

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Goeing, Anja-Silvia (2012) The Making of the Humanities. Volume 1- Early Modern Europe [Book review]. Renaissance Quarterly, 65 (3). pp. 871-873. ISSN 0034-4338

Published by: Renaissance Society of America

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/15844/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

www.northumbria.ac.uk/nrl



Anja-Silvia Goeing, 'Rens Bod, Jaap Maat, Thijs Weststeijn (eds.). *The Making of the Humanities. Volume 1- Early Modern Europe*. Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2010', *Renaissance Quarterly* 65 (2012), H. 3, 871-873

Review of: *The Making of the Humanities. Vol. 1: Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010

When we think of Humanities in early modern times we are usually thinking about school and academy syllabi that were built up on the specific tradition of European Latinitas. This was the central concern of the widely discussed 1986 book by Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in 15th and 16th Century Europe*. Their central argument, that the humanities started with scholars like Peter Ramus, who unhinged humanist teaching from its moral foundations, is subsumed beneath an altogether different view of the beginning of the humanities in this collective volume, *The Making of the Humanities*. Writing about early modern Humanities in this book is synonymous with writing about a bunch of disciplines that came into being much later. The authors treat the humanities as traditions of specific knowledge that are connected to politics and scholarly practices, of which teaching is not the pivotal one. Eighteen case studies describe correcting, streaming, gathering, transferring knowledge in fields preceding those that came to be called the humanities in the 19th century. Contributors take a comparative view in order to build contexts with other fields and discuss different methods and formats. Protagonists include the polymath Giordano Bruno (1548-1600), the Roman Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (c1601-1680) and the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677). The strength of this book lies in the way it connects these well-known profiles to lesser-known figures, and in its discussion of those fields, including the visual arts, linguistics and history, that had scarcely been defined among the *artes liberales* in the humanism of the 15th and 16th centuries. As this book shows, the significance of these disciplines for the academy grew immensely in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The chapters examine the history of disciplines that today are regarded as separate and distinct. Starting with the gap that scholars of today feel between Humanities and the Sciences and notably leaving the Social Sciences out of the argument, the editors seem to have encouraged contributors to form pairs under the following section headings: "Visual Arts as Liberal Arts", "Humanism and Heresy", "Language and Poetics", "Linguists and Logicians", "Philology and Philosophy", "The History of History". Each group connects two or three articles. Six essays make some of the most compelling contributions to current scholarship. F. Cohen's overview article examines the development of the discipline of music. Stemming from mathematics, music separated in the 17th century into the science of acoustics and the content-driven discipline of musicology, which became part of the humanities. I. Rowland and J. Groenland show from two different angles, philosophy and teaching, that in the first half of the sixteenth century scholarly practices helped shape a world view

beyond specific fields of academic knowledge. Seen from this point of view, sixteenth-century practices seem remote from our modern notion of the disciplines. M. Jónsson traces a major thread of common European textual culture in the late 17th century Danish and Norwegian academies. Arnas Magnaeus (1663-1730), student of theology in Copenhagen, collected, transcribed and edited medieval manuscripts of Icelandic sagas and histories. He introduced humanist traditions of accurate transcription into this field and stumbled over the compilation of textual variants. After his death, his collection of close to 3000 manuscripts went to the university of Copenhagen. T. Weststeijn discusses Athanasius Kircher's interpretation of Chinese script as symbols that reveal themselves, connecting the visual and the verbal. Finally, W. Hanegraaff identifies the work of Jacob Brucker (1696-1770) as one of the most influential philosophical studies in the 17th and 18th centuries. Brucker used a historical approach to separate Christian and classical philosophical thinking. With this he not only criticized sharply hybrid forms like Neoplatonism but also paved the way to modern philosophical thinking.

The purpose of this book is to answer two questions: first, the question of "what" – what kind of organizing principles did academic knowledge deploy in different early modern settings; and second, the question of "how" – how did academic knowledge in Europe come to be what it is in modern times? The authors' focus on the non-sciences is intended to fill a lack that the editors see when compared to the existing, vast literature written about the history of the sciences. The book is therefore most valuable to academics studying the history of European academic knowledge.

ANJA-SILVIA GOEING California Institute of Technology