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MAKING BOOKS MATTER

DYNASTIC WOMEN AND THE MATERIAL CULTURE
OF BOOK OBJECTS IN EARLY MODERN GERMANY

A woman inscribing herself into the biography of a book can mean that she physically wrote it or authored its paratexts, that she selected a set of texts to be printed at her expense, or ordered certain works to be bound together, that she made or planned the iconography of the binding, superimposed or inserted a portrait or an allegorical image onto or into the book object, as well as making or adding to manuscript entries in the book itself. By donating books during their lifetimes or leaving instructions in their wills for their disposal, women sought to influence the biography of individual objects and groups of objects beyond their own life-span. That this was a gendered practice from the medieval period onwards was pointed out in 1982 in a seminal article by Susan Groag Bell, and her findings can be directly applied to the early modern period.¹ This article draws on examples from my research over the past decades on early modern women's libraries and inventories and re-examines them in the context of their materiality.

Books on display – attributes

Lady Anne Clifford's portrayal of herself at three stages in her biography in the famous triptych of 1646 by Jan van Belkamp² (plate I, p. 457) has engaged the attention of many prominent literary and book historians.³ The

- 1 Susan Groag Bell: Medieval women book owners. Arbiters of lay piety and ambassadors of culture, in: *Signs* 7 (1982), pp. 742-768.
- 2 Clifford had two copies of the painting made to be hung in two of her houses. The painting can be seen on the website of Abbot Hall Art Gallery (Kendal), <https://www.abbothall.org.uk/great-picture> (accessed 8.8.2016).
- 3 Barbara Kiefer Lewalski: *Writing women in Jacobean England*, Cambridge, Mass. 1993; Graham Parry: *The great picture of Lady Anne Clifford*, in: *Art and patronage in the Caroline court. Essays in honour of Sir Oliver Millar*, ed. by David Howarth, Cambridge 1993; Richard T. Spence: *Lady Anne Clifford Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1679)*, Stroud 1997; Nigel Wheale: *Writing and soci-*

Countess was one of the richest women in England and the owner of vast properties. She commissioned two copies of the painting made to be hung in two of her houses and this image, combined with information from her diary and other ego-documents,⁴ offers an invaluable insight into the nexus of biography, books and authority in the self-fashioning of an early modern woman from a powerful dynasty. There is no comparable example of a woman projecting such a complex visual image of herself and her relationship with her book collection in the German territories of the period. The following examines the way in which individual devotional book objects highlight how early modern dynastic women sought to wield and retain influence through the use of books. The German examples show the same motherly authority exerted over distance displayed by Anne of Denmark, consort of James VI of Scotland and I of England, in about 1606. In Robert Peake the Elder's portrait of her daughter, Princess Elizabeth, from whom Anne was separated, the ten year-old girl faces the observer holding an opened book with a handwritten dedication by her mother. The essential part of its message, documenting her mother's guidance and parental care for posterity, was legible to the viewer. It reads: »No tablet / For thy brest / Thy Chr[ist]ian mo / ther gives hir / Dattere What / Jewell Fits hir / best A boke not / big but yet ther / in Some hidden Vertu is«. ⁵ (plate II, p. 458)

The book, usually a prayer book with a costly binding, is of course also a common attribute in German portraiture, with varying nuances.⁶ A broadsheet with a double portrait of the ruling Wolfenbüttel Duke Friedrich Ulrich (1591-1634) and his wife Anna Sophia (1598-1659) published in 1618 shows them with the gendered attributes of a plumed helmet for the military leader and a prayer book for the pious consort (Fig. 1).

ety. Literacy, print and politics in Britain 1590-1660, London 1999; Heidi Brayman Hackel: Reading material in early modern England. Print, gender and literacy, Cambridge 2005; Julie Crawford: Lady Anne Clifford and her use of christian warfare, in: English women, religion and textual production, 1500-1625, ed. by Micheline White, Farnham 2011, pp. 101-123.

- 4 George C. Williamson: Lady Anne Clifford. Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery. 1590-1676. Her life, letters and work extracted from all the original documents available, many of which are here printed for the first time, Kendal 1922.
- 5 The image and a full description of the painting, with literature, can be found on the website of the Metropolitan Museum New York, <http://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/437263> (accessed 8.8.2016).
- 6 On the book as an attribute see Wolfgang Undorf: Religiöse Bücher in Frauenhand. Darstellung und Selbstdarstellung, in: Einbandforschung 23 (2008), pp. 41-47.



Fig. 1: Elias Holwein: Double portrait Anna Sophia and Friedrich Ulrich von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel, 1618 (1718), Kunstsammlungen der Veste Coburg

Usually, as here, the book lies on a table, sometimes it forms part of a group of symbolic attributes. A miniature portrait of the Dowager duchess Anna Eleonora of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1601-1659) by Friedrich Brentel has her demonstratively and stoutly supporting herself on an up-ended volume, thus stressing her role within the dynasty as a pillar of



Fig. 2: Martin Bülck: Sibylle Ursula von Holstein-Plön. Engraving for funeral work, 1672, Herzog August Bibliothek, Gn 4° 1592

prayer.⁷ A dog lying next to the book underscores her fidelity. The devotional book is also an attribute in engravings accompanying funeral sermons in depictions of the deceased on her *lit de parade* or in her coffin, as in the case of Sophie of Brandenburg-Ansbach (1614-1646) from the 1640s⁸ or Sibylle Ursula of Holstein-Plön (1629-1671) from the 1670s (Fig. 2).

In all these portraits, the book is a generic object with symbolic value that was not perceptibly deployed by the woman herself. Books here form part of a standard repertoire used to connote certain virtues associated with the ideal princess. This stands in stark contrast to the case of Anne Clifford and Queen Anne, who themselves gave commissions for portraits consciously exhibiting books as central to their identity. The use of explanatory texts within the paintings leaves no doubt about their proclamatory nature and their intended impact on the viewer/reader.

This intentionality is revealed by close examination of textual sources and surviving material objects in which early modern dynastic women from the German-speaking territories consciously made their mark in or crafted individual books and established their own intimate connection to a book

7 Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 420626, <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/search#/2/collection/420626/anna-duchess-of-brunswick-luneburg-kalenberg-1601-1659> (accessed 8.8.2016).

