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Hans-Bernd Harder, Hans Rothe, eds. *SpÖ¤ter Humanismus in der Krone BÖ¶hmens 1570-1620.* Dresden: Dresden University Press, 1998. 100 pp. DM 88.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-931828-59-2.

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Whither Rudolf and his World?

Spaeter Humanismus in der Krone Boehmens is a compilation of 23 essays that were originally presented at a 1993 conference in Passau. This gathering was actually the fourth of its kind bringing German and Czech scholars together from a wide range of disciplines to discuss the issue of humanism in the Bohemian lands. The actual impetus for these conferences was initially political. The *Komitee der Bundesrepublik zur Foerderung der slavischen Studien* was founded with the intent to foster an ideological neutral zone for east/west scholarly exchange. The first of these Czech/German conferences, in 1985 at the Dominican cloister in Walberberg, grew out of this impulse. Though the political climate has changed, it is encouraging to see that in these budget-conscious days such sponsorship has not been abandoned altogether as Germans look east to understand better their own past. The specific focus of this Passau convention was the Rudolfine era (1570-1620). Now, five years after the event, the proceedings have appeared in print.

The great flowering of Rudolfine studies really began in the early seventies with the work of now Regius Professor, R.J.W. Evans, and the Dutch scholar, Nicolette Mout.[1] In many respects it is a shame that this conference was a strictly German-Czech affair. Rudolfine studies has always been a broad international enterprise, and the comments of Evans and Mout in particular, along with the great American authority in this field, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, would have been helpful in providing perspective on the developments of the past quarter century. Nonetheless, these essays are a valuable contribution to our understanding of the field.

The first point to note concerning this collection is the key word of its title, humanism. This conference did not focus exclusively on cultural and intellectual activity in Bohemia. Though it is the art historians who have perhaps profited the most from the rediscovery of Rudolf, there is only one essay in this collection devoted to the art of the period. This compilation really does show us a different side of the Rudolfine era–more politically grounded than the work of Evans, and more locally oriented than the perspective of Kaufmann.

We begin with a series of pieces examining political developments. Jaroslav Panek presents a broad overview of the emperor himself. He examines three main issues: the move of the court to Prague, Rudolf's orientation toward Bohemia, and the problematic matter of the emperor's mental state. Complementing Panek's contribution are the essays of Joachim Bahlcke and Inge Auerbach. Bahlcke examines the estates of the Bohemian crownlands under Rudolf's tenure, while Auerbach explores the rising religious tensions of this region. These three pieces call to mind the marvelous volume edited by R.J.W. Evans and T.V. Thomas, *Crown, Church and Estates.*[2]

In the area of social history we have the work of Ludger Udolph and Vaclav Buzek. Both of these scholars are interested in the use of language in this polyglot region. Udolf explores the linguistic rivalry between German and Czech speakers, while Buzek in contrast investigates the bilingual population of the kingdom. Eliska Fucikova, the lone art historian of the group, gives a general survey of stylistic developments at the Rudolfine court. She argues that a well-defined school did not develop under the emperor's patronage, maintaining instead that Rudolfine art was characterized by a broad array of styles and approaches.

One of the strongest aspects of the volume is the attention given to reading and publishing. Jiri Pesek demonstrates that the libraries of Prague's inhabitants were thoroughly cosmopolitan. However, he does make the same mistake as Frances Yates in assuming that those who possessed these libraries actually used them regularly. Mirjam Bohatcova and Hans Rothe, on the other hand, analyze the contributions of the printer/ publisher Daniel Adam von Veleslavin, one of the most significant figures of the Rudolfine era. In a final grouping of es-

says we see that the cultural efflorescence of this period was not strictly limited to the Bohemian lands. Two intriguing pieces by Eduard Petru and Peter Woerster highlight Moravia and specifically the episcopal center of Olomouc. Here we encounter an imperial visit in 1577, the antiquarianism of Johannes Dubravius, and a sampling of the work at the new Jesuit university.

Though the volume certainly expands our knowledge of this important period, there are a number of problems as well. More careful editing would have caught a number of small mistakes. The *Renewed Constitution* (*Obnovene zrizeni zemske*, *Vernewerte Landesordnung*) was implemented in 1627, not 1625. Thomas Kaufmann is listed as Thomas DaCosta in the index. Admittedly, these are minor errors, but in other more important ways this volume could have been better edited.

