

they were in religious dissent. She always kept her spiritual independence with regard to Calvin, and his interest in Renée was probably also politically motivated.

Gabriella Scarlatta's chapter, "Between Literature and Religion: Renata di Francia's Literary Network," addresses the community of women, both real and textual, who were related to Renée's court in Ferrara. The network of female courtiers, authors, and spiritual advisors turned the court into a relatively protected free place for religious debate that included a wide diversity of perspectives and favoured literary innovation.

Finally, Kathleen Wilson-Chevalier addresses Renée's art patronage in her chapter "Under the Rubble: Renée de France and Fragments of Art from Her Italian Years." Despite the fragmented survival of artworks, books, and architecture commissioned by Renée herself, Wilson-Chevalier's erudition ensures the assemblage of a masterful and incredibly rich overview of the artistic context of Renée's years in Ferrara.

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*Anna Zieglerin and the Lion's Blood: Alchemy and End Times in Reformation Germany.* Tara Nummedal.

Haney Foundation Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. xii + 288 pp. \$49.95.

In her latest book, *Anna Zieglerin and the Lion's Blood*, Tara Nummedal vividly retells the story of Anna Maria Zieglerin (ca. 1545–75), a self-taught alchemist and prophetess working at the court of Duke Julius (1528–89) and Duchess Hedwig (1540–1602) of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in Wolfenbüttel. Drawing expertly on recent research, the author places alchemy squarely in the context of the religious and scientific discourses of the time, as well as court intrigues and political power struggles. Alchemists in the sixteenth century had to carefully navigate between the prospect of profit and reputation on the one hand, and distrust and accusations on the other. Favor and protection of the patron was crucial. Once Anna Zieglerin and her fellow alchemists Heinrich Schombach (who was also her husband) and the Lutheran pastor Philipp Sömmering lost the trust of Duke Julius, their case was pretty much sealed. Accused of a range of crimes including fraud, sorcery, political scheming, and murder, they were executed in Wolfenbüttel in 1575.

After a detailed account in chapter 1 of the preceding events in the 1560s—the so-called Grumbach Feud and the Gotha Rebellion, which cast a long, gloomy shadow over the casual bystanders Zieglerin, Schombach, and Sömmering—Nummedal turns to the lives of her protagonists in chapters 2 and 3. We learn that Anna claimed to be of noble lineage, a young widow who had reluctantly consented to marry Heinrich Schombach (also known as Cross-Eyed Heinz), a courtier of Duke Julius. Being a

woman and fiercely distrusted by Duchess Hedwig and her entourage, Anna had to find creative means to make her way at court.

Finally, in a bold statement of her own alchemical expertise, Anna approached Duke Julius with a collection of recipes in which she explained how to make a golden oil called lion's blood that would bring lucrative benefits. This prospect enabled Anna to establish herself, albeit briefly, as an alchemist in her own right. By aligning herself with Paracelsian insights, she emphasized the up-to-date nature of her skills. Nummedal's analyses of this extraordinary booklet in chapters 4 and 5 are a most inspiring read. As the author points out, in referring to the efficacy of blood Anna tapped not only into popular belief and medical discourse but also "a rich system of meaning that linked alchemy to the generation and redemption of matter, the knot at the heart of early modern Christianity" (82). Ultimately, Anna considered herself pure because of her lack of menstruation, and likened herself to the Virgin Mary. She believed that, like Mary, she had a unique role to play in salvation history as the source of new life, which would be brought about by the lion's blood.

Chapters 6 and 7 are concerned with the downfall and trial of Anna Zieglerin and her companions. She stands out as one of the few women alchemists known to us, although they were in fact not that uncommon in the sixteenth century. However, had it not been for her trial, whose extensive documents have survived to this day, we would probably know nothing about Anna Zieglerin either. Nummedal's analysis of the material is appropriately cautious yet allows her to tease out how Anna framed herself as a practitioner of "holy alchemy" (127) and a decidedly Lutheran prophetess who would speed up the hotly anticipated end of time. The final chapter demonstrates the longevity of nineteenth-century academic and popular narratives about Anna Zieglerin, which are heavily affected by gender stereotypes.

The book is superbly written and clearly contextualized, and thus easily accessible even to non-experts. However, more experienced scholars will also benefit from this elegant study. All in all, *Anna Zieglerin and the Lion's Blood* adds considerably to our understanding of the complexity of sixteenth-century religiosity, which was easily able to accommodate alchemical practices, since alchemists could be seen as "reenacting sacred history in the laboratory" (134). Because of the ways in which it considers the religious implications of alchemical practice, Nummedal's study is a worthwhile read not only for historians of science but also for Church historians and religious scholars.

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