

ceived by the Arnhem sisters. She argues that Maria's Eucharistic piety anchors devotion in liturgical ceremony, reinvigorating Church structures and hierarchies precisely as they were being threatened by the Reformation. Both these contributions, as well as Arthur Marotti's essay on Dame Gertrude More, probe the relationships of the women to their confessors and their strategies for asserting spiritual and personal independence within the strictures of Catholic hierarchy. Bethany Wiggin's essay on the Protestant community at Ephrata in Pennsylvania provides an interesting counterpoint in its exploration of the modes of control exercised not only over women but over the writing of women's histories.

As with any edited volume the contributions vary in quality, and those with the broadest reach suffer the most for being too short to handle their topic sufficiently. Jeffrey Hamburger and Hildegard Keller's joint essay on images and iconoclasm is particularly egregious in name-dropping without explanation. Nevertheless, I deem many of the central essays truly excellent. Furthermore, the variety of methods modeled as well as the continuities and interrelations between the essays make the volume more than the sum of its parts. This collection would not serve as a good introduction to early modern mysticism. It will be of greatest interest to scholars in the field seeking new incitements to research, whether as graduate students finding a dissertation topic or established scholars looking for new excitements.

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### **Poetry As a Way of Life: Aesthetics and Askesis in the German Eighteenth Century.**

*By Gabriel Trop. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2015. xii + 388 pages. \$89.95.*

Novalis, in a short poetological text entitled "Poesie," remarks: "und wenn die Philosophie durch ihre Gesetzgebung die Welt erst zu dem wirksamen Einfluß der Ideen bereitet, so ist gleichsam Poesie der Schlüssel der Philosophie, ihr Zweck und ihre Bedeutung" (*Werke*, ed. Schulz, Munich 2001, 378). The philosophy-poetry relationship works both ways in Gabriel Trop's *Poetry as a Way of Life*, a study of Hölderlin, Novalis, and Anacreontic texts: theory leads to an understanding of poetry as an aesthetic and cognitive exercise and conversely poetry corroborates poetological and philosophical observations that led to a practice of what Trop calls "art as a form of askesis" (26). Poetry, like all artistic expressions of human experience, becomes in this view a sustained practice through which form is given to the sensuous. Simultaneously, Trop warns us, "there is nothing so deadly" (208) as to understand art *merely* as an attempt to represent the unrepresentable. His approach to German poetry of the eighteenth century thus insists on interpreting poetry in spite of its seeming unintelligibility.

Trop's study is organized in three parts, chronologically reversed, opening with some of Hölderlin's poetological reflections (especially "Being, Judgment"), *Hyperion*, and three of his river poems ("The Rhine," "The Ister," and "Patmos"). The second part examines the disorganizing, yet also stimulating, effect of Novalis's *Hymns to the Night* and *The Novices of Sais*, while the last part considers the "lightness, joy, and play" (19) of Anacreontic texts starting with Gottsched and Gleim,

concluding with Goethe's "Anacreon's Grave" followed by the afterword. Each of the three parts is subdivided into three chapters and a conclusion. In an extensive study such as this one, effective organization is much appreciated. Furthermore, not only the individual parts, but also individual chapters can stand by themselves, allowing readers to browse freely. Trop's tendency to summarize important findings from previous chapters in light of new contexts make this study highly usable to readers with diverse interests in specific texts or authors. However, one might want to consider the introduction and the first chapter thoroughly; here, the main direction and purpose of the study are explained.

Trop grounds his approach in Baumgarten, who considers aesthetics "as a science of sensuous cognition," or—in Trop's words—as "the act of making present in the mind something that is absent to the senses" (326). With this, the fundamental ontological problem of artistic expressions comes into focus: since poetry, like all art, must be seen as an appearance of human activity in the world, can it reveal the necessity of life (cf. 118)? With Hölderlin, Trop explains that reality and possibility are inseparably linked to each other, since no thinkable possibility lies outside of reality. Yet necessity is reality as it ought to be. Here he relies on Kant's notion of practical reason in order to describe the realm of reality and possibility (the sensual world) on the one hand, and the realm of necessity (the postulates of reason), which cannot be perceived by human cognition, on the other hand. This is where poetry derives its function: "Poetry activates a sustained cognitive process that attempts to digest the inedible world, a world that appears at first to manifest only signs of disharmony and violence, emptied out of possible redemptive content" (324). Still, Hölderlin's poetry can make necessity appear to the reader (117–118). By means of aesthetic exercise, poetry creates a space in which both freedom and a divine order (necessity) can be reconciled. While order itself can never be made visible, poetry activates insinuations of the existence of some order and therefore makes it perceivable for human experience. Through (Hölderlin's) poetry, "the mind is challenged to seek out not only its own integrity, but the integrity of the history and the world into which it has been born" (119). This integrity Trop defines as "the force that binds all things and makes out of contingent events an intelligible whole" (119). This is "the central task of aesthetic cognition" (119). In Novalis's poetry, then, the poetic exercise presents itself, simply said, as a provocation of life (205). Aesthetic cognition subsequently generates imaginative acts of self-differentiation and self-overcoming. Via Schelling, Trop arrives at the importance of perception. The act of continuously reading poetry, then, becomes an exercise to immanently make the world (and thus life's necessities) visible—without necessarily resorting to a teleological reconstruction of it.