8 <http://www.portraitindex.de/documents/obj/34002599> (accessed 8.8.2016).

and its use, thus embedding their own biography into it and making it into an artefact for posterity. Once acquired, whether by gift or purchase, books belonging to dynastic women in the early modern period ceased to be commodities traded on an open market and became part of an exclusive culture of gift-giving and inheritance.⁹

Creating obligations: mothers and books

Consorts who became regents had a particular responsibility for the education of the sons in whose stead they ruled until they came of age. In the 16th and 17th centuries a fundamental part of this education was confessional. In the case of Elisabeth of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1510-1558), her aim was to ensure that her son Erich adhered to the Reformation, which she had introduced into the territories during her regency.¹⁰ It is well-known that she crafted handwritten manuals of instruction (*mütterliche Vermahnungen* [motherly admonitions]) for both her son and her daughter. She had a costly silver binding made for the book for her son, which she wrote in 1545 and called a manual of government.¹¹ It did indeed lay down instructions for all aspects of his future behaviour as a good Protestant ruler. The actual book object has not survived, but what interest us here are the inscriptions that were incorporated on the back and front of the binding, for like the text they are an exhortation to her son to follow her advice, and, grounded in biblical precedent, they legitimize female teaching. The texts she chose were Genesis (21:12) »Gott sprach zu Abraham alles, was Sara dir gesagt hat, dem volge« [And God said unto Abraham in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice] and Esther (4:17) »Mardocheus ging hin und thet alles, was im Ester geboten hatt.« [So Mordecai went his way,

- 9 It was not until the eighteenth century that dynastic women's books were publicly auctioned, usually to pay off their debts. See Helga Meise: Darmstädter Fürstinnenbibliotheken des 18. Jahrhunderts im Spiegel von Bücherverzeichnis und Katalog. Traditionen, Gebrauchsformen, Funktionen, in: Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte 34 (2009), pp. 83-97.
- 10 Jill Bepler: Enduring loss and memorializing women. The cultural role of dynastic widows in early modern Germany, in: Enduring loss in early modern Germany. Cross disciplinary perspectives, ed. by Lynne Tatlock, Leiden 2010, pp. 133-160; on Elisabeth and her library, see Eva Schlotheuber: Fürstliche Bibliotheken – Bibliotheken von Fürstinnen, in: Herzogin Elisabeth von Braunschweig-Lüneburg (1510-1558). Herrschaft – Konfession – Kultur, ed. by id., Hannover 2011, pp. 207-221.
- 11 Paul Tschackert: Herzogin Elisabeth von Münden (gest. 1558). Die erste Schriftstellerin aus dem Hause Brandenburg und aus dem braunschweigischen Hause, ihr Lebensgang und ihre Werke, in: Hohenzollern-Jahrbuch 3 (1899), pp. 49-65.

and did according to all that Esther had commanded him].¹² The very binding itself thus carried an immediate appeal to filial piety and obedience, even before the book was opened. In the paratext of her powerful preface the Duchess expressed her intention that her book of government should be regarded as part of dynastic heritage to be passed down to later generations as what she expressly termed an »Erbbuch«, a book heirloom.¹³

Another widowed Reformation consort who made use of book bindings¹⁴ as strong emotional appeals to conscience in the confessional education of her children was Dorothea Susanna of Sachsen-Weimar (1544-1592).¹⁵ In his publications Daniel Gehrt has demonstrated just how intensively the duchess used what he terms the symbolic language of book bindings¹⁶ to communicate with her young son, Friedrich Wilhelm, from whom she had been forcibly separated. One of the most personal customized gifts Gehrt describes in great detail was printed in 1574 at Dorothea Susanna's request by her former court preacher, Bartholomäus Gernhard *Fünffzig Psalmen und Gebetlein*.¹⁷ Gernhard was one of the Thuringian theologians expelled in 1573 on the orders of the Elector of Saxony, who had assumed guardianship of Dorothea Susanna's children after their father's death. Thus a commission to Gernhard to compile a manual for the ducal children was in itself of symbolic significance. The Duchess had 26 copies of this work bound together with an edition of psalms and prayers with commentaries by Luther and Veit Dietrich, obviously as potential gifts, two of them particularly richly. The copy that has survived in Gotha is beautifully bound with silk and gold and silver thread needlework on velvet and was a New Year's gift to her son.¹⁸ At the front of the book the Duchess

12 Tschackert (fn. 11), p. 16; Bepler (fn. 10), p. 143, 151.

13 Tschackert (fn. 11), p. 44; Bepler (fn. 10), p. 143.

14 On bindings and the intrinsic value of books, see Jochen Bepler: *Der Einband eines Objektes und sein intrinsischer Wert*, in: *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte* 26 (2001), pp. 51-64.

15 Irene Dingel: *Dorothea Susanna von Sachsen-Weimar (1544-1592) im Spannungsfeld von Konfession und Politik*, in: *Glaube und Macht. Theologie, Politik und Kunst im Jahrhundert der Reformation*, ed. by Enno Bünz, Leipzig 2005, pp. 175-192; Daniel Gehrt and Vera von der Osten Sacken (Eds.): *Fürstinnen und Konfession. Beiträge hochadeliger Frauen zur Religionspolitik und Bekenntnisbildung*, Göttingen 2015.

16 Daniel Gehrt: *Die religiöse Erziehung Herzog Friedrich Wilhelms von Sachsen-Weimar im Spiegel seiner Bibliothek*, in: *Zeitschrift für Thüringische Geschichte* 67 (2013), pp. 75-115, see p. 77.

17 *Ibid.* pp. 109-111.

18 »so über die massen sauber in rothen leder eingebunden«: *Bucheinbände aus der Forschungsbibliothek Gotha*, ed. by Katharina Paasch, Gotha 2010, p. 62. On the

had her own gouache portrait inserted, which she inscribed with her name, the date and her personal motto taken from the book of Job »Ich weiss dass mein erlöser lebt«, an acrostic of her husband's initials (Johann Wilhelm Dux Mein Einig Lieb) (Plate III, p. 459).

Her own painted miniature portrait inserted into a book that the young prince was clearly intended to use in his private devotions while separated from his mother was a strong emotional appeal to obedience and duty that confronted him each time he opened it. Combined with the precious binding, it also sought to ensure that this book too would become an heirloom and perpetuate the memory of the Duchess' role in the dynasty's history.

Like many other men and women, Dorothea Susanna compiled manuscript prayer books and meditations. In 1591, the year before her death, the Duchess had one of her manuscript prayer books printed as a New Year's present for her children, again exhorting them to remain true to the Ernestine Lutheran confession of their father. The book was edited by the court preacher Antonius Probus and it is under his name that it is always catalogued.¹⁹ Probus provided a long dedicatory preface to the children explicitly naming Dorothea Susanna as its compiler and describing the circumstances of the work's publication. As described in her funeral biography, Dorothea Susanna ordered that when she died the original manuscript prayer book which she had often used when praying with her children should be placed in her coffin.²⁰ Presumably this is the text she had printed as a New Year's gift. Again, Dorothea Susanna consciously used a book to create a public arena for her gift to her children. By taking the manuscript to her grave she imbued the material object of the original text with great symbolic significance. She posited a link between herself and her children reaching beyond death and incorpo-

significance of New Year's gifts, see Natalie Zemon Davis: *The gift in sixteenth-century France*, Oxford 2000, pp. 36ff.

