

REWRITING EVE: THE FORMATION OF THE FEMALE SELF IN REFORMATION
GERMANY

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
San Francisco State University
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree

AS

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2016

HIST

.863

Master of Arts

In

History

by

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San Francisco State University

May 2016

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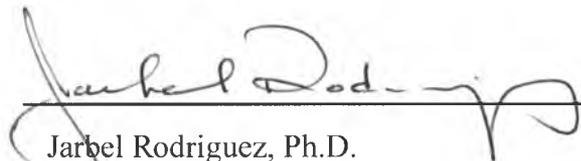
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REWRITING EVE: THE FORMATION OF THE FEMALE SELF IN REFORMATION
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San Francisco, California
2016

This thesis aims to reconstruct the formation of the female self during the Protestant Reformation by contextualizing women's writings as, not only a response to discourse produced by men, but also as an independent production of opinion. This study will shed light on the highly historicized evolution of the gender hierarchy, how the religious discourse of the Protestant Reformation changed that hierarchy, and how those changes functioned in creating space for female agency in the birth of the self. The central texts to be examined in this study come from Katharina Schütz Zell, the wife of an early reformed pastor, Argula von Grumbach, a noblewoman and first female Protestant writer, and the male voices that spoke to these women, such as Martin Luther, Philipp Melancthon, and their respective husbands and family, among many others. The discourse created by such men constructed the female identity within a strict topos of either the Virgin Mary or Eve. This thesis will show how the texts written by women and about women construct the self as being between the angel and harlot paradigms: it is in this collision between the authority and the other that the self emerges.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.



Chair, Thesis Committee

5/17/16

Date

PREFACE

I began this project during my first semester of graduate school at San Francisco State University in an attempt to put women back into the study of history. I wanted to give women more than the marginal subjective role that I found assigned to them within the texts I encountered repeatedly in my undergraduate studies. In order to locate women's agency in the early modern era, I looked to Protestant women's published writings. In these texts, I found more than agency, and discovered unique identities and strong senses of self. I would like to thank my thesis committee and mentors, Professor Laura Lisy-Wagner, Professor Sarah Curtis, and Professor Jarbel Rodriguez, for assisting me in this arduous, but enlightening, project of tracing the Reformation's impact on women and the self. I also want to thank my family and friends who supported me as I, too, found my own distinctive, and sometimes chimeric, self during this project.

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Introduction

In a 1522 edition of Martin Luther's translation of the New Testament, a woodcut by Lucas Cranach depicts the Whore of Babylon wearing the triple-tiered papal tiara and riding a seven-headed beast of Revelation. The crowd gathers around the beast, gazing up in awe at the woman holding a censer, a symbol of the Catholic Church's gilded rituals that the reformers detested. The whore symbolizes the unfaithful Church and is the embodiment of earthly evil that will bring the Apocalypse. This allegorical portrayal of the Pope as the Antichrist was a common theme in Protestant Germany. Lyndal Roper aptly describes the motivation behind these works: "Theological difference took anthropomorphic form."¹ In other words, the Protestant leaders assigned their enemies a body in order to efficiently target it and embed it within lived experience. As was traditional, that body was female. Propaganda depicted the Pope as a tawdry and dangerous woman who was a threat to social life and righteous, Christian living. The Virgin Mary was no longer regal, but simply a Christian mother who did not warrant individual worship. The Devil took the form of female witches who plagued local communities and were burnt at the stake in a display of religious triumph. The Reformation sought to Christianize daily life, and in turn, imbued ordinary moments with new meaning.

¹ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, Sexuality and Religion in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 43.

The religious schism of the German Protestant Reformation brought with it great social and cultural change. In order to oppose Catholic rituals and sacraments, which reformers believed contradicted truth derived directly from Scripture, Lutherans targeted social roles and aspects of daily life that were closely tied to Catholic rites such as priests, nuns, and concepts of marriage and family. The Lutheran pastor differed from the Catholic priest and monks, because he spoke in the vernacular and interpreted Scripture in ways that made it more understandable for his flock. The pastor's wife was a figure in direct opposition to the nun. They were both pious female figures who were lifted up by their respective faiths as paragons of womanhood, but the pastor's wife lived amongst the community and was a celebration of domestic life unlike the celibate, cloistered nun. There was constant tension between these religious and social characters, even amongst Protestants who divided amongst themselves within decades of Luther's Reformation, and thus provided space for new discourses on identity to emerge, which is the central concern of this project.

Secular authorities, at the behest of reformed leaders, dismantled civic-run brothels, local convents and monasteries, and narrowed women's chances of independence. Marriage became a civic act when it was stripped of its status as a sacrament and its validity rested on parental and secular authority. The secular government was now able to punish marital transgressions, and therefore, Lutheran theology controlled another aspect of daily life and this was supported by the state legislature. By stripping communities of alternative places such as convents for women's

economic independence, and by highlighting the centrality of marriage in Scripture, women's public roles and opportunities were severely limited.² Marriage was so elevated that "the discourse of wifehood began to displace that of womanhood altogether."³ Protestants believed that God created women to be wives and mothers, but nothing more. This meant that a woman's identity was boiled down to a mere few elements. She had no other opportunities to fulfill her personal or social purpose, and she could not escape into a convent.

Even clergy were urged to marry. Thus came the new role of pastor's wife. This new type of marriage fell under the community's gaze and acted as a role model. The pastor's wife became the definitive role for women, and her actions in her marriage were meant to be an instruction manual for her fellow Christian women. The pastor's marriage was set up for public consumption. Women's bodies once again bore the brunt of cultural fear and hope. As a woman in the spotlight, the pastor's wife had to conform to Lutheran, male discourse about women's ultimate purposes and roles within the community and family. She represented the rejection of dangerous Catholic thought and the cure for a damaged society. However, when we look to women's writings of this time, we can see an internal change occurring that did not fit within the dominant discourses, which reflected a powerful female self to emerge on the page. This self arises in the spaces

² For a more thorough discussion on marriage, see Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Clarendon Press, 1989).

³ Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 40.

between the opposing authority structures where women transgressed the roles set for them.

The historiography on sixteenth-century women's agency is vast, and nearly all concludes with the negation of women's claim to agency. Historian Elsie Anne McKee aptly points out that the historiography on the Reformation shifted from a focus on the major reformers to an analysis of the active participation of those "being reformed" and how their participation shaped the religious movement. This historiographical approach of looking at how religious change affected people is important because it also looks at how those not involved in the top-down changes were able to effect change from below. Looking at how women, a marginalized group in both history and historiography, navigated these changes places them in a position of agents of change in the sixteenth-century Reformation.

Substantiating McKee's critique, we find that many historians concentrate on how the Reformation changed the female role within society, coming to differing conclusions from women experiencing little to no change to women experiencing complete emancipation.⁴ A less polemical argument comes from Max Weber's theory: "[T]he equality granted to women in the early stages of a religious community's formation always diminishes significantly as routinization and regimentation of

⁴ *Elisabeth's Manly Courage: Testimonials and Songs of Martyred Anabaptist Women in the Low Countries*, ed. and trans. Hermina Joldersma and Louis Peter Grijp (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2001), 14.

community relationships set in.”⁵ Researchers such as Elsie Anne McKee in the monograph *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany* and the contributing writers in *Elisabeth’s Manly Courage: Testimonials and Songs of Martyred Anabaptist Women in the Low Countries* follow the Weberian thesis, particularly when examining one specific woman, such as the early reformer Katharina Schütz Zell in *Church Mother*, or when analyzing a group of women as in the Anabaptist community that embraced radical social changes that often ended for naught. The subjects of these texts were able to effect change in their communities when the Reformation first began and when the Anabaptists formed, but once the dust settled, the women no longer had a revolutionary role to play.

The inclusion of women in the home with no alternative option in convents for an autonomous lifestyle, leads Lyndal Roper to argue that women no longer had the space to develop their own talents, and it narrowed the options of acceptable female identities.⁶ Such an argument asserts that reformed women had no free will or opportunity to choose what their social identity would be. Taking away women’s freedom of choice also takes away their agency since they are not theoretically able to control their own lives or the events shaping their lives. Roper has elsewhere argued that when we look at the history of gender, we must look at both femininity and masculinity since “the changes in the

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lyndal Roper, “Luther: Sex, Marriage, and Motherhood,” *History Today* (December 1983): 35.

notion of ‘woman’ should change the meaning of ‘man.’”⁷ In this discussion, she posits that women did not possess a separate feminine culture or sense of gender solidarity because women perceived their place in society in the context of their relation to men. In an article on Lutheran wedding sermons and their influence on definitions of gender, Susan C. Karant-Nunn similarly claims that when we look at the autobiographical texts of reformed women we catch “a glimpse of women who had thoroughly absorbed their pastors’ valuations.”⁸ She believes that even in the intimate space of diaries and letters, it appears that women perceived of their lives in relation to a patriarch. Both Roper and Karant-Nunn see evidence of women being inextricably tied to the male narrative, thus, giving away some of her freedom of choice and control over her own life.

In her compilation of exemplary women in the Reformation, Kirsi Stjerna works to problematize this male-dominated narrative. Stjerna presents fascinating biographies on many female reformers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and describes several of these characters as “early modern feminists” who “articulated their gendered experiences and intentionally addressed the issue of gender and authority, [and by doing so,] they rebelliously broke gender boundaries, and they were aware of other women doing the same elsewhere.”⁹ While Stjerna does remove men from the focal point in her work, she creates another problem by presenting such an overgeneralized and

⁷ Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil*, 38. For her full discussion on how women were inextricably linked to the male culture, read her chapter “Was there a crisis in gender relations?” in *Oedipus and the Devil*.

⁸ Susan C. Karant-Nunn, “‘Fragrant Wedding Roses’: Lutheran Wedding Sermons and Gender Definition in Early Modern Germany,” *German History* 17, no. 1 (1999): 38.

⁹ Kirsi Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2009), 250.

anachronistic argument. She creates space where it does not exist. There was not, as Roper shows, a separate space for women to assert agency, especially not as a “feminist.” Women were not collectively thinking or gathering in an attempt to overthrow the authority of the patriarchy. The authority they sought to insurrect was not the subversive cultural powers of gender definitions but the oppressive Catholic Church and the local communities wrought with sin.

Stjerna was right, however, about women articulating their gendered experiences. The letters and pamphlets published by Protestant women reflect the gender of the writer through the way in which the author perceived and translated events. Gender was an integral aspect of daily and spiritual life in the early modern era, and it was not divisible from individual identity. Karant-Nunn’s statement that women’s writings were visibly marked by male authorities’ judgments ties in here as well. Yes, the subordinated gender often bore the signs of men’s discourse on the appropriate behavior and inherent nature of women. However, when we compare reformed men’s writings and ideologies about women to actual women’s writings and their actions, sometimes many of those marks are missing. This suggests that women had some control over their internal and social identity, even if reformed theology and secular authorities worked to curtail their choices. Where women diverted from acceptable concepts of identity, they carved out a space for themselves. I argue that it is where we do not see Luther and his compatriots’ handiwork that there is a powerful, gendered sense of self.

