

# H-Net Reviews

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Mary Lindemann, ed. *Ways of Knowing: Ten Interdisciplinary Essays*. Boston: Brill, 2003. xxiv + 219 pp. \$120.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-391-04184-4.

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Every three years, the FNI conference (Frühe Neuzeit Interdisziplinär) brings together students of early modern German history, literature, art, and music, eager to share their latest research and to take stock of new developments in the field. "Ways of Knowing" served as the conference's umbrella theme for the 2002 meeting that took place in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It now is the title of the publication under review here which contains ten outstanding essays based on papers from this conference. As the volume's editor, Mary Lindemann, explains, the theme of knowledge is twopronged: "Ways of Knowing" refers to what counted as knowledge in early modern Germany as well as to how knowledge was collected, used, and understood. The individual essays successfully take up and probe this conceptual framework from a variety of perspectives. I have divided the papers into three sections, knowledge/representation, knowledge/religion, and knowledge/law and government.

The volume's first part focuses on the intersection of representation and knowledge. Surveying early modern hippological publications, Pia F. Cuneo detects frequent comparisons or conflation between horses and women. She contends that the supposed affinities between females and animals must be understood against the backdrop of a Renaissance epistemology that revolved around similarities and dissimilarities. Such a descriptive nexus could be mustered to assign both virtues and vices to women. With great acumen, the author investigates these vagaries of "the gendered nature of equine knowledge" (p. 18). While hippology is an area in which elite pursuits encountered popular knowledge, Janice Neri artfully investigates the visual conventions that shaped knowledge in the late sixteenth century. The artist Joris Hoefnagel's imaging of insects draws on sev-

eral matrices of visual representation, border illustrations in manuscripts as well as Albrecht Dürer's studies of nature among them. In light of the artist's aim to delight and surprise the viewer, represented nature is interestingly porous. Hoefnagel's visual project combines imagined insects with insects copied from nature; at times, it squares calligraphy with the study of insects. Neri reminds us that naturalism is only one of several impulses in the production of early modern nature imagery: "concepts such as accuracy and careful observation possess highly contextual meanings within the realm of visual representation" (p. 44). Usually, *naturalia*, that is, natural objects, had a firm place among the visual wonders housed in the *Wunderkammer*, or cabinet of curiosities. In "The Management of Knowledge at the Electoral Court of Saxony in Dresden," Helen Watanabe-O'Kelly shows succinctly that the Dresden cabinet differed from other collections in that regard. Its founder, August I (r. 1553-86), specialized in practical knowledge. As could be appreciated recently in the Metropolitan Museum's exhibition "Princely Splendor: The Dresden Court 1580-1620," Saxony's collection featured predominantly instruments and tools, maps, and books. Only Elector Johann Georg I showed an interest in things natural and instituted an anatomy chamber (after 1612). In "Facts or Fiction: Reading and Writing in Early Modern Popular Literature," Elisabeth Wüghall Nivre makes an important contribution to research on Georg Wickram's German prose novels. Many studies have been devoted to this literary innovator whose printed texts were inventions based on a variety of sources rather than retellings of extant tales. Yet few literary critics have grappled with Wickram's narratology. Wüghall Nivre demonstrates vividly that Wickram embraced a notion of fictional truth in which "examples can express the knowledge gained from expe-

rience" (p. 69). As exemplary tales, such texts embodied a claim to universal knowledge. Whether his audience accepted such an ambitious vision is hard to know.

The second section concerns cultures of knowledge within early Protestantism. Susan R. Boettcher analyzes Lutheran iconography from the decade after 1546, when the Cranach studio started to insert portraits of Luther and other Reformers into altarpieces painted for Lutheran churches, interlacing biblical scenes with contemporary Protestantism. According to Boettcher, this visual archive engendered a collective memory of Lutheranism at a moment when Luther's legacy became the subject of debates. While images had to be "clearly confessional and comprehensible" (p. 105), we would be misguided, the author states persuasively, to view these images as propaganda. Histories of Protestantism have traditionally described this historical moment in terms of a division between Phillipists, followers of Melancthon, and Gnesio-Lutherans, the guardians of Luther's achievements. Yet as a pointed analysis of Cranach's altarpieces from this period shows, these conflicts had relatively little impact on the visual commemoration of the Lutheran Reform. Instead, Boettcher asserts, these icons perpetuated the "previous cultural traditions" of medieval Catholicism. They reveal "a Lutheran culture caught in a complicated web of tensions between the remembered past and the hoped-for future" (p. 98). Mitchell Lewis Hammond takes on a different aspect of sixteenth-century confessional formation. He unearths the slow but steady emergence of a Reformation "art of dying." Gradually, "reformers shifted the focus away from the soul's departure and gave greater attention to care for the dying person before the moment of death" (p. 114). Reform theologians, while approaching sickness spiritually, advocated that believers seek professional help from trained doctors. Attentive to an impressive range of texts, Hammond's article opens a fascinating window on notions, beliefs, and practices that, in the long run, helped to bring about a Protestant culture of the dead. In "How to Do Things with God," Francisca Loetz examines the interrogations and trials of men who were brought before the council of Zurich for the charge of blasphemy (1500-1800). What the authorities called blasphemy encompassed a broad range of activities and attitudes, however. Read against the grain, the documents indicate a "social knowledge of everyday life" (p. 151) and give a glimpse of how religion was experienced. In this colorful essay, the blasphemers who populated Zurich and who caused much anxiety among officials are not subsumed into a collective popular culture of religion.