- 19 Anton Probus: *Gebette, wie sich ein Christe schicken und bereiten sol zur Beicht, Absolution, Abendmal und sonst in allerley Nöthen derer gebrauchen*, Erfurt 1592. Only one copy of this first edition is recorded and it seems to have been destroyed in the fire at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar (R4:38). The edition used here is Anton Probus: *Gebete, wie sich ein Christ schicken und bereiten sol zur Beicht, Absolution, Abendmahl und sonst in allerley Nöthen derer gebrauchen durch eine Christliche, Fürstliche Person ... zusammengebracht und in drey Theil abgetheilet*, Altenburg 1663, Bepler (fn. 10), p. 151.
- 20 Anton Probus: *Symbolvm Dorotheae Svsannae. Der Trostreiche Spruch Hiob am 19. Cap.*, Jena 1592, fol. Jivv: »Ihre F.G. hatten in einem Büchlein eine sonderliche Form beschrieben / derer sie gebrauchet / wenn sie für die hertzlieben Fürstlichen Kinder betet / welch Büchlein sie mit in Sarck und Grab genommen.«

rated into the printed copies of the book, in which the paratext of the preface set down the circumstances of the gift for posterity.

A similarly demonstrative New Year's present was the book of their father's poems and prayers, *Sacra Poemata*, that Eleonore of Anhalt had printed for her 16 children and stepchildren in Zerbst in 1587, the year after his death.²¹ Like Dorothea Susanna she addresses her children via books, but in contrast to her, she signs the preface herself rather than using the voice of her theologians. Eleonore's dedicatory foreword carefully stylises her husband's texts as part of dynastic tradition and herself as the guarantor of its continuity. The preface is worth examining more closely because it emphasises how paratexts could be used to posit bonds of duty and obligation.²² Eleonore's address to her children and stepchildren begins with a definition of her own role in prayer and solicitude for their well-being. She draws comfort from the certainty taken from scripture that she will be reunited with her husband at the resurrection, but also in the memory of his unblemished record as an upholder of confessional principle in his territories. Eleonore stresses Joachim Ernst's exemplary role in faith, which is clear not just in his life and actions, but in his texts, and she reiterates that this embodies his care not just for the family, but for his lands and all his subjects, and it is this heritage that she is presenting to them as a gift:

Wann denn / beneben Sr. L. gantzem leben und vorhalten / aus derselben eigener hand / darmit sie ire gotselige gebet und Christliche gedicht oder Poemata verzeichnet / derselben ruhmwirdige gotseligkeit / Christliche andacht / und veterliche fürsorge für uns alle / so wol die gantze Landtschafft / unnd alle Unterthanen / sönderlich wol zuvernemen / haben wir / durch hertzliche trew / aus Sr. L. eigener handschrifft / solch Sr. L. werck / durch den druck E.L. zum newen jhar mittheilen wollen.

[As well as His Grace's whole life and comportment, his own hand by which he recorded his blessed prayers and Christian verses or Poemata, clearly rings

21 *Sacra Poemata*. Das ist Geistliche Gedicht Durch Weilandt Den ... Herrn Joachim Ersten Fuersten zu Anhalt, Zerbst 1587 (<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:1-341330>); Jill Bepler: Women's books and dynastic networks in early modern Germany. Female practices of collecting and bequeathing, in: *Der Hof. Ort kulturellen Handelns von Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. by Susanne Rode-Breymann and Antje Tumat, Köln, Weimar and Wien 2013, pp. 295-313, see p. 307.

22 Natalie Zemon Davis: Beyond the market: books as gifts in sixteenth-century France, in: *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series*, 33 (1983), pp. 69-88, see p. 73.

out his praiseworthy godliness, Christian devotion, and fatherly care for us all, and for the whole territory and all his subjects, so, in heartfelt fidelity, we wished to impart his beloved Grace's work in print to you beloved [children] at New Year, from his own manuscript.]

As in the example of Dorothea Susanna, the gift itself is also an obligation made public:

denn E. L. sampt und sönderlich / solch löblich exempel ires Herrn Vatern / stets für augen haben / in Sr. L. löbliche fustapffen (sic) treten / und ebnermassen in aller gottseligkeit und ernstem gebet sich uben mögen.

[so that, beloved, each and every one of you should always keep sight of your father's so praiseworthy example, follow in his Grace's footsteps, and equally practice all godliness and sincere prayer.]

Eleonore ends her preface by legitimating her own role in admonishing her stepchildren and children in confessional matters through Biblical example and an appeal to dynastic continuity and respect for their forefathers:

Denn so der heilige Paulus seinen Timotheum erinnert / des ungeferbten glaubens seiner Grossmutter Loide / und seiner Mutter Eunicke / unnd hierdurch ihn ermanet / die gabe Gottes / die in ihm ist / zuerwecken / zweiffeln wir nicht / es gebüre uns auch / E. L. nicht allein derselben Herrn Elter Vatern / Herrn Johansen / und Herrn Vettern / Herrn Georgen / und Herrn Joachim / gebrüdern / Fürsten zu Anhalt / etc. sondern auch Herrn Vatern seligen / ungeferbten glaubens / so in inen gewohnet zuerinnern: mit freundlicher vermanung / E. Li. wollen / durch fleissige betrachtung solcher ihrer seligen Vorfahren exempel / die gabe Gottes / die in ihnen ist / erwecken.

Bitten demnach freundlich / E. L. wollen solches / wie es von uns trewlich gemeinet / freundlich vermercken / und deme allen also folge leisten.

[For, just as Saint Paul reminded his Timothy of the unsullied faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice and thus admonished him to awaken the gift of God which was in him, we do not doubt that it is fitting for us to remind you not just of the unsullied faith that lived not only in your grandfather Johann, and your cousins George and Joachim, brothers and princes of Anhalt, etc., but also in your blessed father, with this friendly admonition that, beloved, you should awaken the gift of God that is in you by assiduously observing such examples of your ancestors. I beg accordingly, beloved, that you take friendly note of the sincere manner in which this is meant and adhere to it all.]

