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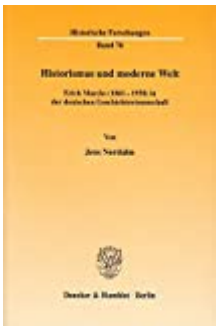

Jens Nordalm. *Historismus und moderne Welt: Erich Marcks (1861 - 1938) in der deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft.* Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2003. 414 S. EUR 98.00 (gebunden), ISBN 978-3-428-10999-9.

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Marcks and the Neo-Rankeans

Nordalm's dissertation sets out to rehabilitate the reputation of Erich Marcks (1861-1938), a well-known historian whose career spanned the *Kaiserreich* through the Third Reich. Marcks was born in Magdeburg. In 1879, he began his studies in Strasbourg, where he took courses in ancient history, philology, philosophy, archeology, literature, and modern history. In 1884 he received his doctorate, and in 1887 he completed his habilitation in Berlin. He was a *Privatdozent* in Berlin when the first volume of his biography of Gaspard von Coligny appeared (1892). In 1893 he was called to Freiburg, and the following year went to Leipzig, where he was a colleague of Karl Lamprecht until 1901. His monograph on Elizabeth I appeared in 1897. In 1901 he went to Heidelberg and in 1907 he was called to Hamburg. The first volume of his Bismarck biography, *Bismarcks Jugend*, was published in 1909. From 1913-1922 he taught in Munich; following that he went to Berlin, where he remained until his retirement in 1928. In addition to the works mentioned, Marcks published a lengthy biography of Wilhelm I for the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, which would later be published separately. He wrote an assessment of Bismarck's *Gedanken und Erinnerungen*, and his subsequent *Lebensbild* of Bismarck went through twenty-six printings. Numerous essays and lectures were published under the title *MÃ¤nner und Zeiten.* His final major work, *Aufstieg des Reiches*, appeared in 1936, two years before his death.

Since then, Marcks has been by and large neglected. Jens Nordalm notes that he has not been the sole subject of any scholarly monograph, but rather has been lumped together with a number of other historians who were considered to be part of the "Ranke Renaissance." Specifically, Nordalm wants to free Marcks from association with the "neo-Rankean" historians of the late imperial era, especially Max Lenz. To this end, Nordalm takes on the standard, but now rather dated, views put forth by Hans-Heinz Krill and Christoph Weisz.[1]

To separate Marcks from Lenz and other "neo-Rankeans," Nordalm wants to challenge the conventional interpretation of Marcks and question the usefulness of the concepts "neo-Rankean" and "Ranke Renaissance." Nordalm's alternative interpretation of Marcks is based not only on Marcks's works, but also his remaining diaries and letters and the desire to situate Marcks in the

broader cultural currents of the time.

After a short summary of Marcks's life and career in the introduction, the work is divided into three sections: "Der KÃ¼nstler," "Der Wissenschaftler," and "Der Politiker." In "Der KÃ¼nstler" Nordalm makes his strongest pitch to separate Marcks from Max Lenz, and others associated with the "Ranke Renaissance" (Hans DelbrÃ¼ck, Otto Hintze, and Friedrich Meinecke). According to Nordalm, the key to understanding Marcks is his writing style. Marcks had aestheticized historical writing. Nordalm draws upon the work of Hayden White and Daniel Fulda to support the similarities between history and literature in terms of narrative strategies. This aestheticization distinguished him from the neo-Rankeans. Marcks's keen literary sensibility played a crucial role in his method of *Anschauung* and *EinfÃ¼hlung*. Influenced by the novellas of Paul Heyse and Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, Marcks partakes in what Nordalm refers to as "Geschichtsschreibung aus dem Geiste des poetischen Realismus" (pp. 76-81).[2] Nordalm closes the first section by examining Marcks's connection to the contemporary art scene (especially during his time in Hamburg, where he was a close friend of Alfred Lichtwark). Here emphasis falls on the "impressionistic" aspects of Marcks's work. Returning to Marcks's style, Nordalm refers to "Impressionismus als Kunst der Nuance, Kunst vor allem der Adjektive" (p. 52). Rather than providing the reader with an authoritative master narrative, Marcks's impressionistic style provides the reader with all of the available information and lets the reader decide.

"Der Wissenschaftler" is an attempt to refute obvious intellectual criticism that could arise from the first section. The emphasis on the aesthetic aspects of Marcks's style and the principles of *Anschauung* and *EinfÃ¼hlung* could leave Marcks open to the charge of irrationalism. Nordalm answers this charge by pointing to Marcks's wide reading and scrupulous use of sources. In an attempt to reach a proper understanding of the material and the time, Marcks does apply some psychological insights in his biographical analysis, first of Coligny and later Bismarck. Nordalm argues that Marcks's methodological approach and his concern for social and economic factors put him much closer to cultural historians such as Jacob Burkhardt, Karl Lamprecht, Walter Goetz, and Aby Warburg, or the economic historian Gustav Schmoller, than to the traditional political/diplomatic historians dubbed neo-Rankeans. Even while claiming that Marcks can in no way be considered a neo-Rankean, Nordalm takes issue with the concept of a Ranke Renaissance. Nordalm observes that after the tenure of Heinrich von Treitschke, holding up Ranke as a model to be emulated in terms of scholarly standards and detachment was not a bad thing. If that is what was meant by a Ranke Renaissance, then there certainly was one, and it was a good thing. But in Nordalm's judgment, admiring and adhering to Ranke's professional standards did not make one a neo-Rankean.