Because religious discourse turned inward, the Reformation is an important era for thinking about the self. The new theology promoted a re-examination of morality and faith, which caused people to look within at the self. The Lutheran concept of *sola fide* meant that one could no longer confess to their sins, do good works for penance, and expect those sins to be forgiven. Old Catholic rituals no longer sufficed, and salvation could not be purchased. The only way to live a faithful, Christian life was to internally change through worship and building a close relationship with God. However, religious ideology also worked its way into civic policy. If an individual was unable to control his morality, church and state were there to impose reformed ideologies on their life. Philosopher Charles Taylor utilizes this narrative of secularization to identify the sources of the modern self. Taylor argues that the modern self recognizes that it comes from within (i.e. from a soul-like place); the modern self believes that the ordinary and daily life is the necessary source of the self, and the modern self can express its nature outwardly. The second element places the Reformation as a central factor and major turning point in the creation of Taylor's modern self, because the Reformation affirmed daily life through secularization.¹⁰

The leaders of the Reformation believed that the traditional authorities failed their flocks and led the populace astray into sinful vices. In order to regulate a community's immorality, Protestant authorities pressured secular authorities to make society godlier by

¹⁰ Taylor defines daily life as "those aspects of human life concerned with production and reproduction, that is labor, the making of the things needed for life, and our life as sexual beings, including marriage and the family." Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 211.

removing visible elements of sin from the streets. In this search to imbue society with Christian values (along with many other steps), the Protestant church began to secularize its control. Taylor begins his argument with pointing to the reformers use of secular power to deal with their concerns for controlling daily life. Since the mendicant's path and ecclesiastical way of life was no longer lifted up as the apex of society, the artisan became more highly praised than the armchair philosophers. Therefore, the secular life became more important and godly. If the Catholic Church was not assigning degrees of divinity to differing identities, then it was up to the individual to do so. Here, Taylor sees the inward move of the self. The individual was alone with God, who solely could offer salvation. However, with the secularization of reformed theology, the self, for Taylor, was still controlled from the outside. In regards to women's lives, Taylor saw the rejection of good works and ascetic living a promotion of the domestic, married life.¹¹

In this vein, Natalie Zemon Davis explores the sense of self in sixteenth-century France. She claims that the self was "made in conscious relation to the groups to which people belonged" and, thus, all instances of talking or writing about the self existed within concepts of relationships.¹² For Zemon Davis, the most important and central relation was the one between the female author of a text and family. She claims that in a society where there is religious and political upheaval, relations between God and the state shift, but the familial and patriarchal relationship stands constant. Zemon Davis

¹¹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 211-234.

¹² Natalie Zemon Davis, "Boundaries and the Sense of Self in Sixteenth-Century France," in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, ed. Thomas C Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E Wellbery, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), 53-64.

shows how women “gave themselves away” in marriage in order to carve out a space to assert their free will, because they saw marriage’s powerful ability in society to make peace or war. Women understood the importance of marriage on socio-political level, and saw that they could influence their own lives through choosing their marriage partners. In this example, among others, she shows how women and men used cultural experience to inform their sense of self. While Zemon Davis is correct in how daily life affected identity, she falters in rooting the self solely in the family unit. Relationships are important, but focusing on the family alone can confuse notions of gender by severely limiting the scope of women’s roles. This is also the problem with Taylor’s concept of the self. By following a narrative of secularization and seeing the affirmation of the domestic life as an integral factor in the formation of the self, they both ignore the religious life and the deep well of possibilities that spirituality and faith offer the self.

One historian who pushes back on such theories used by Zemon Davis and Taylor is Phyllis Mack who focuses on religious, rather than familial life, and how it imbued the self with meaning and power. Her article “Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency” demonstrates that only looking at external changes limits the possibility of seeing religious women act with agency and independence. Mack’s objective is to include pious women, particularly eighteenth-century Quakers, into feminist history. She argues that the trend in feminist history has been to exclude overtly religious women because many historians “assume that those who are inspired by religious enthusiasm or fanaticism, or who live under the influence of a religious institution or discipline” lack

individual identity and agency.¹³ Mack blames this on the metanarrative of secularization. If one believes that society became modern with the secularization of the state and culture, and that only a modern individual could be autonomous and have agency, then the natural conclusion would be to ignore highly religious people as holders of agency. Mack posits that the Quaker women conformed to Michel Foucault and Judith Butler's definition of agency, which assert that the individual must be able to create change and displace social norms even from a subordinate position.¹⁴ By looking at how Quaker women defined agency, "not as the freedom to do what one wants but as the freedom to do what is right...which is determined by absolute truth or God as well as by individual conscience," it is clear that they do in fact fit this criteria by making choices about how to be obedient to God.¹⁵ Mack shows that Quaker women, when acting as ministers and preaching prophets, experienced self-transcendence; they were not only divided from their sense of personal identity but from their womanhood.¹⁶

However, I differ from Mack here by arguing that a division from womanhood is not essentially possible during the Reformation. While it is important to realize that women were able to have a self outside of familial relations and male ideologies, it is equally important to show that they asserted this agency *as women* and not as characters who transcended their identities. Another historian who sees power within religious

¹³ Phyllis Mack, "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism," *Signs* 29: no. 1 (Autumn 2003): 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 156

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 156

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 165

identity is Sylvia Brown who claims that Christian women had “personal revelation or unmediated experience of the divine, with the result that spiritual authority becomes invested in them: not in priestly mediators, guides, or teachers, but in their own selves, bodies, voices, and writings.”¹⁷ She does not see a transcendence of self, but transcendence from authority figures whom filtered religious experience and power. Women became more rooted in their identity during divine experiences, according to Brown. However, while women’s actions support this conclusion, it is important to see that women’s writings still engaged with male discourse. Women rhetorically accepted men’s limitations on them, but used their power derived from religious experience to carve out a space where they deviated from men’s ideology. The writings produced by women showed a “fractured, changing, alterable”¹⁸ sense of self as they both broke with and adhered to aspects of male thematic frameworks. In the texts written by women, and about women, the female self is seen situated between the angel and harlot paradigms where she is slowly building a new and individual self within the gender hierarchy available to her.

G. Sujin Pak’s article on three female reformers and their self-identification as prophets is an example of Mack and Brown’s concepts working together by revealing the benefits of looking into religious women’s writings.¹⁹ Pak locates these women in a

¹⁷ *Women, Gender, and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sylvia Brown, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 11.

¹⁸ Liz Stanley, *Auto/biographical I*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 63.

¹⁹ G. Sujin Pak, “Three Early Female Protestant Reformers’ Appropriation of Prophecy as Interpretation of Scripture,” *Church History* 84:1 (March 2015), 90-123.

larger biblical tradition, and thus, shows how they transgressed gender boundaries by imbuing themselves with great spiritual authority and ignoring gender in general.

However, by only unpacking the prophetic qualities of women's writings, Pak falls into Mack's problematic concept of self-transcendence. Ignoring the writer's womanhood will lead to a faulty understanding of the self, because by not seeing gender, we miss the cultural and social authorities that aided in shaping the self. If we cannot see how the self transgresses the norms, we cannot see how it is unique. What is needed is a more coherent mixture of the methodologies working in tandem to see how the self can be gendered and subordinated, but powerful.

Stephen Greenblatt's investigation on the self offers such a methodology.²⁰

Greenblatt posits that self-fashioning occurs when an individual interacts with characters, theatrical in his case and biblical in mine, and enters into a process of negotiation with the societal powers that created such characters. In his study on Renaissance English literature, Greenblatt argues that literary characters are reflections and judgments of the culture that constructed them, and they carry with them concepts of authority and the other. This means that when one compares oneself to a character in a play, such as Shakespeare's Romeo, that individual is consciously associating with and reflecting the system of signs and symbols that are inherent in Romeo's character. For this project, this concept is a guide for unpacking the cultural meaning of characters and the reformer's appropriation and projection of their meaning.

²⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

Greenblatt posits that man is born a *tabula rasa* with no pre-determined identity linked to his race, gender, or class. He argues that to interpret a historical figure's identity correctly, one must focus on "the interpretive constructions the members of a society apply to their experiences."²¹ Greenblatt asserts that in using written word, as evidence of this fashioned self, one makes the cognitive choice to adhere to authority, work within societal structures of power, and purposely transgress from those structures. Thus, the self forms through conscious choices of applying definitions to and tensions between the authority and to the "other," reflecting those dependent, binary structures. It is in the collision between the authority and the other that the self emerges. The differing ways through which an individual grappled with the subversion of the authority in its fight with the other results in "fashioning" a particular sense of identity, which can be molded through time and space as the symbiotic, binary relationships change. The Reformation held many such oppositional subjects and created an opportunity for such a collision: the Catholics versus the Lutherans, the nun versus the pastor's wife, the first generation Protestants versus the second generation, the confessionalized state versus popular piety, the Virgin Mary versus the original sinner Eve. Tensions between these opposing relationships and identities ran high during the Reformation, and by redefining the way in which people understood the world, women were able to redefine the way in which they understood themselves.

²¹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 4.

In order to see how these opposing relationships informed women's identity, we must look at how they utilized language to navigate the authoritative discourses. Poststructuralist feminist theory argues that language is the major building block in the construction of identity. Since discourse is tied to one's understanding of the self, and since it is rare that there is ever a single dominant discourse, the discursive formation of a woman's language and the way in which she uses that language to speak about herself derives from many different discourses. Again, the opposing authorities are present; each one has their own discourse on what it is to be a woman, what it is to be a man, what it is to be a Christian, what it is to be a citizen, and so on. The way in which these differing discourses intermix and the way in which an individual consciously deals with them through language, is how a woman fashions herself. With the Reformation's shifting structures and gender roles, women had to be able to reconcile with previous paradigms. When the first generation Protestants damned the clergy and the Catholic virtue of celibacy, for example, the sanctity of marriage was raised up as the ideal path for all women. Thus, individuals had to find a balance between the old world and the new, or rather, between the paradigm of the Virgin Mary and the original sinner, Eve. We can see this balancing act in the sources written by women.

In a scripturally inspired introduction text to a hymnbook, Katharina Schütz Zell, a central subject for this project, stated, "By their fruits you shall know them."²² She

²² Katharina Schütz Zell, "Some Christian and Comforting Songs of Praise about Jesus Christ our Savior, His Incarnation, Birth, Circumcision, Etc., Out of a Very Fine Songbook About Which More Will be Said in the Foreword," quoted in Elsie McKee, *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in*

believed that by looking at a person's productions or acts, you can tell who they truly are. I also believe that we can know how women saw themselves from how they wrote about their roles in society (their fruits), because we can see how they transgressed from male discourse. There is a distinct difference in the way women utilized characters and portrayed social roles from how men saw those same personas. Women were able to carve out a space to do this because of the Reformation's clashing discourses on religious and social identities.

In order to see what the difference between male and female discourses looked like and to interpret its meanings, it is imperative to take into account not only the voices of the women, but also the voices that speak to those women. Drilling further down into specific interactions with Reformation male leaders and Protestant women reveals the unique ways in which men's voices from the Protestant Reformation helped discursively formulate the female self. Some women felt they gained authority by being members of the priesthood of all believers, but they still adhered to men's perceptions of women. As women began to see themselves outside of the male ideal of what a woman should be, however, women were able to describe themselves in a fractured way, forming a feminine discourse. It is in those cracks that one can truly witness the birth of the female self.