This carefully constructed preface weaves the ties of obligation attached to the presentation of a book²³ which is clearly marked as a result of Eleonore's initiative and work and which contains her husband's texts. As we know, this attempt failed, for her sons became Calvinists, but this original dedicatory text forms the basis for Eleonore's later paratexts in new editions and other works that she published over the next two decades, in which she publicly berated them for their desertion of the faith of their fathers.²⁴

Generations and networks

In their joint article on objects from Fiji, Gosden and Marshall made observations on the mutual status enhancement of object and individuals associated with them that apply equally to books:

Not only do objects change through their existence, but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected. [...] objects gain value through links to powerful people and an individual's standing is enhanced through possession of well-known objects. There is a mutual process of value creation between people and things.²⁵

Book objects and their provenance entries created bonds of status and belonging across generations. Costly manuscript prayer books, commissioned as presents for consorts by their husbands, continued the tradition of the medieval book of hours well into the 17th century, and they were often the subject of special bequests or individual gifts. In the Wolfenbüttel holdings, the famous prayer book of commissioned by Albrecht of Prussia for his wife Dorothea of Denmark (1504-1544) from 1534 is one such example. It was given to Duke August by his sister-in-law Sibylle of Braunschweig-Dannenberg just before her death, in 1652. She herself had probably inherited it from her mother, a Danish princess. Sibylle inserted a loose leaf into the book with a handwritten account of her gift and its origins, which has survived in place.²⁶ Herzog August himself commissioned a silver binding for an

23 Ibid. p. 70.

24 On Eleonore's later publications, Bepler (fn. 21), pp. 307-310.

25 Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall: The cultural biography of objects, in: *World archaeology* 31 (1999), pp. 169-178, see p. 170.

26 Jill Bepler: Die fürstliche Witwe als Büchersammlerin. Spuren weiblicher Lektüre in der Frühen Neuzeit, in: *Der wissenschaftliche Bibliothekar. Festschrift für Werner*

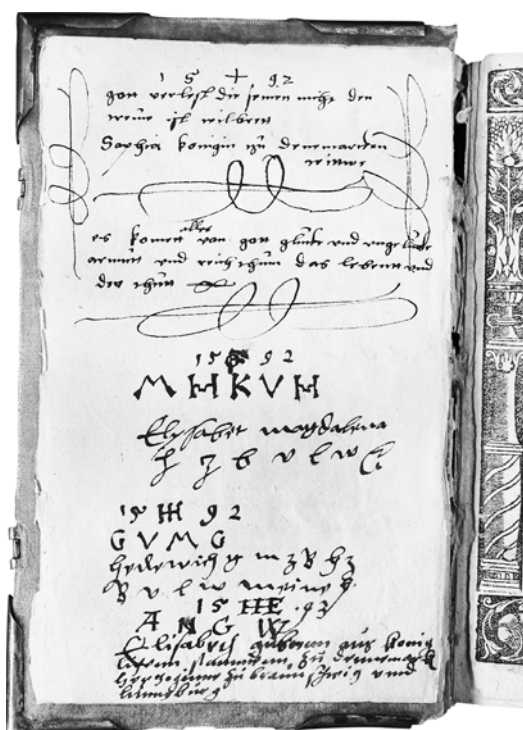


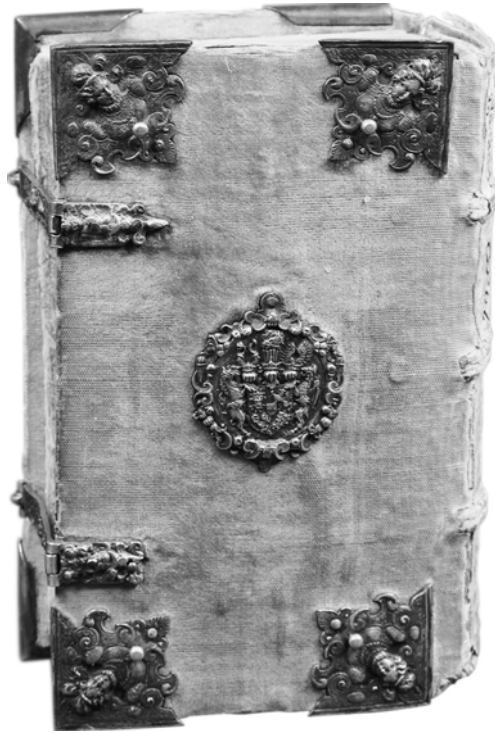
Fig. 3a Fig. 3a (left) and 3b (right): Entries and binding in Martin Moller: *Meditationes sanctorum patrum: Schöne andechtige Gebet*, Görlitz 1591, owned by Anna of Courland, Herzog August Bibliothek, 869 Theol. (photo: Katharina Mähler)

illuminated manuscript prayer book for his third wife Sophie Elisabeth, from Philipp Hainhofer in Augsburg.²⁷ In 1653, the Duchess presented the volume to her 17-year old son Ferdinand Albrecht, after having her own manuscript motherly admonition bound into the volume, exhorting him to always behave as a Christian prince. After his death, the volume passed into the possession of the Duke's wife and then his daughter and it is now part of the treasures of the Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum in Braunschweig.²⁸ Provenance entries

Arnold, ed. by Detlev Hellfaier, Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer and Wolfgang Schmitz, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 19-40, see p. 37.

²⁷ Rudolf-Alexander Schütte: *Die Kostbarkeiten der Renaissance und des Barock. Pretiosa und allerley kunstsachen aus den Kunst- und Raritätenkammern der Herzöge von Braunschweig-Lüneburg aus dem Hause Wolfenbüttel*, Braunschweig 1997, pp. 101-103.

²⁸ Particularly valuable bindings like those belonging to Augusta of Denmark were destined either to be broken up for reuse of their component parts – silver, gold and



sometimes record chains of female possession of astounding proportions, as in the case of a miniature prayer book now held in a private collection. Beginning in 1407, when it was written for an unknown female user, the tiny book contains a chain of predominantly female owners down to the mid-eighteenth century, when in 1756 it entered into the library of Christian Ernst of Stolberg-Wernigerode as a gift from his brother's sister-in-law.²⁹

Books were not just spaces for documenting generational networks, they also recorded social connections, friendships and family ties. Unlike the chains of provenance entries, they captured for posterity configurations of interpersonal relations that existed at a specific place and moment in time. Before and alongside the advent of the custom-made printed album amicorum, which was

jewels – or to never enter a library but to find their way into the *Kunstkammer*, the treasury, and ultimately today's museums.

29 Brigitte Pfeil: *Katalog der deutschen und niederländischen Handschriften des Mittelalters in der Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle (Saale)*, Halle an der Saale 2007, pp. 309-313. Of the 13 named owners, 8 were women. Two of the male owners of the manuscript presented it to their wives during their lifetime. Only in one case was the book handed down directly in the male line.



