

Study Group on Gender History in the Early Modern Period (AKGG-FNZ)
11.06.2003-11.08.2003, Stuttgart-Hohenheim

Excerpts from the report by Andrea Geier (h-soz-u-kult, 02/12/2003)
translated by Hannah Friedman and Andrea Griesebner

The conference on "Knowledge - Gender - Science", organized and led by Maren Lorenz (Hamburg), Monika Mommertz (Berlin), Claudia Opitz (Basel) and Dieter R. Bauer (Stuttgart) set itself the task of "localizing Gender History of the Early Modern Period within the tension of the concepts of Knowledge and Science" (event brochure). Ten lectures and a round table discussion offered a variety of historical discourses on "knowledge" and "science"; the panels were as follows: "Mediation and Appropriation of Knowledge", "Belief and/or Knowledge?", and "Man - Myth - Science". The variety of the fields of knowledge, social contexts, and pragmatic literary discourses under discussion reflected not only how much broader the field of "Knowledge" becomes when one looks at it beyond the boundaries of institutions, but also the effectiveness of Gender History within this field of study. Conflicts between different forms of knowledge - specifically, historically different conceptualizations of "knowledge" and "science" - were specified and differentiated, as was the strategic use of gender-specific allocations regarding the capacity for, production of, and mediation of knowledge within this disputed field. Considering the wide spectrum of topics discussed during the conference, one might critically remark that only a few of the lectures dealt with female actors and their agency. Most of the lectures dealt with female learning and the education of women from a male perspective. The intense discussions continually offered the opportunity for fundamental methodological debates. The discussions ran the gamut from the "male fear of female knowledge", learned treatises which consider the chances and risks inherent in the education and intellectual work of women, to the obligations inherent in the concept of a "new knowledge".

The opening keynote was delivered by Elisabeth Gössmann (München/Tokyo) on the theme of "Early Modern conflict surrounding the Pope Johanna and men's fear of learned women and the latter's access to seats of power". Starting with Church law and the theological 'anthropology' of women in the 12th and 13th centuries, according to which only man was created in God's image, Ms. Gössmann outlined the different uses which the Dominicans and Franciscans drew from the Johanna-story.

The different questions and methodological perspectives on knowledge introduced at the round table discussion had in common their concern with historical possibilities and the prerequisites of knowledge. The closing session emphasized the most productive aspect of the conference: the importance given to methodological and theoretical discussions, which opens up the possibility for interdisciplinary talk and also for reflection on one's own knowledge production.

The next conference will focus on Religion – Culture – Gender.

It will take place from Thursday 04/11/2004 - Saturday 06/11/2004, Stuttgart-Hohenheim
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