Sixteenth-Century Germany (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 93. In reference to Schütz Zell's belief that the man who wrote these hymns in Bohemia must be a good Christian based on his works.

I will organize my argument around the binary relationships between reformed men and women in sixteenth-century Germany in order to illustrate how structures of religious and secular authority coupled with concepts of gender and internal religiosity functioned in creating a space for women to formulate identity. “Chapter I: Reformation Discourse on Women’s Identity” presents the idea that reformed theology utilized women’s identity as a way to directly oppose Catholic doctrine. Therefore, the Protestant male leaders constructed a discourse on women, and through secularization, they applied their discourse to women’s lives and attempted to shape women’s identity. “Chapter II: Argula von Grumbach” and “Chapter III: Katharina Schütz Zell” both provide examples of how two individual women transgressed from that male discourse. Due to each women’s respective community, social class, and social role, they each dealt with differing binary structures of authority. This caused them to have to carve out space for themselves in different ways, and thus, their sense of identity greatly differed. The concluding chapter offers a comparison of the women, and illuminates that Argula von Grumbach was a lone rebel, while Katharina Schütz Zell was a church mother (*Kirchen Mutter*). In both chapters I argue that by looking at how these women consciously chose to identify with culturally constructed characters and vocations, such as the noble wife, the pastor’s wife, and the roles of prophets and preachers, we can see how these women negotiated with their chosen social roles and character identities to create distinct and gendered selves.

Chapter I: Reformation Discourse on Female Identity

“Woman is isha; ish is a man among men, isha a little man and of itself means not a woman because it is made of the substance of a man.”²³

In the decade after Luther’s wave-making *Ninety-Five Theses*, the Reformation forced a reevaluation of human nature as Protestants called for a Christianization of every aspect of life.²⁴ Acting to cleanse society of traditional Catholic rituals and beliefs, reformers focused on elements of daily life that they could regulate, such as marriage and sex. Given that both of these categories are so closely tied to gender, morality, and perceived natural tendencies, reformers began reexamining human nature. A religion grounded in the concept of *sola scriptura* naturally looked to the Bible for guidelines against which to evaluate human nature—man’s (or the Pope’s) laws could no longer act as sole judge and executioner. The book of Genesis offered Protestants a starting point. From there, they turned to Eve to gain an understanding of God’s plan for women: a wife and mother, repenting for sin. No longer was the Virgin Mary the paragon of women; celibacy became regarded as an unreachable and superfluous goal, and, thus, Mary was an unattainable character. As the perpetrator in the Temptation, the cause of the Fall, and the origin of the female race, Eve represented the reevaluated and “natural” female

²³ Martin Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1523/24, WA XIV*, quoted in Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93. In this sermon, Luther describes how God made women to be wives, and nothing else, and that once she marries, she “shall no longer follow [her] own will.” Luther stated that women were subordinate to the man, named after him, and thus, a derivative of him.

²⁴ Heide Wunder, *He is the Sun, She is the Moon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 45.

identity. Eve's actions changed God's design and forced a re-creation of women's nature. Therefore, her symbol reigned supreme in the exegetical texts of leading Protestant men, such as Martin Luther, Martin Bucer, John Calvin, and Philip Melanchthon.²⁵ A Lutheran pastor in Ulm, Conrad Sam, expressed, "Women are still Eve, they still hold the apple in their hand."²⁶ According to the male voices of the Protestant Reformation, women could not transcend Eve's nature. This perception of the nature of women, stemming from biblical characters and the roles they represented, informed leading beliefs on women's roles in society and built a foundation for how men discussed female identity. An analysis of the leading Protestant men's exegetical texts on Biblical women and scripture relating to women's place in the world allows us to reconstruct the identity of the Reformation female built by the voices of men.

The majority of literature on the Reformation recounts men's opinions during the religious upheaval. With the cultural turn, many historians began to analyze discourses so that they could tell us something about the construction and meaning of gender, sexuality, and identity. Historiography on the Reformation turned to examining the sources from the era's leaders in order to see how their beliefs affected the previously mentioned categories of analysis. A brief examination of these historical trends will help situate how men's voices have been understood to affect women's roles in the early modern era.

²⁵ I generally focus on the works by Luther, supplemented by Calvin, as they held the most sway over the early phase of the Reformation in the German regions that Katharina Schütz Zell and Argula von Grumbach respectively lived.

²⁶ "Weiber/ sind noch heüt alle Eva/ verführen den man/ und haben den apffel noch in der hand." Quoted and translated in Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Réformation Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 65.

In J.L. Thompson's *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, for example, Thompson looks at Calvin's writings about women and how they fit in to or work against predominant ideological trends during the Reformation. *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah* looks at exegetical works that Calvin would have known, and shows his reactions to those works in order to present the changing and, often inconsistent, attitudes of Protestant leaders. A more thorough methodology would look at how Protestant theology was a reaction to Catholicism coupled with an analysis of how Scripture both informed and shifted with contemporary concepts of gender will help to unpack how these men's were shaped by the religio-political sphere and would produce a deeper understanding of the implications of their writings. A similar text is *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook*, a compilation of Luther's opinions on women found in his theological writings, sermons, pamphlets, letters, and table talk. The authors look at both his theories on women as well as the reality of his relationship with his wife and other women reformers. With this text, Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Susan Karant-Nunn attempt to fill a gap as there are no texts that solely address Luther's views on the female sex.²⁷ While Thompson's work on Calvin and Wiesner-Hanks and Karant-Nunn's publication are both worthy attempts to put women back in to history, neither aim to give agency to women.

Some historians moved away from looking at the leaders of the movement, and focused on the people who were on the ground and how the new theology affected their daily lives. Steven Ozment's *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* is

²⁷ Introduction to *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook*, edited and translated by Susan C. Karant- Nunn and Merry E. Wiesner- Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.

an example of this historiographical trend to provide lay people with agency. Ozment expertly examines the way in which people in the Reformation around Germany and Switzerland spoke about marriage and parenthood so that he can reconstruct the altering attitudes about family.²⁸ The author's goal is not to show just how political and economic structures shaped family, but to place agency into the hands of those experiencing and creating the new Protestant concepts of family. A work that attempts to bridge the gap between Ozment and Thompson's differing approaches is Joel F. Harrington's *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany*. His aim is to show the historical significance of the Reformation by balancing the *longue durée* methodology that looks at larger collective changes over time and a methodology that claims individuals can make lasting impacts.²⁹ Harrington's work on the changing state of marriage during the Reformation looks at religious, political, and exegetical discourse on marriage and compares these discourses to the impact on the ideas and practices of society. Since discourse does not always reflect experience, and neither exists in a vacuum, Harrington's task is a productive one.

However informative these works are, they still ignore the voices of women themselves. Heide Wunder, in *He is the Sun, She is the Moon: Women in Early Modern Germany*, aims to bring women's experience to light through describing the changing opportunities for women in various social strata and by showing how both urban and

²⁸ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 2-3.

²⁹ Joel Harrington, *Reordering Marriage and Society in Reformation Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2-3.

rural societies organized around gender relations. Wunder shows that women were able to project informal power through the changing importance of marriage; a fact that she claims historians fail to realize.³⁰ She posits that women and men attained self worth and identity through the household and marriage as it created a claim to adulthood, acted an orientation to secular life and piety, and produced a professional and productive space. However, Wunder's reliance on the structure of marriage reduces the importance of the individual self.

Inspired by the aforementioned work by Wiesner-Hanks and Karant-Nunn, Charlotte Methuen's article "'And your daughters shall prophesy!' Luther, Reforming Women and the Construction of Authority" focuses on four women reformers and their publications. Methuen looks at how these women were able to publish in an era and under the influence of a religion that drove women back into the home by examining the women's motives for publishing as well as their relationship with Luther and his male supporters.³¹ Methuen emphasizes women's experiences, and attempts to remove them from the space of the home and family. She points to Wiesner-Hanks' influential critique in "Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation" as a basis for her methodology. Wiesner-Hanks argues that women's history predominately places women in the home and sees the family as the sole determinant in their lives, and simultaneously "ignores women's intellectual and political history while conversely

³⁰ Wunder, *He is the Sun, She is the Moon*, 202.

³¹ Charlotte Methuen, "'And your daughters shall prophesy!' Luther, Reforming Women and the Construction of Authority," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 104 (2013): 85.

ignoring male sexuality and familial roles and gender restrictions on men.”³² In order to incorporate men’s gendered views into a discussion on women as intellectual and political actors we must begin an analysis of feminine discourse by looking at Luther and other reforming men’s ideologies first. This will reveal what men believed reformed women’s identities should look like. I will look at the various views on celibacy and marriage and the views on women in social roles such as prophets and preachers in order to reconstruct female identity as it was understood and constructed by active male leaders in the Protestant Reformation.

The Virgin and the Wife

As the mother of Christ, pious Catholics venerated the Virgin Mary’s image for centuries. The Reformation brought this crashing down, proclaiming the cult of Mary as an act of evil idolatry. Her decline was brought on by the fact that Protestants believed praising the saints was dangerous, since it drew attention away from Christ and scripture as well as set unreachable precedents for people to emulate. Thus, reformed theology, directed in opposition to Catholic beliefs, targeted the renowned image of Mary. While the Virgin remained an important facet in Christianity, her characterization shifted. Reformers redefined her personality to fit with their newly formed ideals of womanhood.

³² Merry E Wiesner-Hanks, “Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation, *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18 (1987): 316.

Luther looked to scriptural examples to explain the implications of venerating Mary and, thus, to directly oppose Catholic traditions and theology. He commented on the feast of her ascension and declared it a papist and blasphemous event as there was no basis for it in Scripture. He claimed that the only ascension in the Bible was that of Christ, and that the Pope's veneration of this falsified event "shames and dishonors the Ascension of our Lord Christ, because [the pope] wants to make the mother equal to the son in everything."³³ Luther saw the Catholic doctrine that praised the Virgin so highly as imposing Mary as an intercessor between the pious and Christ, just as Catholics placed the pope as intercessor between the people and God.

In his *Sermon on marriage* in 1525, Luther referred to the wedding at Cana in order to show the scriptural evidence for Christ's disavowing the worship of the Virgin. Mary asked Jesus to obtain wine for the wedding, and in doing so, Luther interpreted Christ's silence as evidence of his acknowledgement of his mother erring. Mary's actions showed that she believed that Christ would answer her when she needed to be answered. However, Luther claimed that God only answers prayers "when He wishes it and when His hour comes."³⁴ Christ did not answer Mary; if he succumbed to her will, he would show her greater honor than he receives himself. Jesus "rebuked [Mary] sharply and roughly" so that it was clear that "He is the one who should intercede between God and

³³ Luther, *Sermon on the Visitation, held according to the ordinances of Brandenburg and Nuremburg on the day of Mary's ascension, 1532, WA LII, pp. 681-88*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 47.

³⁴ Luther, *Sermon on the Sunday after Epiphany, 1528, WA XXI, pp. 62-5*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 55.

humans and not Mary or any other saint, no matter how holy that saint might be.”³⁵

Lutherans de-emphasized Mary’s role as protector, comforter, and mother here, since she was no longer able to act on behalf of those in need and she did not have the ear of her son or God.