Thanks to the power of language, we encounter individual agents. How people drew God into their lives verbally depended much on the context of their utterances: conflicts over status and honor, provocation, religious discussion, and jocular conversation provided some of the social contexts for what was considered blasphemy by the authorities.

The exercise of governmental authority and the passing of new legislation required rulers and their representatives to collect information on their subjects. This form of knowledge is the focus of papers by Jason Coy and Terence McIntosh. In a vivid portrait of sixteenth-century Ulm, Coy tackles a paradox that haunted many an authority. While councilors claimed to defend God's order, the police forces to actualize such a claim were extremely small, at least by modern standards. Inefficiency and incompetence undermined official policing and monitoring efforts further. At a time when a patrician regime had replaced a council controlled by guilds, rulers therefore continued to rely on the collaboration of those who were ruled. In fact, officials had a variety of measures at their disposal: they collected information from the Lutheran clergy; they interrogated witnesses and the accused in ongoing judicial procedures; and they encouraged and relied on denunciations, though many of them proved to be false. The conclusion—that in early modern Ulm power was constantly negotiated—can hardly be surprising. But the finely woven analysis illuminates very well how these different strategies intersected, shaping the very nature of urban government. By contrast, Terence McIntosh studies the complexities of legal change and reform. In a gem of a case study, the author looks at the changing responses to public church penance in early modern Saxony. Instituted with the Reformation to reign in illicit behavior, sexual behavior above all, the ritualized exposure of sinners during church services became a bone of contention around 1700. Church discipline had been enforced inconsistently and episodically for many decades when, in the early eighteenth century, concerns over a perceived rise in sexual irregularities and infanticide abounded. With these concerns, the question arose how to combat these evils and restore order. While opponents argued that public church penance itself caused offenders to commit crimes, defenders made the opposite claim. When reform came about in 1756, it was partially in response to reforms in other territories. These are only some of the intricacies of this study at the interface of secularization, bureaucratization, and the formation of civil society during the early Enlightenment. Finally, Robert Beachy's deft contribution concerns a much neglected

area, the cultural history of early modern business practices, namely the “complex interactions of business, cultural, and legal changes in shaping a new economic consciousness” (p. 172). On one level, “The Eclipse of Usury” is a case study of the Leipzig financier Gottfried Winckler who defaulted in 1723 and fled to avoid prosecution. His spectacular demise unleashed a barrage of responses, among them legislative measures to regulate bankruptcy. On the other hand, this essay is a study of a conceptual and cultural shift, that from usury to bankruptcy. As Beachy makes clear, the moral issues that were embedded in the concept of usury attached themselves also to bankruptcy, which caused a “social death.”

Almost inevitably, such an anthology prompts questions of a general kind—questions as to how this collection is situated in early modern German studies at large and what it tells us about the field’s present or future directions. Let me proffer some scattered observations to this effect. First, the authors in this volume are delightfully unorthodox with regard to their sources of inspiration. They take their cue from a variety of theoretical perspectives: Cuneo and Neri from Michel Foucault’s *The Order of Things* (1973), Loetz from Austin’s speech act theory, Boettcher from the burgeoning literature on memory, and similar approaches. Other contributions where such links may be less obvious, however, are no less theoretically astute. McIntosh’s contribution, for instance, productively reframes Isabel Hull’s groundbreaking *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society* (1996) as a microstudy of how legal change was debated, experienced, and executed. Second, one of the volume’s focal points is the construction of visual knowledge. Many contributors benefit from the upswing of interest in visual histories. To pick just one example: Beachy’s analysis of economic and cultural change crystallizes in a fine reading of an image published in a 1724 pamphlet. The increasing significance of images, visual literacy, and visuality for the study of early modern Europe means to push the limits of text-based methodologies. It remains a *desideratum* to enmesh our novel interest in the visual more promiscuously with other categories of historical analysis, such as class, gender, and agency, for instance.

Third, cutting-edge research on early modern Germany has moved away from the early years of the various religious reforms in the sixteenth century (and their prehistory) to the period of rapid confessional formation after 1550. Significantly, not one paper tackles the early years of the Reformation—a period that was the focal point of much research from the 1970s through the 1990s. Doubtlessly, other readers of this volume will make observations different from the ones suggested here—a fact that bespeaks the rich resonance of these formidable essays and of the volume as a whole.

Despite this wealth of perspectives on early modern “ways of knowing,” there are also marked absences. Let me point to one that is of the greatest significance for a historical sociology of knowledge in the early modern period. None of these contributions studies the painstaking measures taken by early modern authorities and elites to keep knowledge from those deemed unworthy to share it. The ever more sophisticated forms of censorship or the exclusivity of certain forms of knowledge in the age of print remain largely outside the purview of these contributions. Such themes would warrant an explicit discussion, precisely because the “management of knowledge,” to use Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly’s title, implies a historical dialectic between dissemination and disciplining. Who had access and when to Saxony’s cabinet of curiosities? Asking questions of usage and access will help us assess whether or how the Dresden collection, to stay with this example, actually contributed to the production of new and practical sciences.

How the editor, Mary Lindemann, got away with the volume’s title is a secret I am sure many readers would like to know. Members of this list might be well advised to avail themselves of this secret knowledge in future negotiations with publishers. I fear that with a title as vague as *Ways of Knowing: Ten Interdisciplinary Essays*, the excellent contributions in this volume will not find their way to readers in the field of early modern German Studies or in early modern studies at large. May this review help to prevent this from happening. Dear reader, get to know *Ways of Knowing*.

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