

Summer School 2010: Crossroads

Shaping Europe: Imagined Spaces and Cultural Transactions 1450 - 1700

with: Proff. Dominique Brancher, Susanna Burghartz, Christine Göttler, Anthony Grafton, Ina Haberman, Margaret Healy, Silvana Seidel Menchi, Jeanette Nuechterlein, Anita Traninger



Basel, 29.8.2010 - 4.9.2010

1st Day

The first of three sections of the International Summer School „Shaping Europe: Crossroads“ entitled „**Networks of Communication**“ opened with a lecture by Silvana Seidel-Menchi (Pisa) on „The Local goes Global. Erasmus as Politician“. Seidel-Menchi convincingly showed that a locatable specific event may eventually originate something global, i.e. durable and general. Her exemplary close reading of the political situation in London in March 1514, more precisely of a speech in parliament in favour of the possible ‚recapture‘ of France in comparison with a letter of Erasmus to Antony of Bergen offers an interesting insight in the mechanisms of Erasmus‘ politics of production and transmission of ideas. In his occasional, politically triggered letter Erasmus already formulated a concept of pacifism that would be published a year later by Froben in Basel and became ‚global‘ (i.e. basically european) in the future.

Another aspect of the Erasmian network was addressed by Anita Traninger (Berlin) in her lecture „Framing Erasmus – Historical Person and Textual Persona“. Traninger traced in life and work of Erasmus at least three different „figures“: First – and nearly unseizable behind the others – Erasmus „the man“; secondly the medialized Erasmus – an image carefully worked on and shaped by Erasmus himself, and lastly the *persona* of the texts – which allows to distance the author from the narrator of the texts. Traninger identified the *declamatio* as the genre in which this separation of author and persona is possible and which also is frequently used to articulate critique. By writing the humanistic *declamatio* a space opens up, in which uncertainties and ambivalences are not only permitted but requested.

In her lecture on „Holbein, Humanism, and Publishing in Basel“ Jeanne Nuechterlein (York) raised the question of what might be „humanistic painting“ or „Reformation painting“. Using Hans Holbein the Younger and his career aspirations as example she showed that the artist fitted well into the humanistic networks where his skills were required, but nevertheless wasn‘t an integral part of that group. Secondly Nuechterlein argued that Holbein was well prepared to show his skills and his know-how at the right place at the right time: he conceived „show pieces“ for every possible audience respectively patron, whether this might be basilean burghers, printers and Humanists, the French or the English court. And he moved rather smoothly within different European networks to achieve remuneration and status.

The program was on the following three days enriched by guided visits to the Historisches Museum, Basel, the Kunstmuseum, Basel, the Unterlinden Museum, Colmar, and the Pharmazeutisches Museum, Basel.

2nd Day

The second section was entitled „**Sites of Mediation**“.

In her lecture on “The Secrets of Silenus. Art, Mythology, and Local History in Early 17th Century Antwerp. Ruben’s Sleeping Silenus in the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts” Christine Göttler (Bern) presented a collaborative painting which combines the figure of a sleeping Silenus in a grotto, painted by Peter Paul Rubens, with a banquet still life of an unknown painter, showing different kinds of luxury drinking vessels which were produced in Antwerp, Chinese bowls, and jugs, sometimes with the décor of maritime sceneries, representing and reflecting trade, Antwerp as a major trading city, and the involvement of the merchant-collectors in these global networks. In the painting there is a tension between the mythological figure of Silenus, who is associated with ‘secrets’ and, most of all, ‘secret knowledge’, and on the other hand the material objects of the banquet still life, which themselves also carry a message about the high value of knowledge. The diverse precious vessels, the Chinese bowl, made of porcelain, or the shimmering, shiny, and reflecting *façon de Venise* glasses stand for the specific knowledge, that lies behind their manufacturing process, concrete: the knowledge of mathematics and alchemy. On a second level the painting technique represents this knowledge also through the fact, that the surface of the painting is shimmering as well. So there are correspondences between the artist’s skills and the techniques of glassmaking. Art, craft, and alchemy stood in a close dependency.

