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*A Ruler's Consort in Early Modern Germany: Aemilia Juliana
of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt* by Judith P. Aikin (review)

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A Ruler's Consort in Early Modern Germany: Aemilia Juliana of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt.

By Judith P. Aikin. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. xv + 238 pages + 30 s/w illustrations. \$94.46.

This is a fascinating and ground-breaking study of the many cultural and social activities of a ruler's wife in a small principality in Thuringia in seventeenth-century Germany. Aikin presents a full picture and large-scale study of a ruler's consort, set within a lively, historical picture of her surroundings and her time. Aemilia Juliana of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt (1637–1706) was born into the class of imperial counts in the midst of the Thirty Years' War. Orphaned at age five, she was raised by her aunt and godmother Aemilia Antonia and educated at Rudolstadt with her cousins under the care of court tutors. Her aunt was instrumental in preserving Aemilia Juliana's inheritance and in arranging in 1665 her marriage with her son—Aemilia Juliana's first cousin—Count Albert Anton II of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt. In her position as a ruler's consort, Aemilia Juliana lived through the seventeenth century and contributed to the important years of reconstruction after the great war.

Aemilia Juliana is best known today as perhaps the most productive of German female authors of devotional songs, leaving some 700 hymn texts—and a similar number of rhymed prayers and prose texts; many were published in Rudolstadt in collections like *Geistliches Weiber-Aqua-Vit / Das ist / Christliche Lieder und Gebete* (1683) and *Kühlwasser in grosser Hitze des Creutzes* (1699) during her lifetime and after her death in the eighteenth century. She also wrote about 300 letters per year for about 50 years (only one relatively small corpus of 430 letters addressed to her eldest sister-in-law from 1664–71 has survived), and had some responsibility for about a dozen devotional and educational publications. It is much to Aikin's credit that she has painstakingly assembled a complete bibliography and analyzed the surviving texts, as well as the documents created on Aemilia Juliana's behalf, for the “archival record of the public, official, and legal life of this seventeenth-century countess contains much of interest for the study of the legal rights and activities of women of her class” (8). Aikin is thus able to read and interpret many of the devotional texts that have until now been the only focus of attention and to acknowledge that such texts “reflect an aesthetic no longer appreciated or well understood” (12). Aikin can first present a vivid picture of the vagaries, ceremonies, duties, and significance of “Becoming a Ruler's Consort” (19–56). With this role the cultural activities in “Enthroned at the Court of Muses” (57–100) assume a new meaning, such as the laudatory poems addressed to her as the “tenth Muse,” the devotional paintings, allegorical frontispieces and representations, the staging of performances and musical events. Patronage, organization, and representation are important activities. The chapter “Partner in a State Marriage” (101–136) establishes Aemilia Juliana's “Practical Interventions” (119) as an unofficial participation in governance through her poetry, prayers, and charity work, her sense of responsibility for the poor and destitute, her support for pharmaceutical information and supplies, and her entrepreneurial involvement (in timber production and mining) in the economic recovery of the principality. Though not directly involved in governance, “Aemilia Juliana was a full partner to her husband, her activities on behalf of the principality and its inhabitants complementing and supplementing his” (129).

The most interesting chapter (for this reviewer), “Advocate for Women” (137–174), outlines Aemilia Juliana’s role as a learned woman and her efforts for the education of girls. Rudolstadt can be considered a model in the Lutheran territories for the push for universal education started in the Reformation. Through her texts, among them role-playing songs, and her practical interventions focusing on the professionals who led the churches and schools, Aemilia Juliana contributed to improving the education of children. She also wrote for and comforted pregnant and birthing women. In the networks for women, “some functioning within the court household or principality and others connecting female peers from across Lutheran Germany [...] Aemilia Juliana was the primary supporter, offering expressions of sympathy, pharmaceutical remedies, visits from the court physician, intercessional prayers, pastoral conversations, role-playing songs, and advice” (155). An abiding faith and religious devotion was at the center of Aemilia Juliana’s life and activities. In her final chapter Aikin rounds out the impressive presentation of this *Landesmutter* by addressing succinctly how “The Ruler’s Consort Constructs Her Legacy” (175–206), Aemilia Juliana’s seemingly very conscious shaping of her legacy by preparing for her death, her funeral, and the tradition and preservation of her writings. A fine selection of some 30 illustrations complements Aikin’s presentation. Readers will also appreciate the skillful, yet unobtrusive translation of all German texts and historical terms.

In her preface Aikin relates the genesis and vagaries of her archival research that began in 1979 with a first visit to Rudolstadt (then in the GDR) and had to be put on hold because she was denied access by the then Ministry of Culture in the GDR. It was decades later that she could pick up and pursue her monumental research with great support from regional and national libraries and archives. Aikin’s excellent study reveals new insights into the social and cultural life at a German principality in the seventeenth century and, more importantly, it showcases the impressive role of a ruler’s consort based on a wide array of sources, not on modern theoretical speculations. By reading and interrelating the religious and secular texts, the study represents also a new approach to the understanding of devotional texts and of the (many) women who wrote them in seventeenth-century Germany. The study is a ‘must read’ for the historian and for the literary scholar of early modern Europe.

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Herders Rhetoriken im Kontext des 18. Jahrhunderts.

Herausgegeben von Ralf Simon. Heidelberg: Synchron, 2014. 417 Seiten. €42,00.

Es ist noch nicht lange her, dass die Germanisten zu wissen glaubten, mit Herder sei die ehrwürdige Tradition der Rhetorik beendet: Gerade durch seine Arbeit habe die Ausdrucksästhetik des Sturm und Drang sie verdrängt. Heute scheint der neue Konsens aber eher zu sein, dass die Rhetorik in Herders Schriften nicht „überwunden“ ist, sondern vielmehr in seiner Textgestaltung und in seinem Denken in verwandelten, weniger offenbaren oder versteckten Formen weiterlebt. Wie diese Transformation der Rhetorik zu verstehen ist, lässt sich aber nicht einfach bestimmen, wie die Pluralität der Perspektiven von 25 Autoren in dem von Ralf Simon herausgegebenen Band zeigt. Auch Björn Hamsch spricht in seiner Untersuchung „... ganz andre