The last section, "Der Politiker," is a discussion of Marcks's writing, letters, and public lectures in the context of *Gelehrtenpolitik*. The section examines Marcks's views and reactions to the dismissal of his idol Bismarck, Anglo-German relations, German imperialism, the war, the collapse of the Reich, and the founding of the Republic. The section closes with a brief discussion of the Republic after Locarno and the rise of Hitler. Marcks was a fervent admirer of Bismarck and his social politics as a way to confront the changing social and economic structure of the German Empire. Wilhelm II's dismissal of Bismarck left Marcks with an ambivalent attitude toward the Kaiser, but he remained a strong supporter of the monarchy. During the war, Marcks was not an annexationist, but he did lend his open support to the war by offering numerous public lectures on behalf of the German cause. Marcks stayed in his post at Munich rather than going to Berlin when he had an opportunity because he felt he could have more influence in the Bavarian capital. After the war, Marcks could not be counted among the supporters of the Weimar Republic and Nordalm's attempt to place his views in line with *Vernunftrepublikaner* like Meinecke are unconvincing. When the National Socialists came to power, Marcks was concerned about their crassness, but, like many who could not be classified as National Socialists, he approved of their nationalist agenda.

Nordalm is ultimately successful in his endeavor to distance Marcks from Lenz and the moniker "neo-Rankean." In the narrowest sense of the term, Marcks was not one. Although his biography of Bismarck certainly falls into the Rankean category of the history of great men, Marcks's work was not solely focused on political and diplomatic history or questions of "balance of power." Indeed, he cast his net more broadly to consider factors that Ranke omitted. That said, it is not a stretch to consider Marcks a next-generation Rankean. The works on Coligny, Elizabeth I, and Bismarck could all be fairly read as natural extensions of Ranke's agenda, particularly in its focus on the fortunes of nations. But that similarity in and of itself does not provide the term "neo-Rankean" with any new explanatory power and the term itself may have as little value as the notion of a "Ranke Renaissance."

The book is not without its difficulties. The first section on Marcks's aesthetic sensibility is problematic. The use of White's work to explicate Marcks's historiographical approach is, at best, superficial. Within White's typologies, Nordalm puts Marcks in the category of "Contextualist": with formist and romantic strains and a tie to organicism.[3] This mixture of categories, which could apply to virtually all nineteenth-century historians, including White's archetypes, does not shed any meaningful analytical light on Marcks's work. Nordalm's discussion of Marcks's aesthetic sensibility is more a praise of his literary style than an examination of how the epistemological position outlined by White affects the construction of Marcks's historical narrative. Also surprising, considering Nordalm's interest in the fictive elements of historical narratives, is the lack of reflection on Marcks's diaries and letters. They are accepted at face value without much critical examination.

The organization of the book is also problematic. The three sections are designed to identify different layers of Marcks's work. However, the result is a significant amount of overlap and repetition among the three sections, as well as repetition within them. On more than one occasion, the text repeats citations from Marcks's work verbatim. For example, the following observation from *Gaspard von Coligny*: "alles neu, und doch das Neue mit dem FrÃ¼heren sich zwanglos vereinigend, eine Gage der reichen Fremde und dennoch franzÃ¶sisch durch und durch" appears on consecutive pages (pp. 39, 40).

Nordalm is to be credited for attempting a novel approach to his subject and he has provided a useful service by calling into question the validity of the notions of a "Ranke Renaissance" and "neo-Rankeans." Had he modeled his approach along the lines of Lloyd Kramer's *Lafayette in Two Worlds. Public Cultures and Personal Identities in an Age of Revolution*, he might have written a more concise book.

Notes

[1]. Hans-Heinz Krill, *Die Rankerenaissance. Max Lenz und Erich Marks. Ein Beitrag zum historisch-politischen Denken in Deutschland 1880-1935* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962); and Christoph Weisz, *Geschichtsauffassung und politisches Denken MÃ¼nchner Historiker der Weimar Zeit. Konrad Beyerle, Max Buchner, Michael Doeberl, Erich Marcks, Karl Alexander von MÃ¼ller, Hermann Oncken* (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1970).

[2]. Hayden White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973); and Daniel Fulda, *Wissenschaft aus Kunst. Die Entstehung der modernen deutschen Geschichtsschreibung 1760-1860* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1996).

[3]. White, pp. 1-42.