Both Catholics and Protestants believed in her simultaneous roles of virgin, mother, and wife. However, each religion put different emphases on these roles. For the Protestants, she was mostly a model of faith for both sexes, not extolled for her wifely and motherly duties. Lutherans venerated her role as virgin, because it revealed the holiness of Christ and fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, but this role was hers alone; it was not something to be emulated.³⁶

Luther praised Mary for three specific virtues, which he found in the biblical chapter Luke that venerates her faith, humility, and chasteness. He claimed that Mary’s faith in her role in bearing the Son of God shows women that they should constantly be in positions to hear the word of God, and to faithfully follow his commands even if uncertain of the purpose.³⁷ Mary is a symbol for humility as she does not become prideful in her role as the mother of Christ: “This is certainly a lovely jewel and great ornament on the dear Virgin, that she did not become proud because of the honor that she had...It would not be a wonder (because women are certainly inclined to vanity) if she fell into

³⁵ Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1527, WA XXIV*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 22.

³⁶ Karant-Nunn, Introduction to Chapter 3: Mary, *Luther on Women*, 34.

³⁷ Luther, *Sermon on the Visitation, 1532*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 48.

vanity deeper than Lucifer with his angels...³⁸ Luther asserted that women, who were derived from Eve and, thus, naturally vain, could not follow Mary's model of humility. In regards to chasteness, Luther defined it as not being forward or wanton, but staying at home and refraining from gossip and frivolity—women that were not chaste were “slutty idlers.”³⁹ Luther did not ruminate on Mary's celibacy, only her chasteness, as he did not hold celibacy in high regards. Luther stated that very few women were able to meet the standards of chasteness. Most were “fresh and vulgar,” and in childbirth, they were “immodest... screaming and raging as if [they are] insane.”⁴⁰

To Luther, the Virgin was a singular exception. She alone bore the Son of God; her qualities were unique and caused her to rise in the eyes of God as worthy for such a duty. However, she did not carry on her virtues through bearing daughters and sons of man, as Eve did. Other virgins received a lesser fate, as celibacy was impossible to adhere to: “God has not allowed many virgins to live long, but hurried them out of this world... He knows how precious their treasure (virginity) is and how difficult it is to attain very long.”⁴¹ Her character was deemed unattainable—Mary was not an option for the Protestant female identity. Merry Wiesner-Hanks, in her article “Death of Two Marys” explains that even in regards to motherhood, Luther qualified Mary's purpose and deemed her a tool to teach men a lesson. He believes that men would be much better

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Luther, quoted in Merry Wiesner “Luther and Women: Death of Two Marys,” in *Feminist Theology: A Reader*, edited by Ann Loades (London: SPCK, 1990), 129.

off if they were born by men, and not women. However, if men did bear their own children, they would be at risk of being too prideful. Therefore, “this glory has been completely taken from the men and assigned to the women (who are nevertheless subject to the rule of the men) so that the men should not become vainglorious but be humble.”⁴² Luther emphasized that women were only given the gift of childbearing to act as a tool to keep men from being too prideful. Women were not to be praised for their motherhood role, then. Therefore, Mary, the ultimate mother, was still to be seen as merely the daughter of Eve and as subject to man. For Luther, Mary represented an instrument for man and an impossible character for women to emulate.

Reformers saw celibacy as a miraculous act of God and not a personal, individually driven achievement. This concept fit the dichotomy between confessions. Catholics saw virginity as an act of good works, which equated to divinity. Because Protestants sought to oppose Catholic theology by rejecting good works and by praising *sola fide*, Lutherans dismantled the “holy” vows of chastity. However, this narrowed women’s place within the home since they could no longer choose to live behind the walls of a convent. We see this ideology taking form in the Augsburg Confession by Philip Melanchthon, which was the primary confession of the Lutheran faith, and was presented to the Diet of Augsburg on June 25, 1530. In Article XXVII: Of Monastic Vows, Melanchthon wrote about the seeming absurdity and dangerousness of monasteries and convents as they promoted an unattainable lifestyle: “This they called

⁴² Luther, quoted in Merry Wiesner “Death of Two Marys,” 131.

fleeing from the world, and seeking a kind of life which would be more pleasing to God. Neither did they see that God ought to be served in those commandment which He Himself has given and not in commandments devised by men.”⁴³ God’s commandments did not call for people to live in a walled-off sanctuary, according to reformers. In response to the Church Fathers and saints that “came out of the world into the deserts and cloisters,” Luther argued that they are not to be praised, because they were simply fleeing and hiding from the tribulations and temptations God set upon them. He wrote, “For if I am in the desert, separated from all other people, no one has to thank me that I do not commit adultery, murder or steal.”⁴⁴ Reformers saw convents and monasteries as a means to run from the world and from the duties of marriage. They believed that God created Eve and Adam as husband and wife, so others must perpetuate this holy tradition.

Moreover, Melanchthon saw that there were “scandals” and “snares were cast upon consciences” when men and women attempted chastity. Protestants called for the clergy to marry in order to avoid the breaking of vows to God, since man was not meant to be alone, and women were too lustful to avoid transgressions: “For it is manifest, and many have confessed that no good, honest, chaste life, no Christian, sincere, upright conduct has resulted (from the attempt), but a horrible, fearful unrest and torment of conscience has been felt by many until the end.”⁴⁵ It is clear that the reformers did not see Mary, and her subsequent followers in chastity, as a possible identifier for women. They

⁴³ Philip Melanchthon, *Augsburg Confession, Article XXXVII: Of Monastic Vows*, 1530.

⁴⁴ Luther, *Sermon on Matthew 5:27-29, WA XXXII: Weekly Sermons on Matthew 5-7, 1530/32, pp. 369-75*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 143.

⁴⁵ Melanchthon, *Augsburg Confession, Article XXIII: Of the Marriage of Priests*.

extolled her character as the sole, exceptional Mother of God. As she was no longer a role model for women, she could no longer be a part of the discourse for female identity. This discourse turned into reality with the dissolution of convents and the veneration of the role of marriage.

When we look at the binary relationship between Catholicism and Lutheranism and how it played out in regards to concepts of virginity and saintliness, we see that the Virgin Mary became a central point of contention. Protestants used her image to oppose certain Catholic concepts of divinity and womanhood, and in turn, redefined her and greatly diminished her role in daily life. The leaders and doctrines of the Reformation that discussed this shifting perception show us how dissolving the cult of Mary changed the discourse of female identity. Without Mary as a positive role to admire and aspire to within the framework of the Reformation ideologies, women were left with fewer choices to construct their sense of self. The Reformation leaders utilized Eve more in Mary's absence. They looked to the original woman to define the fundamental (sinful) qualities of women, and then based their new laws and theology off those ideas in order to control that character.

The Reformers' emphasis on Genesis and the Creation dictated women's identity as it elevated Eve to the "everywoman." According to Christian doctrine, Eve's choices and subsequent nature affected the lives of her daughters, since women carry on her traits and punishments. Calvin preached:

It is true that Eve alone sinned. But just as God has punished the human race for the sin of Adam, so also must the fault of Eve be punished in all women... Women know that in the person of Eve, they are the cause of the fall. We are cursed of God, children of wrath... And who is the cause of this? The women...⁴⁶

The exegetical texts on Eve are generally organized by discussions on her nature before she sinned, her motive for sin, and the result of that sin. An analysis of the leading reformers' views on these moments will work toward reconstructing the discourse on female identity.

Since women derived their nature directly from Eve, the weight of the blame for the Fall sat heavily on her daughters' shoulders. Eve was weak, derived from a superior being, and easily swayed to the taunting and mesmerizing serpent in the garden. In Luther's lecture on Genesis in 1535, he pondered the Devil's strategy with Eve. He believed that the Devil knew that Eve was the inferior human by nature, even though "both were equally righteous."⁴⁷ Luther asserted, "Because Satan sees that Adam is more excellent, he does not dare assail him; for he fears that his attempt may turn out to be useless."⁴⁸ While the two may have been equal in faith, it was the woman's nature that made her an easier target. Again, we see how the female identity was grounded in a nature that even predates original sin. How difficult it must have been for women to break the ties that bound from such a holy and ancient yoke.

⁴⁶ John Calvin, *Serm. 1 Tim. 2:12-13*, quoted in John Lee Thompson, *John Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah: Women in Regular and Exceptional Roles in the Exegesis of Calvin, His Predecessors, and His Contemporaries* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1992), 149.

⁴⁷ Luther, *Lectures on Genesis, 1535, LW I*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 27

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

However, some Protestants admitted some fault to Adam, since he did partake in the sin. While all exonerated Adam's role, some chose to portray him as being more than just a victim; albeit still not as an active participant. Calvin believed that Adam stumbled upon the scene where the conniving snake was enticing Eve, and "he became entangled in the same fallacies by which she was deceived."⁴⁹ However, Calvin admitted that the cause of the transgression began with Eve when he referred to St. Paul's words on the matter in 1 Timothy.⁵⁰ Luther, too, placed some blame on Adam. While he still believed that Eve "was a fool, easy to lead astray," because "she didn't not know any better," it was difficult for Luther to not see where Adam also faltered. Adam knew God's words, and as he was the head, he should have corrected Eve's mistake rather than join her. "He knew it well and should have punished her. But he stands there, looks on, and eats too, wantonly giving his consent to the devil's advice."⁵¹ Eve assuredly played a role in mankind's demise for the reformers, but as she was derived from Adam's side, she cannot bear all the blame. This symbiotic relationship shifts with God's punishments for their transgression.

Eve's punishment for the sin dictated her and her descendants' roles in the binary relationship between men and women. The reformers widely discussed the purpose of Eve's creation in order to understand God's plan for her in relation to Adam and his male descendants—mankind. A central question was whether Adam was created for Eve, or

⁴⁹ Calvin, *Comm. Gen. 3:6*, quoted in Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah* 134.

⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 2:12: "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet."

⁵¹ Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1527, WA XXIV*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 21

rather, was woman created for man. For the Reformation leaders, Genesis 2:21 supported the idea that Eve was created as a servant to Adam since she was taken from his rib. John Calvin believed that Eve was “*me alterum*” [another me], because Adam “lost one of his ribs, but...obtained a faithful associate of life; for he now saw himself rendered complete in his wife.”⁵² For Calvin, Eve completed Adam—perhaps not in the romantic sense, but rather, she solidified his position in the gender hierarchy by operating as a subordinate being. God created women to teach men how to be the head—because Eve’s body derived from Adam, he held the status of superior and ruled over her.⁵³ Calvin and Luther saw Eve, the everywoman, as inferior to Adam, the everyman. Even before the Fall, it is clear that the female identity was rooted in a natural state of subordination and weakness.

Genesis 2:18-21 also served as a basis for this debate, and Paul in Corinthians 11:8 buttressed the discussion.⁵⁴ Gen. 2:18 refers to Eve’s creation as a companionate helper to Adam. Luther’s 1527 sermon on Genesis retells the story of Creation where Adam was unable to find a “helper” amongst the animals God brought to him, and then God created “*auditorium simile ei*” [helper similar to himself].⁵⁵ Adam recognized this woman as distinct from a female animal and to be similar to his human self, because she was able to help him give birth. This is the basis for Luther’s emphasis on the woman’s

⁵² Calvin, *Comm. Gen. 2:23*, quoted in Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, 122.