Intricate reversal is one of the more noticeable features of poems and texts presented in this study. Furthermore, the theoretical complexity inherent in the topic requires, too, the highest level of consideration and attention to detail. Trop demands accordingly that aesthetic exercise must generate "coherence amidst the difficulty" to "guarantee[ ] the stability of Being as a primordial domain of ontological identity" (62). At the same time, he exemplifies Hölderlin's poetological writings as approaching "a limit point in the form of the writings themselves, in their long and complex syntax, in the piling up of conditional phrases, in a confusion of words that stretch the limits of retention at the same moment in which they proclaim its centrality" (ibid.). It is therefore unproductive at times that Trop, despite his capability to explain

highly complex aspects in precise terms, cannot free himself from burdening his language with unnecessary infusions and embellishments. For example, also in the section on Hölderlin, Trop states: “The act of creativity and the foundation of ‘that which remains’ are therefore reversed: it is not that the poets create something that remains, but rather, that which remains, the poets bring into being” (63). The following lines explain much more clearly the poetic process which emerges from something that predates the very process, making certain peculiar constructions redundant.

Regardless, Trop’s study offers insights into an intriguing selection of eighteenth-century poetry and poetological texts. His philosophical approach embraces thorough philological examination. He provides an aesthetic and ontological lens through which poetry is approached and interpreted. His main concern throughout the study, however, lies in an opposition to understanding poetry purely as a representation of the unintelligible. In contrast to Heidegger and Benjamin, for example, Trop sees in Anacreontic enjoyment and play the refusal to give in to death’s “transcendental weight”; instead, the poet, without ignoring death, resignifies death “a nullity, a sign at a zero state” (311). Hence, poetry marks it as a disturbance in life which is unavoidable, but must be dealt with. The theoretical exploration of poetry’s power to represent realities and possibilities of human experience—as well as present life’s necessities—is here always grounded in close readings of a broad spectrum of texts. This makes Trop’s interdisciplinary study not only a rich source for any scholar, but also intriguing to all readers interested in German studies and philosophy. Most of all, the study aims to instill in the reader of poetry a “different form of attentiveness to the world” (326). This in itself makes the volume worthwhile reading.

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**Der ganze Mensch – die ganze Menschheit. Völkerkundliche Anthropologie, Literatur und Ästhetik um 1800.**

*Herausgegeben von Stefan Hermes und Sebastian Kaufmann. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2014. vi + 318 Seiten + 9 s/w Abbildungen. €89,95.*

This volume collects 14 essays that seek to rethink and expand the idea of a “literary anthropology” through a series of readings of German texts from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The editors observe correctly that in spite of the fact that interest in foreign cultures was central to Enlightenment anthropology, many studies in literary anthropology focusing on the period tend to omit this aspect (4). Equally promising is the claim that the eighteenth-century view of other peoples and cultures shows universalist and relativistic tendencies (6). Through an interdisciplinary and comparative approach that seeks to incorporate some of the insights of contemporary cultural studies, the volume documents how literary texts participate in and contribute to the construction of anthropological knowledge about other peoples.

On the whole, the volume succeeds at doing what it sets out to accomplish. For someone who looks at this volume from the perspective of the history of anthropology, it is strange that Camper and Blumenbach are not mentioned once and that Buffon and Alexander von Humboldt are only mentioned occasionally (the index lists three mentions for each). Herder, in contrast, is a frequent point of reference, and that is a good thing, because some of the more crucial ideas of Buffon, Camper, and Blumen-