

Ulrike Schneider and Anita Traninger, eds. *Fiktionen des Faktischen in der Renaissance*.

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The title of the essay collection, which translates into “Fictions of the Factual in the Renaissance,” historicizes a phrase coined by Reinhart Koselleck. The late German historian claimed that every historical investigation and representation of past events lives on a “fiction of the factual” that characterizes both historical and literary writing. Koselleck’s article “Darstellung, Ereignis, Struktur” was published in 1973 (in Gerhard Schulze, ed., *Geschichte heute: Positionen, Tendenzen, Probleme* [Göttingen]), in the same year as Hayden White’s seminal *Metahistory*. Historians like Koselleck and White are interested in the necessary interferences of historical and literary discourses. While their works investigate the “Fiction of Factual Representation” (White) from a theoretical perspective, and, to a certain extent, level the differences between historiography and literature, the contributions of the volume gathered by Ulrike Schneider and Anita Traninger aim at a careful “charting of the grey areas” (7) characteristic for Renaissance culture, which consciously stages its fictions of the factual. Renaissance literature in particular, as the ten philological essays of this conference volume present it, is a permanent renegotiation and reevaluation of fact and fiction. Eliding the unmasking gesture of some branches of postmodern criticism the essay collection focuses not so much on collisions of fact and fiction, but on the ambiguous texture of Renaissance literature, whose truth claims escape, it is argued, the conceptual framework of contemporary theories of history and fiction.

By historicizing the debate enhanced by historians such as Koselleck and White the book develops more refined concepts of factuality and fictionality that turn out to depend on the historical, pragmatic, and generic contexts of the works discussed. Placing an emphasis on Romance literatures, its essays cover a remarkable array of literary genres such as drama, epic, historiography, autobiography, philology, dialogue, satire, and poetry. Nearly all of them are concerned with questions of generic tradition and the imitation of classical and medieval role models: Klaus W. Hempfer sets forth the “functions of the factual in fiction” (“Funktionen des Faktischen in der Fiktion”) in Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso* by tying the esthetical references of the epic tradition to encomiastic elements that evoke a historical frame

of reference. He thereby tries to overcome the conceptual boundaries of fact and fiction through a notion of the poetic not as an anti-pole to reality, but rather as a way of creating it. While Hempfer stresses the factuality of fiction, Marc Föcking elaborates on the multilayered composition of historical facts in Poliziano's commentary on the Pazzi conspiracy in Florence. By developing a threefold model of early modern factuality he accounts for the irreconcilability of the Renaissance poetics of imitation with modern notions of historical facts that inform, for instance, Lauro Martines' popular account of the Pazzi conspiracy, *April Blood*. A slightly different form of intertextuality characterizes the autobiographical facts in Thomas Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* and *Series*, which, according to Andrew James Johnston, turn out to be part of a poetic project: Hoccleve's imitation and emulation of his model author Chaucer undermines the alleged authenticity of his texts — its autobiographical traces are obliterated by metafictional play.

In many Renaissance texts the question of genre is most closely intertwined with a careful pinpointing of their instances of speech. Taking issue with autobiographical readings of Ariosto's satires, Susanne Goumegou explores the self-fashioning of the poet within the satiric tradition. According to her intertextual analysis, Ariosto's conscious play with the satiric persona points beyond the realm of the factual, i.e., his historical situation at the Este court, to new models of authorship and thus to a reality yet to be created. The ambiguous frame of reference of Renaissance literature, therefore, as a number of essays demonstrate, hinges on its pragmatic context, particularly on the subjects of speech. Whereas historiography is based on the congruence of the narrator with the real author, literary texts draw upon the disjunction of intra-textual and extra-textual instances of speech. This becomes most obvious in the philological dissections of genres such as drama, literary dialogue, and lyrical poetry, which, time and again, suggest and deconstruct the identity of textual speakers on the one hand, and of historical actors and authors on the other.

Owing to these recurrent questions and themes, the book, despite its variety of texts and subjects, maintains an encompassing perspective that links its individual essays together. Thus, it does not primarily offer new theoretical approaches, but it brilliantly performs — and this is by no means to play down its originality — sophisticated philological techniques in order to expose the Renaissance fictions of the factual without destroying their ambiguity.

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