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Pomp, Power, and Politics: Essays on German and Scandinavian
Court Culture and Their Contexts (review)

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(Review)

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Mara Wade, ed. *Pomp, Power, and Politics: Essays on German and Scandinavian Court Culture and Their Contexts*.

Vol. 32, nos. 11–2 of *Daphnis: Zeitschrift für Mittlere Deutsche Literatur und Kultur der Frühen Neuzeit (1400–1750)*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004. 378 pp. illus. \$112. ISBN: 90–420–1711–2.

This volume, edited by Mara Wade, deals with German and Scandinavian court cultures. Most of the contributions draw attention to the importance of, and renewed interest in, court festivals, entries, and performances. In European state archives hundreds of records of such performances are awaiting closer examinations. They often seem quite similar. They demonstrate the precise goals of distributing messages to a wider public and to posterity. Therefore it is essential to study the political contexts, the backgrounds, and the precise descriptions and messages of the printed *Beschreibungen*.

Mårten Snickare in his article on the entry of Ulrika Eleonora into Stockholm in 1680 states, “An inscription in Latin above the opening expresses the joy the citizens feel at the arrival of the King and Queen, and the peace their marriage has brought about” (253). This certainly is not an expression of the people’s response to the festivities or to the royal couple, but the response expected and intended by the creators of the show. We shall hardly ever be able to trace the popular view of these royal shows, but part of at least Danish grand scale court festivities was to pacify the people through large amounts of free beer and roast beef.

Bonner Mitchell examines the journalistic mediation of Italian festivals. It seems that relatively unknown men of letters used the record of festivals as a means of establishing a career in public life. The effect was well-known also in Denmark; the only option if you wished to publish a newspaper in an absolutist state was to flatter the monarch with such records. Paul Casey studies Georg Pondo’s “Weinachtsspiel” of 1589, which seems to be a copy of an older play. Probably it would have proven dangerous to alter the narrative of the Birth of Christ too much in a context of Lutheran quasi-fundamentalism following the acceptance of the Book of Concord in 1580. Pondo does something different. He writes the dialogue of the shepherds in the Low German dialect, *märkisch*. So he turns the Christmas play into a *Volksschaupiel* of the German tradition.

Barton Browning gives an account of the welcoming celebration of the Danish Princess Elizabeth in Wolfenbüttel in 1590. The marriage was a matter of pure calculation, and Elizabeth never won the hearts of the German populace.

The study of Richard E. Schade describes the court of Württemberg, and the numerous travels that Duke Friedrich made to England. In 1592 he first met with Queen Elizabeth. At this meeting the first arrangements were made to install the duke as a member of the Garter Knights. Württemberg wrote letters and undertook travels to the British court. The entire process lasted twelve years.

The baptism of Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Moritz of Hessen-Kassel, in 1596 marked the dynastic relations with Denmark and reinforced a bulwark against the Habsburg power in Europe. At this occasion royal festivals seem to

change from an emphasis on tournaments to visual activities. Hors Nieder describes these changes.

Jill Bepler's study of Georg Engelhard Loheneys's *Aulico Politica* (1622–24) and King Christian IV of Denmark's *Königlicher Wecker* shows an astonishing semipublic correspondence concerning the court of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Duke Friedrich Ulrich was unable to rule his territories. Confronted with this misgovernment Christian IV, his uncle, in 1620 wrote his tract, instructing his nephew and his helpers to adhere to old and well-established laws and to act as good shepherds to the subjects of the land. In the text the Danish king gives his nephew good advice such as to visit taverns incognito in order to learn about the *vox populi*.

Loheneys is also the subject of Wade's contribution. Danish readers certainly profit from Wade's great knowledge of Danish language and court culture. In her thorough study of Loheneys's equestrian book, *Della Cavalleria*, she assumes that this book must have been used for the design of Christian IV's tournament pageant in Hamburg in 1603.

Mårten Snickere describes Ulrika Eleonora's entry into Stockholm in 1680. Unfortunately the article raises more questions than it answers. He notes that Ulrika Eleonora was a Danish princess arriving at the Stockholm court just after years of war between the two countries. In my opinion it does not suffice to claim that the war may have been due to Danish aggression. Nor is it sufficient to suggest that the numerous inscriptions about Swedish victories over Denmark can be seen as ideological concepts in a specific situation.

Sara Smart's study of Elector Friedrich III of Brandenburg's coronation as king in 1701 is well-structured, extremely clear, and suggestive. What does it require to claim one a king? Smart reads Johann von Besser's *Krönungs-Geschichte* and sorts out three characteristics: it must be made plausible that the elector has always been a king. The second attribute of a king is a large, magnificent court including chancelleries, courts, and any sort of public offices. The third sign of royal status is — especially in Brandenburg — a big and strong army.

We find an article by Lars Oluf Larson about rhetoric and authenticity in the portraits of Christian IV of Denmark. It deals with the political and symbolic use of the king's portrait. Karen Skovgaard-Petersen delivers a fine study of Danish seventeenth-century chroniclers, Pontanus and Meursius, while Dianne M. McMullen introduces her reader to the garden of Venus. The study of a corpus of late Renaissance songs, however, requires some familiarity with the terms of musicology.

All in all, this is a very useful volume that sheds light on a variety of European festivals.

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