⁵³ Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, 123.

⁵⁴ Genesis 2:18-21: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him./ And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;” Corinthians 11:8-9: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;/ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.”

⁵⁵ Martin Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1527, WA XXIV*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 17.

role as a reproducer; not only was she to be a partner in procreation, “not for reasons of lust or knavery,” but she was also a helper “to serve man.”⁵⁶

This sentence for women fostered Protestant ideologies on marriage and family roles. Luther’s 1527 sermon on the third chapter of Genesis recounts Eve’s punishment of childbirth: “[W]here one finds a marriage in which the wife has no misfortune with [bearing] children and in which the husband is not bitter, something is not right.”⁵⁷ Painful childbirth and the constant need to please a husband are central to Eve’s bodily penance for causing the Fall. Thus, Luther believed that marriage and childbirth must be difficult for all women or the relationship loses some of its purpose. God punished Eve’s body for her offense: “I will give you much pain when you are pregnant. You shall bear your children with sorrow; you shall humble yourself before your husband, and he shall be your lord.”⁵⁸ Since her natural role was a helper in reproduction and her soul was eternally saved, according to Luther, God turned to the physical experience of childbirth as retribution for her wrongs.⁵⁹ Furthermore, a woman’s only duty was that of housekeeping, while men were created for governing, fighting, and keeping order.⁶⁰ In a “table talk,” Luther quite infamously stated, “There is no dress that suits a woman or maiden so badly as wanting to be clever.”⁶¹ No matter her original nature, and regardless of Adam’s role, Eve was sentenced to hardships that would be inherited by her daughters.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁷ Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1527, WA XXIV*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 24.

⁵⁸ Genesis 3:16

⁵⁹ Luther, *Sermons on Genesis, 1527, WA XXIV*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 23.

⁶⁰ Luther, *WA TR I, no. 1054, pp. 531-32*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 28.

⁶¹ Luther, *WA TR II, no. 1555, pp. 130*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 29.

Her image, etched into the religious doctrine, infiltrated into the public and private lives of women as the Reformation confessionalized every aspect of life. Eve was the archetype that man wrote onto the pages of female identity.

In regards to marriage, the Reformers also looked to Eve's role in respect to Adam. God sentenced her to subjection. The reformers did, however, debate the extent of this subjection. Thompson describes this controversial matter: "If Eve was created to be subject to her husband, then at the Fall she passed into a state of worse subjection. But if she was created as Adam's equal, her present subjection is a function of the curse and not truly 'natural.'"⁶² The majority of reformers fell onto the side of submission becoming a state of servitude. The Church Father Augustine explained that at Eve's creation, she was made to be a helper to serve her husband, but the punishment after her sin as stated in Genesis 3:16 described a state akin to slavery. Both Martin Bucer and Ulrich Zwingli's perception of Eve were based on Augustine's idea.⁶³ Calvin also fell into this camp: "Indeed, she had previously been subject to her husband, but that was a liberal and gentle subjection. Now, however, she is cast into servitude."⁶⁴ Eve's companionate marriage began to ring a more ominous note. Her role in the Fall left her daughters to bear a great burden. This new servitude placed women under the reforming man's chisel—a woman's identity is sculpted according to Eve's image as imagined by these men.

⁶² Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, 137.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Calvin, *Comm. Gen. 3:16*, quoted in Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, 138.

Eve's character clearly played a central role in reformer's concepts on marriage and its purpose. Marriage was a "union of faith" according to Protestant ideology. Moreover, its purpose was to sanctify sexual urges; Eve's sexuality and easily tempted nature must be controlled and by altering marriage's purpose, reformers believed that they would be able to control women's character flaws. Luther claimed that the main purpose of sex within marriage was for procreation, which was also the central Catholic belief on marriage, but for Luther, it was also permissible to act on desire as long as there was an attempt to moderate it.⁶⁵ He wrote, "...for why should people marry unless they have desire and love for one another?...otherwise everyone would flee from marriage and avoid it."⁶⁶ The leaders of the Reformation also saw sexual urges as irresistible and an obstacle to celibacy. Only within the estate of marriage was sex permissible, however. Luther brazenly writes, "Nature never lets up...we are all driven to the secret sin. To say it crudely but honestly, if it doesn't go into a woman, it goes into your shirt."⁶⁷ Luther's explicit comment on sexual urges reminds us that it was not only women who reformers deemed as lustful. Sex was omnipresent, and had to be dealt with. Natural urges (*Naturflüssen*) found a healthy, and singular, outlet in the marriage bed. The concept of marriage for procreation stemmed from the Garden of Eden and God's creation of Eve. Sex for procreation was laudable, and since God created Eve in order to bear Adam's children, it raised marriage to a holy and necessary estate. Women's identity bound more tightly to her role as mother and as a tool for man within the home.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 91.

⁶⁶ Luther, *Sermon on Matthew* quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 145.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 63.

As described above, God created Eve as a helper for Adam. She was his subject, and some regarded her after the Fall as his slave. Steven Ozment in *When Fathers Ruled* points to the fact that, originating with Peter Lombard and continuing into the sixteenth-century, writers often spoke about Eve's creation in regards to the fact that she derived from his ribs and not any other part of his body. This discourse put special meaning on this bodily experience. She came from his middle, or side, and not from his head or foot. This meant that she was assuredly his companion, not meant to rule over him or be treaded on by him.⁶⁸ Luther asserted that the wife should have the "manner of a grapevine," which could be manipulated with little effort by the farmer. Women, too, should "let themselves be guided and taught by their husbands, so that great and coarse blows and strokes are not used."⁶⁹ For the Reformation leaders, it was clear that women should not do anything without the consent of their husbands, and that they should certainly not attempt to rule anything outside of household work:

The wife governs the household—preserving without damage, however the husband's rights and jurisdiction. The dominion of women from the beginning of the world has never produced any good...[W]hen the wife came along and wanted to put her hand too in the simmering broth and be clever, everything fell apart and became wildly disordered.⁷⁰

It is seen that even with a woman as a companion in this most important role of marriage, she did not gain any sense of equality—woman was not meant to be a helper in the public

⁶⁸ Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled*, 64.

⁶⁹ Luther, *A sermon on marriage*, 15, January 1525, WZ XVII/I, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 95.

⁷⁰ Luther, *Table Talk WA TR I*, no. 1046, p. 528, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 123.

sphere, rather someone who takes care of the home and teaches the children until they are in need of a higher, male-directed education.

After 1520, women outside of the Roman Catholic territories no longer had the choice to escape marriage and pursue a celibate lifestyle within the confines of a nunnery.⁷¹ Women lost freedom of choice with this new state-imposed religious reform, and their roles shifted again. The Protestant reformers believed that the essential role for women was marriage, which, not so ironically, reasserted the gender hierarchy of women as weak vessels to carry on the male line, as subjects for subordination, and as a sex confined to the private sphere. However, there was some shift in the roles for women with the emerging status of the pastor's wife—with the dissolution of the celibate lifestyle, the elevation of marriage, and the allowance of the clergy to marry, a new role was created for women: the pastor's wife.⁷² The Reformation pastors took wives in order to promote the newly formed estate of marriage—although Lutherans desacramentalized the institution, it was seen as the ultimate end for men and women. Luther, himself, married Katharina von Bora in 1527 as a promotion of the new role. Historian Joel Harrington explains that the pastor's wife was under constant scrutiny from the public. Harrington states, "It was quickly evident, moreover, that their success in conveying the spirituality of marriage hinged as much on the personal character and reputation of the

⁷¹ Elsie McKee, *Church Mother: The Writings of a Protestant Reformer in Sixteenth-Century Germany*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), xvii. Not every nun chose to live in a convent; many families placed their daughters there without consent. However, the convent was a viable avenue for many to escape their fate of either playing out the role of wife or ostracized spinster. When Protestants closed many of these Catholic institutions, women lost an opportunity.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 1-4.

local pastor and his wife as his knowledge of official doctrine.”⁷³ Pastors, and subsequently their wives, were living testament to scriptural authority when they entered into the institution of marriage. This created a new purpose and sense of identity for women, but it also led them to be more molded by men and men’s interpretations of doctrine and female Biblical characters.

The Preacher and the Prophet

The Reformation shifted gender roles with its recognition of the primacy of Scripture, the birth of the printing system, and the concept of “a priesthood of all believers.” The laity’s status took a turn during the course of the Protestant Reformation once masses in Latin were forbidden and preaching was done in the vernacular language. Furthermore, now that the laity had the freedom through faith and print technology to read and study the Bible through catechisms at home, they were able to understand it on their own terms and apply Scripture to their daily lives. Since Scripture held a strong sense of authority for the Reformation leaders, the laity gained its own sense of authority through utilizing Biblical text when speaking out or teaching within its own homes, cities, or parishes. Each individual gained the keys to become a member of the priesthood as he or she converted to the Gospel. In this way, the Protestants began to fashion their own selves by reinterpreting Scripture, society, and popular piety.

⁷³ Harrington, *Reordering Marriage*, 83.

A shift in gender roles occurred with these changes as women, too, became members of the priesthood of all believers. Their freedom and support from Scripture to teach to their families and to speak out like the female characters in the Bible provided them roles to aspire toward: prophets and preachers. However, there were only certain circumstances that justified women's preaching or leadership, according to male leaders. Men regulated women's opportunities outside of marriage by imposing limitations based on a woman's family status and/ or the level of emergency that demanded she speak out. It is within the sermons and commentaries on Scripture that refer to women's roles as preacher or prophet, which show us how the male leaders constructed female identity.

Silence: 1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12

St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 14:34 said, "The women should keep silence in the churches." This scriptural command laid the foundation for reformers to restrict women's roles even further into the household. While women were a part of the priesthood of all believers, they were still subject to the rules of Scripture. Luther explained that while every confessor of the Protestant faith was a member of the priesthood, the community must choose one qualified leader to administer the sacraments. "The Holy Spirit has excepted women, children, and incompetent people" from the role of administrator and, instead, only chooses a married, pious, and educated male for the office.⁷⁴ Women cannot

⁷⁴ Luther, *On Councils and the church, 1539, LW XLI*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 75.

be chosen for this office according to further scriptural limitations found in Genesis 3:16, “[Woman] shall be subject to man.” In a lecture on women preaching, Luther equated the extremity of God’s need for them to do so to a situation when “He made the ass to speak and chastise his lord, the prophet Balaam [Num. 22:21 ff.]”⁷⁵ Not only did he belittle the authority of women to speak, he depicted them as akin to an animal speaking. He further said that a church that allowed women to preach would be comparable to a pigsty.⁷⁶ This debasement of women’s identity further bound them to an identity based in the housewife with few exceptions.

*Prophecy: 1 Joel 2:28-9 and Acts 21:9*⁷⁷

Such exceptions for women’s ability to speak in the public sphere included when there was a lack of men available to preach, if a woman was widowed and elderly, if a woman had a special gift, or if man gave her authority to do so. In particular, the Reformation leaders discussed the role of prophesying—when a woman has a special gift—because it was a theme found in several scriptural texts.