Fig. 4: Wedding gift. Binding of Kaspar Bienemann (Melissander): *Ehebüchlein für christliche Eheleute*, Leipzig 1599, Herzog August Bibliothek, 815,5 Theol. (photo: Katharina Mähler)

often an emblem book, the prayer book also often fulfilled the function of a »Stammbuch«. ³⁰ One such work in the Wolfenbüttel collections belonged to Anna Duchess of Courland, (1533-1602), who was a born Princess of Mecklenburg; ³¹ the binding is dated 1592. ³² It was in that year that the elderly Duchess undertook a journey from Courland to her former home, visiting vari-

³⁰ I am grateful to Mara Wade, currently working on a monograph on emblematic practices, for her insights on the gendered use of emblem books as Stammbücher.

³¹ See the section »Duchess Anna« in: virtual exhibition 2012, <http://www.archiv.org.lv/hercogiste/index.php?lang=en&id=13> (accessed 26.7.2016).

³² Signatur Herzog August Bibliothek 869 Theol.; Jill Bepler: Praktiken des Umgangs mit Büchern im Alltag der Fürstin im späten 16. und frühen 17. Jahrhundert. Sophia Hedwig von Pommern (1561-1631) im Kontext, in: Zwischen Thronsaal und

ous courts on the way.³³ The book she either took with her or purchased en route was Martin Mollers *Meditationes sanctorum patrum: Schöne andechtige Gebet*, printed in Görlitz in 1591.³⁴ The binding the Duchess commissioned is a combination of pink velvet and elaborate silver decorations, including her monogramme on the front and the heraldic shield of Mecklenburg, her birth dynasty, on the back (Fig. 3a/3b). The manuscript entries in the prayer book, all dated 1592, were made exclusively by the female relatives with whom she came into contact on her journey and are thus a documentation of this network.

The female figures of the silver decorations on the corners of the binding clearly link the book to Mecklenburg and Pommern. They are modelled on contemporary serial portraits of the princesses from this region, such as those now on display at the Landesmuseum in Greifswald.³⁵ The book is a gendered object providing a gendered space which records a specific moment in a woman's biography.

The professional binding commissioned by Anna of Courland stands in stark contrast to some amateur bindings which may be attributable to dynastic women themselves. In 1623, Countess Anna Sophia of Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt presented her relative the fifteen-year-old Dorothea of Anhalt with a copy of Melissander's *Ehebüchlein* from 1599, probably from her own book collection, to commemorate her niece's wedding to Herzog August of Braunschweig-Lüneburg, at the time well over fifty.³⁶ The textile binding, with its impractical white patterned cloth covering the leather original, suggests that this was not the work of a bookbinder but an amateur, perhaps even Anna Sophia herself (Fig. 4). Her entry on the flyleaf with its reflection on the mixed blessings of the married state carefully records the act of giving. The gift of a book already more than a quarter of a century old, the reworking of its binding and the personal inscription by the Countess are all acts which

Frawenzimmer. Handlungsfelder pommerscher Fürstinnen um 1600, ed. by Dirk Schleinert and Monika Schweikart, Köln 2017, pp. 191-210.

33 August Seraphim: *Die Geschichte des Herzogtums Kurland (1561-1795)*, Reval 1904, p. 239, reports that when she returned to Courland, the Duchess needed 85 horses to transport her entourage and its wagons.

34 Martin Moller: *Meditationes sanctorum patrum: Schöne andechtige Gebet, tröstliche Sprüche, gottselige Gedancken*, Görlitz 1590-1591. The volume is described in Philipp Wackernagel: *Das deutsche Kirchenlied von der ältesten Zeit bis zu Anfang des XVII. Jahrhunderts*. (Bd. 1), Leipzig 1864, pp. 561-562.

35 Bepler (fn. 32).

36 Kaspar Bienemann [Melissander]: *Ehebüchlein für christliche Eheleute, unnd sonderlich für junge Gesellen unnd Jungfrawen*, Leipzig 1599, Signatur Herzog August Bibliothek: 815.5 Theol.



Fig. 5: Title engraving Johann Arndt: *Paradys-Gärtlein*, Leiden 1645, Herzog August Bibliothek, 1241.62 Theol.

embue the book object, which of itself has little material value, with emotional and symbolic meaning.

Incorporations of the biography of the object

Veneration by association, to use David Pearson's term for the way in which book objects accumulate symbolic capital,³⁷ could stem from their provenance and their links to a specific individual owner or donor, as in the cases just cited, but it could also be achieved by attributing the physical survival of a book object to an act of Divine Providence. The most prominent example is Johann Arndt's bestselling devotional manual *Paradiesgärtlein*, first published in 1612. It was claimed that a copy of Arndt's work survived being thrown into a fire in the so-called miracle of Langengöns in 1624, when a Catholic officer caught one of his soldiers reading a copy in a

tavern and threw it in the kitchen oven. When the coals were later raked over, the book, its binding and even its ribbons were found to be completely intact. As soon as news of the »miracle of Langengöns« reached the authorities, the innkeeper's wife was ordered to surrender the book to the local governor at Gießen. He in turn had to pass it on to Landgraf Philipp of Hessen-Butzbach, who sent for it to be incorporated into his castle library »for eternal memory«.³⁸ The first account of the incident was printed in a short pamphlet in Darmstadt in

37 David Pearson: *Books as history. The importance of books beyond their texts*, London 2008, p. 132.

38 Jill Bepler: *Vicissitudo Temporum. Some sidelights on book collecting in the Thirty Years' War*, in: *Sixteenth century journal* 32 (2001), pp. 953-968; Alfred Messerli: *Die Errettung des Paradiesgärtleins aus Feuers- und Wassernot*, in: *Fabula* 38 (2009), pp. 253-279.