Subheadings grouping similar articles together would have been helpful instead of the more haphazard arrangement employed. The one contribution from an historian of science stands awkwardly isolated in a cluster of papers on reading and literacy. The essays themselves would have been more useful if the authors had been given a chance to interact with each other. But by far the greatest failing of this collection may have been caused by a circumstance none of the editors were able to control. It took five years for these conference papers to be published. So much has come out in the interim that many of these pieces are quite dated. Since 1993 there has been the important multi-volume study of the Charles University, further work on the pre-Rudolfine era, and most importantly Prague's blockbuster exhibition in summer 1997, "Rudolf II, Prague and the World".[3]

The time lag between conference and text raises a larger issue facing those studying late humanism in the Bohemian lands–whither Rudolf and his world? When these Czech-German conferences first began in the mid 80's, there may have been some doubt in certain circles whether Bohemia was a *Nebenland des Humanismus*. Whatever equivocation there was on this question has certainly ended. But the broader matter remains. After working up to the great crescendo of Rudolf's homecoming two summers ago, one wonders what type of encore could possibly follow. I would like to highlight three issues worth considering in this context.

Chronology:

The great hinge on which early modern Bohemia turns is the Battle of White Mountain in 1620. As the traditional story goes, when an imperial army defeated the troops of the Czech estates on the hill outside Prague, this proud kingdom lost many of its traditional liberties and freedoms. Admittedly, it is hard to dispute the general tenets of this argument. The crown of Bohemia did lose its elective status, a significant portion of the nobility were forced to emigrate, and the *Obnovene zrizeni zemske* did redistribute power. But this political chronology has all too often been superimposed on the cultural and intellectual activity of this era. This is not to deny that White Mountain did not have an important impact on this sphere as well, but if 1620 remains the *terminus ad quem* for consideration of this period, we may miss some important lines of continuity.

There are a number of areas where we can find important connections between the pre- and post-White Mountain periods. The most obvious would be the arts. What happens to Prague's artists after Rudolf and the catastrophe of 1620? Not all are dispersed. In her important work on the Dutch engraver Aegidius Sadeler, Dorothy Limouze points out that the bulk of his career was spent in the post-Rudolfine period.[4] There is also the Miseroni family, Rudolf's gem cutters who stayed in Prague and adjusted to the changed circumstances after White Mountain. And then of course there is Sadeler's prize pupil, Karel Skreta. Trained at the imperial court, Skreta was part of the exile generation that was forced to pack its bags in a hurry. But he came back to Prague and became Bohemia's most important painter of the seventeenth century. His work also shows continuity with an earlier period. As Thomas Kaufmann has illustrated, artists adapted remarkably quickly to changing political and religious circumstances in central Europe. Karel Skreta is a clear example of this phenomenon and a critical figure for understanding this time of cultural transition.

But it is not just with the fine arts that we find links with an earlier period. Important intellectual developments need also to be considered. Despite the victory of Ferdinand II, the Jesuits were not able to control completely the theological diversity so characteristic of Rudolf's court. True, Protestants were gone or forced underground, but in the Catholic world of mid seventeenth century central Europe Prague was remarkable for its diversity. An important individual to consider in this context is the Capuchin monk, Valerian Magni. A young student of Kepler, Magni advocated an irenic program of recatholicization that had more in common with the Rudolfine period than with the harsher measures normally associated with the Jesuits. In terms of science, the contributions of Marcus Marci should be considered. Marci became the first Czech member of the English Royal Society, most specifically for his work in embryol-

ogy. His Platonic mysticism clearly harkened back to Kepler and stood in dramatic contrast to the more dominant neo-scholastic program of the Jesuits. I could continue with examples, but the point should be clear. By looking for lines of continuity between the pre- and post-1620 periods, scholars may better understand the nature of the changes that did take place in the seventeenth century and avoid a predetermined chronology that too neatly divides the late humanist and baroque worlds.