Luther’s sermon on Joel 2:28, that states, “I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophecy,” refers to women’s exceptional role if they

⁷⁵ Luther, “*Infiltrating and clandestine preachers*,” 1532, *LW XL*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 63.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

⁷⁷ Acts 21:9: “He had four unmarried daughters who prophesied.”

are given the gift of prophecy.⁷⁸ Luther pointed to the fact that Philip's four daughters were prophetesses, and that the Bible documented the possibility of women's capability in this function. However, they were not allowed to preach in public, "but console people and teach."⁷⁹ Luther stated:

There are certainly women and girls who are able to comfort others and teach true words, that is, who can explain Scripture and teach or console other people so that they will be well.... In the same way, a mother should teach her children and family, because she has been given the true words of the Holy Spirit and understands...⁸⁰

Thus, the role of prophesying was not necessarily something to be done in public, but it was rather the ability to understand scripture and pass it down within the family structure. Women's identity, even with a special gift, was restricted to this private sphere. Calvin, too, saw the role of a woman prophet as someone who gained the illumination from God to understand His word.⁸¹ Women were forbidden to speak within the Church regardless of their ability to prophecy given by Joel 2:28, due to the mandate by Paul in Corinthians 14:34.

The Widow Anna in Luke 2:36-40

⁷⁸ In full: "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions."

⁷⁹ Luther, *Sermon on Joel 2:28*, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 61.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 61

⁸¹ Thompson, *Calvin and the Daughters of Sarah*, 202.

Luther utilized the Biblical character of Anna in order to demonstrate the limitations of women's roles, when those limitations could be "broken," and how God was the one who truly contributed to their triumphs. In the beginning of Luther's "Sermon on the Gospel for the Sunday after Christmas," he referred to Anna, a prophetess who continuously fasts and prays in a temple and speaks to worshippers about God, as an example for the scriptural precedence of faith and good character rather than good works. Then, Luther commented on the fact that the works Anna does do are only righteous because she is a widow with no members left in her family for her to serve. Luther characterized the female identity when he asserted that women must only do good works outside of the home once they have been deprived of all familial duties: "To confound the matrimonial estate, and that of widowhood, to leave one's own calling and to attach oneself to alien undertakings, surely amounts to walking one one's ears, to veiling one's feet, to putting a shoe on one's head, and to turning everything upside down."⁸² Luther believed that going on a pilgrimage, fasting, praying, remaining celibate, and going to church in excess when within the estate of marriage was devilish character for women. Rather, their duty was in "the godly administration of children and the household, and taking care of parents, as St. Paul says [1 Tim. 5:4]."⁸³ For the reformers, a woman's identity derived from Scripture and the roles of women who no longer carried Eve's burden—this was exceptionally rare, and not often applied to the leader's contemporaries.

⁸² Luther, "Sermon on the Gospel for the Sunday after Christmas, Luke 2[:33-40], 1521, LW LII" quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 77.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 77.

Conclusion

The Reformation created a space for the formation of new identities, because it was an upheaval from the Catholic traditions that ruled culture, society, and law for centuries. The Bible was reevaluated and utilized to create strict guidelines on how to Christianize life in all aspects. This close study of biblical texts led to the primacy of Scripture for Protestants, and in living by the Word, faith alone became the advised path to Heaven. Reformers altered the Church's sacrament of marriage, based on a scriptural interpretation that saw Eve as the sole archetype for women. The Virgin was an unattainable character for women, and even while she represented pure faith and virtue, her purpose as the mother of the Son of God made her exceptional in every sense. It is in Eve that we find the "everywoman," sculpted by man's interpretation of her creation, purpose, and God's punishment for her wrong-doing: "And notice that as God made the woman out of the rib of the man, the text uses the word *to build [bawen]*: He builds a woman just as if she was supposed to be a house."⁸⁴ Man too builds Eve's identity, and thus, builds women's identity when women reformers adhered to the ideology and discourses of the male leaders.

In the demise of the cult of Mary, celibacy as a personal goal and the convent as a haven, were erased from the blueprints of a woman's life.⁸⁵ The rise of the role as

⁸⁴ Luther, quoted in Karant-Nunn, *Luther on Women*, 17.

⁸⁵ A trend of declining feminine power began with the Renaissance. Women lost power in the law, wealth, property ownership rights, education, and political power with the rise of centralized power and the subsequent suppression of feudalism. For further discussion on this topic look to Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did

pastor's wife created a new outlet for women, but was subsequently even more limiting in that this type of wife was under great scrutiny as the new paragon for the Protestant community. Luther and his followers looked to other women in the Bible to help them model the changing female identity. We see that the roles of women as wives, mothers as teachers in the home, and widows as prophets rose in prominence, while the position of preacher remains barred. The way in which men described the character of women built the female identity, but also set a standard for women to rebel against. Such religious thought seeped into the culture and society of these German-speaking lands where our subjects Argula von Grumbach and Katharina Schütz Zell lived, and we see the formation of the female self in their engagement with male discourse and in the moments that these two women actively departed from the identity men created for women.

Chapter II: Argula von Grumbach

Argula von Grumbach (1492-1554) was a deeply religious woman born into the noble *Freiherren* Bavarian von Stauff family who had a high degree of autonomous control over local jurisdiction because they were loyal to the Emperor alone.⁸⁶ Her mother also descended from a noble Bavarian family: the Thering or Törring.⁸⁷ Her parents died early in her life during an outbreak of plague in 1509. Her guardianship fell to her uncle Hieronymus von Stauff, executed in 1516, and, subsequently, to Duke Wilhelm, a close family friend.⁸⁸ Around age fifteen Grumbach joined the daughter of Emperor Frederick III, Queen Kunigunde's, court as a lady-in-waiting.⁸⁹ The authoritative Grumbach- historian, Peter Matheson, informs us that her upbringing was unusual as a noble since her family promoted education within the household.⁹⁰ Her father even bestowed an expensive German-language Koberger Bible on her at the age of ten. Although she was clearly literate given this unprecedented gift, she decided not to read it since Franciscan advisers insisted that Scripture would only confuse her.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Peter Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1995), 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹⁰ Peter Matheson is the primary modern historian of Argula von Grumbach. His central work on her *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation* offers an insightful and thorough introduction to her life and times. The rest of the work is committed to providing a full translation and explanation of each of her existing texts.

⁹¹ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 5.

Around 1516, Argula married Friedrich von Grumbach. He, too, was from a noble family, albeit not one as prominent as the von Stauffs. Friedrich died in 1530, making their marriage relatively short.⁹² Their relationship's power dynamics is telling of one of the ways in which she defined her identity. She managed the household finances and business, perhaps because of her literacy, and controlled the children's Protestant education.⁹³ Friedrich remained loyal to the Catholic Church until his death, but this held no bearing on his wife's religious beliefs or pursuits. Nor did her location within Bavaria—an area that became central to the Catholic Reformation and a staunch enemy against Protestants. In the early phases of the Reformation, the region did see some groups gather around sites of learning where they read the new translations of the Bible and Reformation tracts. Bavaria leaned toward Renaissance traditions and had a strong vein of humanism, and therefore, when the anti-clerical dukes sided with the Catholic Reformation, it was rather surprising since many humanists fell into Protestant camps. Chancellor Leonard von Eck foresaw that the Reformation could create instability and danger, as evidenced by the Peasants' War of 1524-1525, and persuaded the local dukes to pass strict legislation against reforming ideas.⁹⁴ It is in this tense environment, pushed to the new religion by her upbringing and closed off from it by the local authorities, where Grumbach lived and wrote.

⁹² Argula married again in 1533. Her marriage to Count von Schlick only lasted eighteen months, ending with his death. Her marriage to him comes after the period of her writing I examine here, and holds no bearing in my analysis. Peter Matheson, "Form and Persuasion in the Correspondence of Argula von Grumbach," *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700: Form and Persuasion*, ed. Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 276.

⁹³ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 8.

⁹⁴ Matheson, "Form and Persuasion," 283. This occurred on 2 October 1524 and followed up on legislation began in February 1522.

Prominent reformer Andreas Osiander employed Joel 2:28, “both your sons and daughters will prophecy,” to provide scriptural support for Grumbach as a writer and prophet. Osiander is commonly attributed as the author to an anonymous preface to one of Grumbach’s several published pamphlets where he defends her audacious public writing, and his words provides us with some insight into her perceived place in reformed society. Not only did an elite theologian outwardly support her writing, but he also worked to justify it. Osiander presented her work as an exhortation and instruction to biblical scholars, buttressed by citations of Scripture: “This is scarcely credible, something very rare for the female sex, and completely unheard of in our times.”⁹⁵ He further supported her actions by referring to her as being like the biblical Judith, Esther, and Susanna. He did not see her as a male prophet, weeping for the atrocities committed by the sinful clergy in Jerusalem, but he portrayed her as an exceptional woman divined by God.

Grumbach, however, did not see herself in this simplified and narrow way. Because she lived and wrote in a town that was harshly divided along confessional lines, Grumbach found an important and pressing reason to make space for her voice. She was determined to defend the Reformation and had the capacity to justify her public speaking out with the use of Scripture. However, because she was a woman, she was still in a

⁹⁵ Andreas Osiander (?), “Preface,” *Wye ein Christliche fraw des adels in Beyern durch iren in Gotlicher schrift wolgegrundtenn Sendbrieffe die hohenschul zu Ingolstadt umb das sie eynen Euangelischen Jungling zu widersprechung des wort gottes. Betrangt haben straffet* (Erfurt: Matthes Maler, 1523), quoted in Peter Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman’s Voice in the Reformation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 74.

subordinate position. And it was in the way that she defended her writing as a woman under the banner of a religious cause that shaped her identity. The tension between Catholicism and Protestantism as well as between women and the patriarchy forced her into a process of negotiation and accommodation with the clashing authorities and their overbearing viewpoints on women's roles. This process was fundamental in Grumbach's self-fashioning, because she chose which roles to rhetorically adhere to and which to actively refute. She identified with characters beyond Osiander's (and his reformed male equivalents) list of acceptable female prophets--she saw herself as a complex mixture of the roles of Biblical characters who reflected her sense of identity as an subordinate and dutiful wife, a preacher, and a prophet.

Grumbach "broke through the silence around women" in her oppositional writings.⁹⁶ She only published during the years 1523 and 1524. The University of Ingolstadt's 1523 incident, in which the university leaders persecuted a young Lutheran student, Arsacius Seehofer, by forcing him to publicly denounce his Lutheran beliefs, spurred her first public letters and pamphlets. Grumbach did not initially intend her letters to be circulated, but once the manuscript was printed, it was so widely read that there were fourteen subsequent editions published within a year.⁹⁷ Her succeeding publications were all in response to the fallout caused by her initial repudiation of the University. She wrote to local politicians, councils, and prominent family members and friends in order to promote the Reformation as well as to explain her purpose of writing publicly. Men such

⁹⁶ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 2.

