparent to readers of this volume. Many of us have tended to assume that increased multidisciplinarity will gradually produce interdisciplinarity–but that result would appear to require a slightly more intentional approach than these essays take. Most of them are centered on a relatively clear disciplinary perspective, and while all of them consider the perspectives or at least the conclusions of other disciplines, these auxiliary disciplines do not really substantially affect their method. Even those essays that consider topics outside of the most usual disciplinary frameworks for studying them give rise to a different disciplinary perspective rather than an integration of different disciplinary perspectives. The best results of this approach to the disciplines occurs between those with allied focuses or those that employ comparable analytical or textual methods–religious studies and theology, or history and politics, for example, or politics and literature.

Note

[1]. Max Reinhardt, ed., *Infinite Boundaries* (Kirksville: Truman State University Press, 1998); James

Van Horn Melton, ed., *Cultures of Communication from Reformation to Enlightenment* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002); and Mary Lindemann, ed., *Ways of Knowing* (Boston: Brill, 2004).

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Citation: Susan R. Boettcher. Review of Head, Randolph Conrad; Christensen, Daniel Eric, ed., *Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Early Modern German Culture: Order and Creativity, 1550-1750.* H-Catholic, H-Net Reviews. August, 2009.

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