Geography:

Prague of course was not the only metropolis in the Bohemian crownlands where late-humanist activity flourished. I take it as an encouraging sign that two of the articles in the collection deal with the Moravian situation. As Josef Valka has shown, though there are obvious commonalities, there are also important distinctions between developments in Bohemia and Moravia.[5] It is in this context that we should revisit Silesia and its thriving entrepot, Breslau. It was Nicolette Mout who claimed many years ago that Breslau was a worthy cultural rival of Prague. But, apart from some of the early work of Ivo Koran and Robert Evans, little has been done recently to follow up and trace connections between the two most important cities of the Bohemian kingdom. There are hopeful signs that this situation may be changing, but far more comparative work needs to be done to broaden our view of the cultural and intellectual landscape of this region.[6]

The great challenge of this field is working across artificial national boundaries that have been imposed on the early modern period. Nationalist historiographies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, not to mention more recent Marxist interpretations, have distorted our view of central Europe, the continent's most ethnically complex region of the early modern period. To use the Silesian example, one cannot properly understand this region without critically examining German, Czech and Polish historiographies. I find it ironic, though not surprising, that this conference volume devoted to the multi-cultural world of late sixteenth and early seventeenth century Bohemia has appeared in a series entitled *Schriften zur Kultur der Slaven.*

Disciplinary boundaries:

From my perspective there needs to be more of a conscious effort to work across traditional disciplinary boundaries in this period. To stay in Silesia, one needs to look no further than the great poet, Martin Opitz (1597-1639). Germanists have long recognized his contributions to the development of lyric poetry, but very little attention has been paid to his Latin work or his career as a secretary to the Vasa king of Poland, Wladyslaw IV. Our understanding of this period, both culturally and politically, would be tremendously enriched if one were to locate Opitz more securely in the specific context of late central European humanism.

There are a number of similar examples I could give for the Bohemian situation. In the 1960s Czech historians of drama produced a remarkable series of volumes chronicling the development of theater in the Bohemian lands. After peeling back the Marxist veneer, one finds marvelous material here that is woefully underused by cultural historians.[7] A careful mining of these sources could teach us important lessons concerning the use of drama in the recatholicization of Bohemia. In a similar fashion the very promising work of Zdenek David and David Holeton on the Utraquist church and its liturgy in the sixteenth century could be applied more broadly to questions of religious identity and cultural transition in the seventeenth.[8]

Whatever the case may be, like the alchemist in search of his stone, Rudolf and his world continues to attract devoted followers. It might be time, however, to leave the court and move out into the city and beyond to investigate some of these larger questions lying out on the horizon.

Notes:

[1]. See in particular R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his World* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) and M.E.H.N. Mout, *Bohemen en de Nederlanden in de zestiende eeuw* (Leiden: Universitaire Pers Leiden, 1975).

[2]. R.J.W. Evans and T.V. Thomas, *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1991).

[3]. For the Charles University see *Dejiny Univerzity Karlovy, 1348-1990: publikaci vydala Univerzita Karlova k 650. vyroci sveho zalozeni* , vols. 1-4 (Prague: Karolinum, 1995-98). On the pre-Rudolfine period see my own *The Quest for Compromise. Peacemakers in Counter-Reformation Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Presss, 1997), for which a review is forthcoming on HABSBURG. For the exhibition there is the hefty catalog, Fucikova, et al., eds., *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and City* (Prague: Prague Castle Administration; London and New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997). In 1999 there should be a companion volume to the catalog with the papers of the conference that was held in conjunction with the show.

[4]. Dorothy Limouze, *Aegidius Sadeler (c. 1570-1629): Drawings, Prints and Art Theory*, Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton University, 1990.

[5]. Josef Valka, "Moravia and the Crisis of the Estates' System in the lands of the Bohemian Crown," in *Crown, Church and Estates*, pp. 149-157.

[6]. See the important catalog: Piotr Oszczanowksi and Jan Gromadzki, eds., *Theatrum vitae et mortis: grafika, rysunek i malarstwo ksiazkowe na Slasku w latach ok. 1550-ok. 1650* (Wroclaw: Muzeum Historyczne, 1995). Also suggestive in this area is the work of Jacek Tylicki and Stefan Kiedron.

[7]. F. Cerny, ed., *Dejiny ceskeho divadla* (Praha: Academia, 1968).

[8]. Zdenek David, "The Strange Fate of Czech Utraquism: The Second Century, 1517-1621," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46 (1995), 641-668; David Holeton, "Wyclif's Bohemian fate: a reflection on the contextualization of Wyclif in Bohemia," *Communio Viatorum* 32 (1989), 209-222.

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