⁹⁷ Matheson, "Form and Persuasion," 277.

as her uncle Adam von Thering disavowed her defense of Seehofer in her letter to the University. Her last publication, the poem “Johannes of Lanzhut,” was a response to an anonymously written (under the pseudonym of Johannes of Lanzhut), Catholic-biased poem ridiculing Grumbach for her publications and choice to speak out against Catholic authorities. Grumbach also wrote pamphlets and letters to local leaders, such as Frederick the Wise, and to the people of Regensburg in order to urge them to support the Reformation by fighting against Bavaria’s growing legislation against Protestant practices. These letters and pamphlets help us understand the confessional tensions at play in Grumbach’s religio-political context, and they show us how she perceived of her role in these conflicts. Moreover, because the majority of the letters were directed at men (all except for the non-specified “people of Regensburg”), we are able to glimpse the extreme pressures on her from the predominant ideas of acceptable gender roles.

It is this task of defending her words, pleading for assistance, and spreading the new Gospel where we find the residue of the harsh gender hierarchy that informed her perception of how society expected her to act. None of the recipients of her letters granted her with a reply.⁹⁸ This is evidence of the reality of oppressive tensions at play in both religions. Historians believe that she was the first published Protestant woman writer who used the printing press to widely disseminate her works. Her publications include seven pamphlets and one poem, all challenging the Church, court, and university, making her a prime candidate for analysis. She had no Protestant women role models, was

⁹⁸ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 46.

exceptional in her task, and, thus, untainted by other women's writings for a short time. It is in her writings where we see how she broke from the male discourse surrounding female identity and created new concepts on equality, wifely duties, and Biblical characters.

A Wife

The gendered roles of society did not fully define Argula von Grumbach's actions as a woman. Historians, such as Matheson, do not analyze her sense of personal identity in response to gender—it is a foregone conclusion for many that her concept of identity is defined by her sex. However, in order to understand how her distinct gender identity was informed by her male-perceived place in society and by differing confessional interpretations of Scripture, we must look to how she adhered to and how she strayed from traditional male-defined roles for women. According to her male contemporaries, her role should be that of a charitable mother and wife. However, her circumstances differed from women such as Katharina Schütz Zell (Chapter III) who were able to marry clergy and fulfill the new role of a pastor's wife. Grumbach was a noblewoman and her family background dictated her choices for a marriage partner. Matheson believes that her marriage to Friedrich von Grumbach was arranged.⁹⁹ Friedrich was a staunch Catholic, but this seemed to have no effect on his wife's beliefs. The fact that Grumbach

⁹⁹ Ibid., 7.

kept her own religion and carried that tradition down into her children's education reveals her strength and sense of authority, even within the confines of marriage. Unfortunately for her husband Friedrich, who had been appointed to work as an administrator in the town of Dietfort, the dukes dismissed him from his post in the midst of von Grumbach's controversial publications. This dismissal caused many, including her uncle Adam von Thering and the anonymous Catholic "Johannes of Lanzhut," to believe that Friedrich was not able to keep his wife "in line," and that she was not able to behave as a wife should.¹⁰⁰ It is to this gendered tension that we first turn.

The reality of the subordination of women necessitated Grumbach to discuss her cause for writing and speaking out. She broke the limits of normativity and, thus, she had to address those who opposed her by presenting a rationalized and scripturally based argument for her right to break those limits. In the letter to Adam von Thering, who vehemently opposed her actions and the state of her marriage, Grumbach discussed her reaction to her husband's (then) threat of dismissal and the ill opinions of those judging her. She wrote, "I have been told that they wish to deprive my husband of his office. I cannot help that; I weighed everything up carefully beforehand. It will not stand in the way of my salvation, as was the case with Pilate. I am prepared to lose everything—even life and limb."¹⁰¹ She utilized the counter-example of Pontius Pilate, who relented to Jesus Christ's execution at the behest of the mob since he wanted to save himself and not

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 138-9.

¹⁰¹ Argula von Grumbach, *An Den Edlen und gestrengen heren Adam von Thering der Pfaltzgrauen stat halter zuo Newburg x. Ain sandtbrieff von fraw Argula von Grunbach geborne von Stauffen* (Augsburg: Philip Ulhart Sr., 1523) quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 149.

Christ, in order to strengthen her commitment to turn from worldly concerns. It was her and God alone that could grant her entrance to heaven, and her earthly duties to her husband would not thwart her salvation. She would not heed to the mob's desires as Pilate did. Johannes of Lanzhut's poem advises Grumbach to return to her wifely duties, because that would place her back into the accepted character of a woman: "Discard your pride, your vain opinions/ And instead take up your spindle;/ An edging make; or knit a bonnet./ It's not a woman's place to strut/ With the words of God, or lecture men/ But to listen like the Magdalene."¹⁰² These harrowing lines are evidence of the Bavarian public's reaction to Grumbach. Her place was not to speak out, but to listen, and to be a wife confined to the private world of domestic duty.

Due to the fact that she came against criticisms of her breaking out from her womanly roles, she often had to butt against or attempt to conform to such critiques. How people chose to reprimand her, and how she chose to react, played a large part in how she fashioned herself. In the autumn of 1524, Grumbach published an answer to this demeaning poem. She wrote that she would rather meet in person so that he could openly describe to her where she had misinterpreted her duties. She claimed, however, that rather than education, all he offered to her was a spindle and lessons on domestic duties. She continued, "These duties I carry out day by day/ How could I ever forget them, pray?"¹⁰³

¹⁰² Johannes von Landshut (?), *Ein Spruch von der Staufferin ires disputie rens halben* (Landshut: Johann Weissenburger, 1524), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 168.

¹⁰³ Argula von Grumbach, *Eyn Antwort in gedichtßweiß ainem außd hohen Schul zu Ingolstat auff ainen spruch newlih von jm außgangen welcher hunden dabey getruckt steet* (Nuremburg: Hieronymus Hölzel, 1524), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 191-2.

For Grumbach, domestic tasks were engrained into her mind and perceived role as a woman. But they did not define her and were not the singular aspect of her personality. In response to Lanzhut's advice on how she should treat her husband by holding Friedrich in high esteem she replied, "Anything else would make me squirm!/ My heart and soul are both inclined/ To be at his service at all times/ Delighted always to obey/ I'd hate it any other way/...May God teach me to understand/ How to conduct myself towards my man."¹⁰⁴ Grumbach conformed to the characterization of the doting and devoted wife. This is evidence of how she accommodated the patriarchy's definition of womanhood and the Reformation's definition of Evelyn-wifeness.

However, in an effort to negotiate with these authorities (she gave in to concepts of wifeness, but would not give in when it threatened her individual religious choices), she followed up the above lines by claiming that if her husband ever attempted to "compel or coerce" her into altering her faith, she would listen to Matthew 10:35-7 that states she should turn her back on the unrighteous, even if family.¹⁰⁵ She utilized biblical rhetoric and the Protestant cornerstones of *sola scriptura* and *sola fide* to support her break with the gender binary. It is this move that shows how the colliding structures enabled her to find a distinct voice. Grumbach utilized Scripture to support her claims, evidence of her self-perceived role in the priesthood of all believers. Even while she claimed that she acted as a good and proper wife to her husband, Grumbach did so in a published pamphlet that rebuked a man's words. Moreover, she only conformed to the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 192.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 192.

role with her tongue-in-cheek and spent far fewer lines refuting her apparent transgression in her role as wife than in lines committed to supporting her own self-defined role as an independent authority.

Another striking instance of her efforts in carving out a place for her voice is found in her poetic dispute with the anonymous “Johannes of Lanzhut.” Johannes of Lanzhut first explained to her that she wasn’t allowed to “dispute or duel” within her home, and certainly not in the church, “[b]ecause it wasn’t Adam, but Eve/ Who was the very first to sin.”¹⁰⁶ As a daughter of Eve, she was not permitted to rise above or argue with her husband. Johannes then accused her of following the reformers because their teaching “opens the gates/ Of fornication and lechery,/ Of brazen, gross adultery.”¹⁰⁷ Not only did Grumbach break away from the subordinated character of Eve whom the poet believed should be her role model, but Lanzhut also claimed that she only converted because Lutheran theology granted her the right to be sexually lewd. Eve was naturally a sexual being and both Catholics and Protestants sought to control women’s sexual urges, albeit in differing ways. Lanzhut’s argument then was that she was both not enough like Eve (Grumbach was not subservient to her husband) and too much like Eve (Grumbach was sexually deviant and easily tempted). For Lanzhut, Grumbach was not conforming to Eve’s punishment for the Fall and was only portraying Eve’s natural weaker mind. However, Grumbach upended Lanzhut’s gendered position in a cheeky retort: “So I ask

¹⁰⁶ Johannes Landshut (?), *Ein Spruch*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 164.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

again, come out in the open [to debate]/ So I may see your *manly* wisdom.”¹⁰⁸

Grumbach’s response shows that she did not hold men’s wisdom in higher esteem than her own. Her connection to Eve did not define her place in marriage or her place in learned discussion. Grumbach used gendered language to poke fun at Lanzhut while also showing how she did not adhere to preset female identity. She continued to confront the allegations against her of not following biblical female tradition by rewriting biblical characters in ways reflective of her own actions.

A Preacher

The Reformation’s doctrine on the “priesthood of all believers” provided space for the lay community to assert a sense of individual authority in their personal connection with God by using the newly accessible Holy Writ and concepts of *sola fide*. Women in particular utilized this concept to strengthen their justification for speaking out. However, women still faced the limitations dictated by a patriarchal society and their gender. Women were not meant to be public authority figures, and when they published and spoke out while they were simultaneously wives and mothers, their actions were seen as deviating too far from acceptable gender roles. The radical Protestant concept of all Christians being a member of the priesthood, however, offered a loophole for some women. If women had the authority to interpret Scripture, and saw that there was a need

¹⁰⁸ Argula von Grumbach, *Eyn Antwort*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 186. I added italics for emphasis.

for their voice, the concept of the priesthood of all believers could be deployed to make room for them as preachers. As a preacher, an individual taught others the correct ways of reformed worship. However, most women did not see, or at least did not use, this loophole. Grumbach's writing, on the other hand, shows that she did strongly identify with the role of preacher. Because of her gender, she had to defend that role in her writings. Looking at how she defended her authority and her right to break women's silence to show how she built a foundation to become a figurative preacher in her writing and in her social relationships.

For example, in her first publication, the 1523 exhortation to the University of Ingolstadt, Grumbach determinedly claimed that her writing was "no woman's chit-chat, but the word of God."¹⁰⁹ She recognized her place within the gender hierarchy, but by framing her words as a projection of Scripture, she broke the limitations set by society. In her rebuttal poem to Johannes of Lanzhut, she similarly argued for women when she discussed the fact that having faith in God gave Christians authority to read Scripture and, thus, they could learn how the Catholic Church had been wrongly teaching its followers. Based on this idea of authority, she goes on to ask "*Wo außgeschlossen die fraw vom man?*"¹¹⁰ By this, she meant if God's spirit was within all Christians, and that spirit gave them authority, why were women prohibited from displaying that authority?