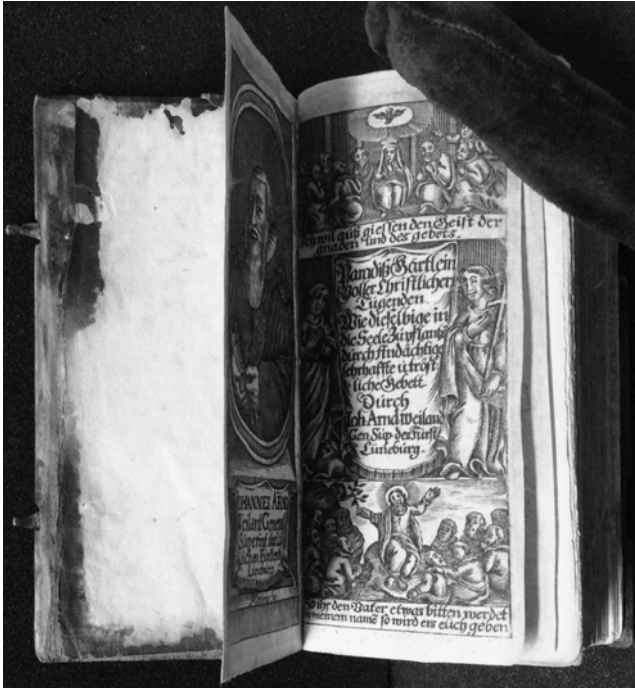


Fig. 6: Charred copy of Johann Arndt: *Paradiß-Gärtlein*, Braunschweig 1676, Herzog August Bibliothek, Th 94

1627. The story was later incorporated into the book itself as a preface and figured in illustrations to subsequent editions, a practice which persisted well into the eighteenth century (Fig. 5). It was claimed that the phenomenon repeated itself several times with other copies during the seventeenth century. Indeed, the Herzog August Bibliothek has a charred copy dating from 1676 (Fig. 6).³⁹

The incorporation of the story of the book's survival into later editions transfers this symbolic, or in David Cressy's terms totemic, status from the single book object to the work itself.⁴⁰

39 Signatur Herzog August Bibliothek Th 94. See Jörg Jochen Berns: *Herzog August – Frömmigkeit und kirchliche Tradition*, in: *Sammler Fürst Gelehrter Herzog August zu Braunschweig und Lüneburg 1579-1666*, ed. by Paul Raabe, Wolfenbüttel 1979, p. 365. Philipp Julius Rehtmeyer: *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Inclytæ Urbis Brunsvigae Pars IV*, Braunschweig 1715, p. 333, mentions that such a copy can be seen in the Wolfenbüttel library.

40 David Cressy: *Books as totems in seventeenth-century England and New England*, in: *The Journal of library history*, 21 (1986), pp. 92-106.

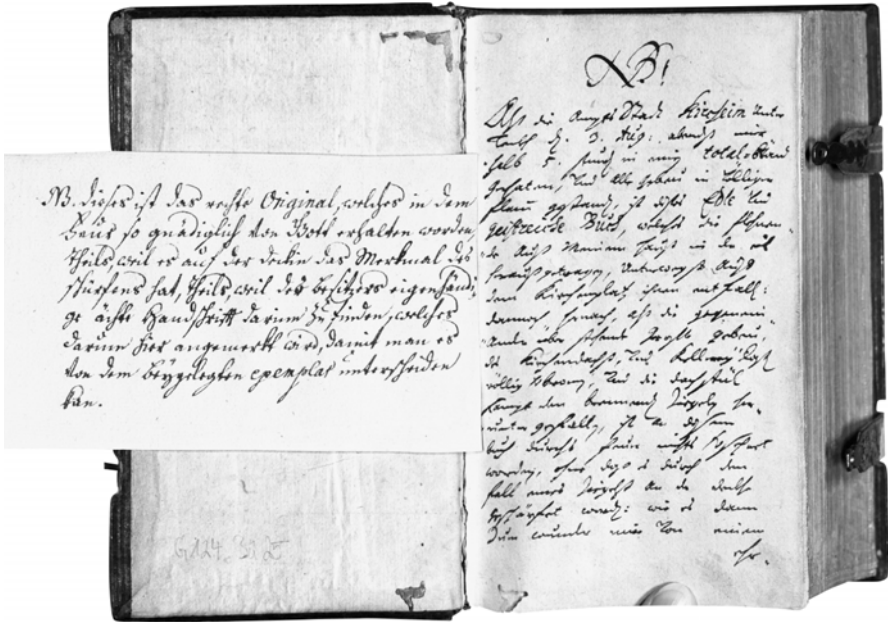


Fig. 7: Testimonial by Ehrenreich Weissmann in: *Gott geweyhtes Andachts-Opffer*, Stuttgart 1690, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, G 124 Bü 25

Similar totemic status was accorded to a devotional work written by Duchess Magdalena Sibylla of Württemberg at the end of the 17th century and her own actions in this context show her consciously creating this status. A copy of her *Gott geweyhtes Andachts-Opffer*, first published in Stuttgart in 1690, survived the fire which practically destroyed the town of Kirchheim in that same year. It was found under a brick by the church, as described in her funeral work:

Nachdem die gantze Stadt in wenig Stunden in die Aschen geleyet worden / und die Hitze nirgend hefftiger ware als um die Kirch herum / da fande in derselbigen Gegend ein Burger erstbelobtes Gebett-Buch / mit einem Ziegel schlecht zugedeckt / gantz unversehrt / und ware nur auf der Decken die Figur eines Creutztes eingetruckt / so zuvor nicht gewesen / wie das noch vorhandene Exemplar mit Verwunderung jedermanns hiervon zeuget.

[After the whole town was burned to ashes in a few hours and the heat was nowhere stronger than directly around the church, a citizen found the aforementioned prayer book in that very area, barely covered by a fallen brick.

It was completely unharmed, but on the cover was imprinted the figure of a cross which had not been there before, to which the copy that is still in existence can bear witness, to the amazement of everyone.]⁴¹

As is the case with the story of Arndt's *Paradiesgärtlein*, all later editions of the Duchess's work, of which there were at least six, contained an account of the »miracle« in their prefaces and carried an announcement of it on the title page, as in the edition of 1706: »Samt einer neuen Vorrede / worinnen sonderheitlich vermeldet / wie der Allerhöchste diese Gebett-Buch wunderlich erhalten.« [Together with a new preface, where in particular there is an account of how the Almighty miraculously preserved this prayer book.]

The actual copy from the Kirchheim fire with the indentation of a cross perceptible on the front cover has survived in the Stuttgart archive.⁴² The entries in the book authenticate its status as a testimony to providence. In the front there is a manuscript entry by its owner, Ehrenreich Weissmann, bearing witness to the circumstances and truth of its rescue (Fig. 7).

He obviously presented it to the Duchess, who only two days later wrote her own entry in the back of the book, recording that she had deposited it in the ducal archive:

so habe zu der Ehren deß Allerheiligsten Gottes, undt zu Ewigen andenken Daß auch die NachWelt, die große Wunder Gotteß darauß Erkennen, und Gott darumb loben Solle, ich dießes ohne einige VerLetzung auß dem feuer gerrissenen buch in daß Fürstliche archiv beylegen Wollen.