In her lecture entitled “Making Europe, forming elites, creating New Worlds: The Workshop of the de Bry and their editorial projects” Susanna Burghartz (Basel) spoke about the workshop of the de Bry family and their editorial project of the America-series, structured into three sections: biographical approach, book history, and representations / discourses ‘of the west and the rest. Theodore de Bry, with and after him his sons Johan Theodore and Johan Israel, and later on Johan Theodore’s son-in-law Matthaeus Merian, published from 1590 to 1630 the 14 volumes of the *Grands voyages* as the America-series was called. From the beginning, the *Grands voyages* were available in four languages (french, latin, german, english) and – different from, for example, Richard Hakluyt’s *Principal Navigations* – the de Bry followed a ‘supra-national’ concept and combined in their volumes travel accounts from different nations. Although their main focus laid on travelogues of protestant writers, they also included texts by catholic travellers. There can be traced a strong market orientation of the de Bry an their editing project, above all from volume nine on, when the Dutch entered the oceans and thus the series. Beside the texts, the America-volumes included a huge number of engravings. Burghartz presented as examples the engraving showing Captain Laudonniere with the indigenous inhabitants of Florida and the encounter between members of a ship-crew and mermaids swimming in a bay off Newfoundland. By the perceivable tension between distancing and belonging, between longing, curiosity and danger, between attraction and repulsion, the engravings visualized and reflected the difficulty of encounters, and the process of self-positioning. With the collection, (re-)combination and edition of the travelogues and the engravings, the de Bry contributed to a “imaginary archive”, out of which the new topographies of identity were shaped.

3rd Day

The last section was devoted to the „**Intersections of knowledge**“. In her lecture „Anatomical Prints“ Dominique Brancher focused anatomical illustrations and flap broadsheets as intersections of anatomical knowledge, erotic and theology. She stated a shifting from religious im-

agery to anatomical icons. The scientific discourse on sexuality and reproduction manifests itself in the face of the history of creation. Especially the popular interest in the female body, its reproductive organs and the mystery of childbirth was transmitted by religious images of Adam and Eve. She located a tradition from late medieval shrine Madonnas, which one can open to see the mystery of incarnation, to the 15th century flap anatomy prints. They are all playing with the hiding and unveiling of the mystery of the female body respectively the body of the saint. The invisible is made visible.

The spectators gaze on the female body in flap anatomy prints was rather a voyeuristic curiosity in a more scientific area than in a sexual or pornographically.

In the second lecture “Paracelsian Bodies and the chemical imagination” Margaret Healy stressed on the knowledge that travels; its circulation and validation as well as the shifting of popular and elite cultures of knowledge. On Theophrastus von Hohenheim (1493-1541), who gave himself the name Paracelsus, one knows little. Hardly anything of his knowledge was published during his lifetime. But throughout the centuries he was attributed with different identities. He became a wide screen on which many qualities are projected; condemned as charlatan, glorified as godfather of new medicine or compared with Luther as a restless fighter for the true belief the spectrum is far-ranging. Often described as itinerant preacher for his new form of medicine (based rather on direct experience than on learned (book)-knowledge) his works had great influence on 16th and 17th century natural philosophy and the establishment of experimental science. The main centers for the distribution of Paracelsian knowledge were the courts. Especially the court of Rudolf II in Prague was a center for occult knowledge, alchemy and cabbala. Within the channels of courtly communication Paracelsian knowledge traveled, spread and underwent constant transformation.

In the last lecture of the workshop Anthony Grafton was highlighting the networks, informants and intermediaries of Jewish knowledge: "Jewish Go-Betweens: Basel-Venice". He started with two important anticipations. 1. Historical persons are not static or uniform figures but rather complex, acting in different roles at the same time. 2. Networks are imperfect. An ideal flow of information does/did not exist. As a productive model of heuristic value for the analysis of learned networks he presented Peter Galison's concept of trading zones: in certain places different people, with different interests or different confessions can come together and collaborate. They establish contact languages and various systems of discourse, which would not be possible outside the area of the trading zone. For Grafton, Basel and books printed there were such trading zones. Basel can be analyzed as an intermediary between Jews and Europe; between 1550 and 1650 it was the most important center for Jewish knowledge. In a time were Jews were not allowed to live within the city gates the printing house of Johann Buxtorf, the elder, Catholics, Protestants and Jews collaborated as editors and correctors of Jewish books. As one of these printing results, the rabbinic bible of Johann Buxtorf represents itself a trading zone. The book is neither completely Jewish nor Christian but all parts can get along with.

To sum up the whole week was marked by excellent lectures followed by lively and informed discussions showing the interferences of printing, trade, religion, art and knowledge making in 16th and 17th century Europe. By detecting and describing the various networks, contact and trading zones of Europe Basel emerged together with Antwerp, Frankfurt and London as an important crossroad for the shaping of early modern Europe.

(Tina Asmussen, Franziska Hilfiker and Anja Rathmann-Lutz)