[thus, in honour of the most divine God and for eternal memory, I wanted to incorporate this book that was torn from the fire without the least damage into the dynastic archive so that posterity can recognise the great miracles of God and praise him for them.]⁴³

There are also echoes of a sanctified life in respect of the Duchess herself in her text. As Margaret Bridges points out, in the medieval hagiography of Queen Margaret of Scotland, for whom no direct miracles were recorded that

41 Christ-Fürstliches Ehren-Gedächtniß, Der Weiland Durchlauchtigsten Fürstin und Frauen, Frauen Magdalena Sibylla, Hertzogin zu Württemberg und Teck, Gräffin zu Mömpelgart, Frauen zu Heydenheim, [et]c. Wittwen: Gebohrner Land-Gräffin zu Hessen, Fürstin zu Hersfeld ... Zu Höchst-schuldigstem Nachruhm auffgerichtet, Stuttgart n.d., pp. 34-35 [Funeral compendium for Magdalena Sibylle of Württemberg] (<http://digital.slub-dresden.de/id364868562>).

42 Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Stuttgart: G 124 Bü 25.

43 Ibid.

would justify her beatification, a copy of the gospels belonging to her that had fallen into a river and survived unscathed was seen as proof of her holy life, thus making the book a surrogate witness to the holiness of the owner.⁴⁴ Bridges concludes that a book can be metonymic with its owner and in the case of Magdalena Sibylle this can be applied to her status as author. The fact that the Duchess's text survives the fire is interpreted in her entry not just as imbuing the book itself with value as an object to be revered, but also as contributing to her own potential salvation: »Der Gott, der das Buch erettet, Wird auch den author dessen in seinen Gnaden Händen ein geschrieben laßen sein« [The God who has saved this book will also see to it that the author of it is inscribed in the hands of his grace and mercy].

Securing books for posterity

In Igor Kopytoff's terms, the strategies deployed by the Duchess in incorporating testimonials to the history of individual books in the objects themselves serve to singularize them as objects,⁴⁵ precluding them from becoming commoditized. There were four locations in which the Duchess herself sought to secure and define the book objects associated with her and determine their future use and ›identity‹. By placing her ›miraculous‹ book in the dynastic archive as an object, rather than just having a written account of its preservation deposited there, Magdalena Sibylle sought to make the artefact itself and the accompanying testimonials part of dynastic history, as a witness to the hand of Providence. As a location, the dynastic archive was the site of personal memory of the individual members who constituted the ›house‹ of Württemberg. She chose not to deposit the book in the Württemberg *Kunstammer*, a collection potentially subject to rearrangement and potential deselection processes. This was where she placed at least three valuable book objects, illuminated calligraphic works of art, that she transferred to the *Kunstammer* in 1707.⁴⁶ Her entries in two of them show that she classed the books as ›rarities‹, and this is her explicitly stated reason for sending them

44 Margaret Bridges: *Mehr als ein Text. Das ungelesene Buch zwischen Symbol und Fetisch*, in: *Buchkultur im Mittelalter: Schrift, Bild, Kommunikation*, ed. by Michael Stolz and Adrian Mettauer, Berlin 2006, pp. 103-121, see p. 110.

45 Igor Kopytoff: *The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as process*, in: *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective*, ed. by Arjun Appadurai, Cambridge 1986, pp. 64-91, p. 73.

46 Carola Fey: *Manuskripte und Drucke im Kontext der Stuttgarter Kunstammer der Herzöge von Württemberg*, in: *Die Ordnungen der Dinge. Kunst- und Naturalien-*

to the *Kunstammer*. She describes the unusual circumstances in which she herself acquired a manuscript book of hymns and extracts from the Psalms by Johann Philipp Kirn dated 1616 (plate IV, p. 460 and plate V, p. 461).

Dießes büchlein ist Mir von einem Verstorbenen frommen Mann in Tübing, Auff seinem Thodt bett verehrt Worden, undt Von Mir wegen seiner Raritet Wieder in die Fürstlich-Wirtembergische Kunst Kammer Verehret Worden, daß eß daselbst zu einem angedencken alle zeit Verwahret bleiben soll.

[This little book was presented to me on his death bed by a pious man who died in Tübingen, and because of its rarity it has been presented by me in turn to the princely Württemberg *Kunstammer*, so that it should be preserved there as a memento for all time.]⁴⁷

The fact that it had been presented to her by a dying man lends the book an anecdotal aspect that is a feature of miscellaneous ›curious‹ articles that found their way into the early modern *Kunstammer*, such as items swallowed by members of the royal family and retrieved when they passed through their digestive systems or shoes of common people struck by lightning. Such objects were of interest even if they were not necessarily of great intrinsic value, but they were incomprehensible once separated from the labels describing their special significance.⁴⁸

The Duchess also provided information on its acquisition in a second manuscript that she transferred to the *Kunstammer* in October of 1707, another example of superb calligraphy. In Johann Haberman's best-selling prayer book, written by Joseph Leipzig von Schorndorf in 1637 (Fig. 8), she wrote:

Dießes büchlein ist Mir Verehrt worden, Von dem seeligen Herr Cappell, Prelaten von Blau Bayern, und von Mir in die fürstl. Wirtembergische Kunst Kammer Wieder Verehrt Worden, Wegen seiner Reihnen schriftt, daß eß darin Zum angedenck verwahrt bleibe.

kammern als Lehr- und Lernorte in der Frühen Neuzeit, ed. by Eva Dolezel, Ralf Godel, Andreas Pecar, Halle 2017. (forthcoming).

47 Württembergische Landesbibliothek (WLB) Stuttgart: Cod. brev. 148; Virgil Ernst Fiala and Wolfgang Irtenkauf: *Codices brevii. Die Handschriften der Württembergischen Landesbibliothek Stuttgart, Erste Reihe, Dritter Band*, Wiesbaden 1977, pp. 183-184. The transcription of the entry by Magdalena Sibylle by Fiala and Irtenkauf contains misreadings: ›von einem Ersamen Alten in Tübingen‹ – correct: ›von einem Verstorbenen frommen Mann in Tübing‹.

48 Jill Bepler: *Barocke Sammelust. Die Bibliothek und Kunstammer des Herzogs Ferdinand Albrecht zu Braunschweig-Lüneburg*, Weinheim 1988, p. 121.



Fig. 8: Joseph Leipzig von Schorndorf, Calligraphic copy of Johann Habermann: *Gebetbuch*, 1637, Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. brev. 67, fol. 4v-5r

[This little book was presented to me by the blessed Mr Cappell, prelate of Blaubeuren, and again presented by me to the princely Württemberg Kunst-kammer, so that it should be preserved there as a memento for all time.]⁴⁹

Inscribing the narrative of its acquisition was clearly part of the strategy of securing a place for posterity for any given object. The third manuscript the Duchess is known to have sent to the Kunstkammer in 1707 has no inscription whatsoever. Only the manuscript catalogue of the collection records her gift. Arguably the most attractive of the three, it contains no entry by the Duchess. This calligraphic manuscript with extracts from the Silesian preacher Lukas Pollio's *Sieben Predigten vom ewigen Leben der Kinder*

49 Württembergische Landesbibliothek (WLB) Stuttgart: Cod. brev. 67; Fiala (fn. 47), p. 88. Another misreading in the transcription by Fiala and Irtenkauf: »Reform-schrift« correct: »Reihnen schrift«.

Gottes (Breslau 1582) has a beautiful reddish-brown velvet binding with gold stitching (plate VI, p. 462 and plate VII, p. 463).⁵⁰

Magdalena Sibylle may have been reluctant to record the way in which the work came into her possession, for it belonged to a large inheritance willed to her husband that arrived in Stuttgart just after his death and it had no direct biographical connection with her. The property belonged to the famous military commander of the fort at Hohentwil, Johann Konrad Widerhold (1598-1667), and was entered into the inventory of Duke Wilhelm Ludwig's inventory in 1675, as it arrived as his own estate was being catalogued in 1678. Widerhold's rich collection of armour and weaponry was integrated into the ducal collections but his considerable book collection of over 300 volumes,⁵¹ including the *Pollio* manuscript, was requisitioned by Magdalena Sibylle and handed over to her, as a note in the inventory margin records.⁵²

The Duchess willed the bulk of her library, nearly 900 volumes housed in a special library room in Stuttgart, to her son to be placed in the dynastic collection and thus be passed down in the male line. The archive, the *Kunst-kammer* and the ducal library were three locations which belonged to the dynasty, the house of Württemberg. In keeping with custom, all the books in her chambers in Stuttgart, Kirchheim and Stetten, her most personal property and her own manuscripts, were willed to her daughter in Karlsruhe as part of her ›female‹ inheritance and therefore moved outside the dynasty.⁵³ As sites of memory, the archive, the *Kunst-kammer*, the dynastic library and the ›private‹ chamber library thus all played a different role in the Duchess's strategy for preserving book objects for posterity.

50 Württembergische Landesbibliothek (WLB) Stuttgart: Cod. brev. 64; Fiala (fn. 47), p. 85, without reference to the earlier provenance.

51 Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Stuttgart: A21 Bü 46, fol. 84r-154v.

52 Hauptstaatsarchiv (HStA) Stuttgart: A21 Bü 46, fol. 83v. »Ferner, seynd auch von weyland Herrn Conradt Wiederholden von Neidlingen, Obristen, und Obervogten zu Kirchheim under Teckh Herrn Wilhelm Ludwig Herzogen zu Württemberg Fürstl. Dhlt. neben dero Gewehr und RüstCammer nachfolgende Bücher legirt, [84r] Zur Zeit gegenwertiger Inventur, anhero geliefert, und auff begehren der Fürstl. Fraw witib Frawen Magdalanae Sibyllae, Dhlt. übergeben worden.«

53 On Magdalena Sibylle's dynastic and chamber libraries, see Jill Bepler: Traditions of reading, writing and collecting. Books in the lives of dynastic women in early modern Germany, in: (Re-)Contextualizing literary and cultural history. The representation of the past in literary and material culture, ed. by Elisabeth Waghall Nivre, Beate Schirmacher and Claudia Egerer, Stockholm 2013, pp. 223-252, see p. 303, online publication: <http://su.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:614612/FULLTEXT01.pdf> (accessed 2.8.2016).

Entangled biographies

Just as the biography of one particular copy of the Duchess's work *Andachts-Opffer* was incorporated into the paratexts of later editions of the work, so it was also made part of the Duchess's own biography in the printed curriculum vitae of the funeral work commemorating her life, where the story of its miraculous survival was retold. The nexus of biographies and books, often to be found in the curricula vitae of women's funeral sermons, where their reading and writing is mentioned, reaches a high point in the dynastic funeral work for Magdalena Sibylle. The texts of the funeral book celebrate her both as a collector, as a reader, and as a prolific author. But her authored books themselves also became a central part of the ceremonial iconography of the funeral service. Material aspects of all her publications – reproductions of their title page engravings – were reproduced and enlarged to be used as shields within the ephemeral architecture of the *castrum doloris* in the church at Stuttgart. They were placed prominently at the base of the construction at eye level with the congregation. As engravings within engravings and books within a book, the title-page engraving of the funeral publication for Magdalena Sibylle reproduced the *castrum doloris*, the eight shields and their representations of her publications (Fig. 9).⁵⁴

Emblems from the Duchess's emblematic compendium *Creuz-Press* are cited extensively in the text of the published funeral sermon that Johann Wolfgang Jäger had held in the Stiftskirche in Tübingen.⁵⁵ The funeral work is thus a complex referential system in which books take centre stage, both visually and textually.

Conclusion: Gendered practices of book use.

In alignment with the medieval *Sachsenspiegel*, early modern devotional works in particular were passed down in the female line, making them difficult to trace. The passive-aggressive book objects with which Dorothea Susanna of Weimar pounded her son entered directly into his dynastic collections in Altenburg and moved with them to Gotha. Most books owned by women rather than men passed through many hands before they reached their present owners and they accumulated rich biographies of their own on the way.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 246.

⁵⁵ Christ-Fürstliches Ehren-Gedächtniß (fn. 41), pp. 19–20, 26.



Fig. 9: Title engraving of the funeral work for Magdalena Sibylle of Württemberg (1712) with shields from her works in the foreground, Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart

Devotional works are often quickly passed over when examining women's book collections as they are misunderstood as bearing witness only to personal belief. My examples have shown women using these books as overt or subtle political and personal statements and exhortations. The biography of the object was intertwined with their own biographies and aspirations and with their dynastic and family networks. By creating and documenting their association with individual objects they engaged in a process of enhancing their value and attempted to guarantee their survival. Women sought to inscribe their personal history into that of the object by using inscriptions and portraits or by actually making the material object book and their connection to it the subject of reflection in printed texts. The various manipulations to which book objects were subjected attempted to imbue them with agency over space and time. The book as an object that could be easily transmitted from one place to another established and upheld personal connections and emotional ties between giver or testator and recipient. Its content could be reinforced by appeals to conscience in its paratexts or in the enhancement of its message in its decoration. Books of little market value, such as a bestseller like Johann Habermann's prayerbook, could be transformed into dynastic treasures by virtue of costly bindings. The devotional book was not just an attribute for the early modern dynastic woman, it was a tool that she used for exerting and maintaining influence and for asserting her place in dynastic memory.