¹⁰⁹ Argula von Grumbach, *Wye ein Christliche fraw des adels in Beyern durch iren in Gotlicher schrift wolgegründtenn Sendbrieffe die hohenschul zu Ingolstadt umb das sie eynen Euangelischen Jungling zu widersprechung des wort gottes. Betrangt haben straffet* (Erfurt: Matthes Maler, 1523), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 90.

¹¹⁰ Translated literally as "Where is the woman locked out from man?"; Matheson translates as "Is woman shut out, there, indeed?" Grumbach, *Eyn Antwort*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 178.

Did women not count as a member of “*all Christians?*” Grumbach saw a sense of equality provided by Holy Writ. She believed that she was “not under constraint to obey any one at all”¹¹¹ since she, as an individual, was baptized to believe in God, and had no ties to anyone’s authority except the Lord’s. By breaking from male discourse that did not see any degree of gender equity in Scripture, she began to define what it meant to be a Protestant woman. From this foundation of authority, she created space for herself to take on the role of preacher (as defined by her).

Clearly, Grumbach believed that being a member of the priesthood of all believers granted her authority to speak out, especially in times of crisis. Her place in society dictated the fact that she would have to spend time justifying her authority each time she chose to speak out. She often accomplished this by qualifying it as an emergency in order to adhere to men’s limitations on women’s activity. When Regensburg’s *Reichstag* ruled to rid the city of Luther’s teachings, Grumbach penned a letter to the citizens begging them to ignore the ruling. In this published letter, while she referred to herself as a “poor, weak, feminine creature” as a nod of recognition to how the city portrayed her role in society, she exclaimed that she was “not going to bury [her] own talent.”¹¹² Grumbach presented herself as men expected her to, but deviated from the acceptable female role by stating that she would not allow her skills to be ignored or oppressed. This is another example of how she worked to negotiate with the authority, but still chose to transgress;

¹¹¹ Grumbach, *An Den Edlen*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 142.

¹¹² Argula von Grumbach, *Ein Sendbrieff der edeln Frauen Argula Staufferin an die von Regensßburg* (Nuremberg: Hans Hergot, 1524), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 156.

claiming to be weak, but talented and worthy of being heard was a process that aided in self-fashioning.

The quarreling between the University authorities and Seehofer on the existence of the Reformation in Bavaria continued to give Grumbach room to speak out and build an identity that was different from the character set for her by men. In a letter written under the threat of death to the Council of Ingolstadt, Grumbach deployed the use of Joel 2:28 to justify her writing to the University.¹¹³ She claimed that because she confessed herself to God through baptism she had equal rights to interpret Scripture and to exhort those who lead the lay people down the wrong path. Grumbach felt her understanding of faith was equal, if not superior, to educated men: “What doctor [of theology] could be so learned that his vow is worth more than mine? The Spirit of God is promised to me as much as it is to him.”¹¹⁴ She argued that God granted her the right to prophesy, and through that action, she understood Scripture as well as, if not better, than theologians. Grumbach diverged far from Luther’s interpretation of this Scriptural passage in regards to women. She saw Joel 2:28 as allowing her to speak and preach publicly. It did not confine her to the private sphere where she could use her gift of prophesying to direct her household. Rather, it provided her with the pedestal from which to teach the public about the faith.

¹¹³ “I will pour my Spirit upon all the flesh, and your sons and daughters will prophesy.” See Ch. I for further discussion on contemporary men’s use of this passage.

¹¹⁴ Argula von Grumbach, *An ein Ersamen Weysen Radt der stat Ingolstat ain sandtbrieff von Fraw Argula von grumbach geborne von Stauffen* (Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 119.

She again utilized this sentiment in her biting, response poem, “Johannes of Lanzhut.” She referred to Joel 2:28 and John 7:37-9, the latter referring to God claiming that all who follow him will be granted true understanding of His word: “Tidings of the Spirit he did preach/ Who each of us will truly teach.../ Are peasants or women excluded here? Show me where that’s said, good sir!/ Who were the apostles-after all/ What higher learning could they recall?”¹¹⁵ Not only did she clearly say that she had the right to teach through her confession to the Protestant religion, but that she was equal to the apostles who had no university training either. Her education was of no regard, nor was the university leaders’. She equated herself with the apostles and then demeaned her contemporary leaders. Grumbach assuredly saw herself in a light far removed from contemporary men’s perspective of women.

Grumbach also employed the commonly cited Scripture from St. Paul in 1 Timothy 2 on women’s silence in the Church.¹¹⁶ During the confrontation with the University of Ingolstadt, she argued for her authority regardless of St. Paul’s exhortation, and explained that she was forced into speaking out because it was a time of emergency when no qualified men were coming to Seehofer’s and the Reformation’s, aid: “But now that I cannot see any man who is up to it, who is either willing or able to speak, I am constrained by [my confession to God].”¹¹⁷ As a reformer, and vessel of God’s words, Grumbach believed that her duty was to speak out and not remain silent. This follows

¹¹⁵ Grumbach, *Eyn Antwort*, Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 177.

¹¹⁶ For further discussion within this paper, see Ch. I.

¹¹⁷ Grumbach, *Wye ein Christliche fraw*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 79.

many authoritative teachings on Paul in 1 Timothy, but her active utilization of these ideas broke out of discourse and into agency. This was an interpretation Luther and his fellow reformers may not have been comfortable with since women were not meant to be active agents, especially in public. Grumbach's agency is evident in her appropriation of the character of preacher.

With the Reformation working to alter society, another fissure opened for Argula von Grumbach's voice to seep through. The collision between the German princes, the Holy Roman Empire, and the ensuing need to determine each state's stance on Protestantism, created a space for her to break through the silence and carve out a space for her individual opinions. The authorities were subverting their attention to their own tensions, and Grumbach's assertion of her voice in these disputes aided in her self-fashioning. She acted as a preacher when she publicly rebuked others for acting against God's laws and Scripture. In her aggressive and famous letter to the University of Ingolstadt, she chided the university men for judging Seehofer, and more broadly for attempting to "exercise sovereignty over the word of God."¹¹⁸ She believed that these men tricked the German princes into making laws that did not fit the laws of God in order to gain control over the state. She blamed the university men "who have the key of knowledge" for "shut[ting] up the kingdom of heaven" by misleading those in their flock. Grumbach found the space to become a preacher here, since she saw that these men were not doing their job properly and the princes were too distracted with their political jobs to

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 82.

study Scripture on their own. She wrote that she was “prepared to write them [the German princes] in this vein” and extend her knowledge of Holy Writ to them.¹¹⁹ Matheson describes these actions as being brought on by her perceived role of prophet, defined as the divinely given ability to interpret Scripture, but I believe that she becomes a preacher here through speaking out publicly, advocating for the people (like they are members of her flock), and attempting to teach lay people the correct way to live through the word of God.¹²⁰ This distinction is important since male reformers believed that divinely selected, exceptional women were chosen as prophets, but did not discuss the option of women being preachers. They did not see that women’s roles went as far as Grumbach believed.

In a letter to a prince, Frederick the Wise, she recounted a dinner he hosted and while in attendance, she spoke to Duke Johann about the Reformation. She saw that the princes of the land were often illiterate and easily swayed by the learned elite.¹²¹ This fissure between the two authorities gave her a space from which to preach to those she perceived of as in desperate need of guidance. She wrote, “I would also gladly have spoken much more with some of the other rulers, if people had been there to listen. God willing, I would not be afraid to meet them face to face when they wanted and as often as

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 83.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 66.

¹²¹ Argula von Grumbach, *Dem durchleüchtigisten Hochgebornen Fürsten vnd herren Herrnn Friderichen. Hertzogen zuo Sachssen Deshayligen Römischen Reychs Ertzmarschalck vnnnd Churfürsten Landtgrauen in Düringen vnnnd Marggrauen zuo Meyssen meynem gnedisisten herren* (Augsburg: Philipp Ulhart Sr., 1523), quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 133.

they pleased.”¹²² Matheson adroitly points to her use of the word “*volgk*,” translated here as “people,” and claims that she may have been noting that a wider group of ordinary people could have attended the meeting and listened to her teach the princes.¹²³ This desire is significant because it reveals her readiness to widely preach to a group of people whom are less learned than she. These duties are reflective of a clergy member, and far from the proscribed duties of a woman.

A Prophet

Scripture tells stories of women were who prophets (even though there were limitations set on to that position). In theory, this allowed the role of prophet to continue as an option for women, because Protestants aimed to radically deviate from Catholicism with the concept of *sola scriptura*, which elevated Holy Writ to a strict guidebook. However, in practice, male interpreters rarely followed this line of thinking. Prophets were defined as individuals who were given the gift of being able to interpret Scripture through divine revelation, rather than having to be taught by another. Prophets were also seen as diviners who can foresee momentous events in the future. Grumbach’s writings show that she strongly identified with the role of prophet. The way in which she characterized herself reveals a break with gender normativity. She saw herself in both male and female characters. However, she went through a process of negotiation and

¹²² Ibid., 134.

¹²³ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 134, fn. 18.

accommodation when she wrote about these characters, because she accentuated the acceptable gendered characteristics of each persona.

Grumbach's writing reflects an understanding of her role in a biblical context, and she justified her actions through the quotation of Scripture. However, in many places she spoke as if she *embodied* Biblical characters: both men and women. Oftentimes, she went further than simply claiming that she was similar to someone, rather she used imagery that placed her as equal to or indistinct from biblical characters. This occurred most often when she dealt with prophets and prophesying. Matheson sees her choice to use the phrase that she was "speaking with" a prophet or apostle as an act of discarding the disciplines such as theologian, lawyer, and scholastic from which she was excluded. To him, by speaking with these Biblical authorities, Grumbach intentionally took on a conversational tone that made her writing distinct from the elite learned men who could not connect with the common laity.¹²⁴ However, I believe that there is more to her choice to "speak with" these Biblical characters. Grumbach created a story and wrote about Biblical characters' tales as if they were her own lived experience. She saw their plight as her own, both stories transcending time. This reveals her excellent learning in Scripture, but moreover, the way in which she interpreted and rewrote their stories shows a unique sense of self that crossed gender boundaries.

The way in which she crossed gender boundaries but continued to accommodate acceptable gender concepts is seen in her letter to the University of Ingolstadt where she

¹²⁴ Matheson, "Form and Persuasion," 284.

implored the men to respond to her accusations and teach her if she was wrong in her interpretations of the Word. She wrote, “I cry out with the prophet Jeremiah, chapter 22...”¹²⁵ This phrase paints an image of Grumbach standing with the prophet in foreign land where he was cast, weeping with him.¹²⁶ It is as if she too saw herself with him, acting as a prophet. Just like Jeremiah, Grumbach called out false prophets and aimed to protect the Christian people. Her use of Jeremiah was unique in the creative and transcendent way she wrote the story. In the same paragraph, Grumbach recalled both Jerome and Jesus Christ teaching women such as Blesilla and Mary Magdalene. She shifted her focus to acceptable roles for women: unlearned listeners looking for male guidance. Since she was describing herself like Mary Magdalene, she was conforming to a secondary role. However, even though she depicted herself as being akin to Mary Magdalene, she was still acting as prophet by continuing to interpret Scripture and by relating it to the University authorities. Although Grumbach presented herself under the guise of Mary Magdalene, she only chose some of Mary’s characteristics and altered the biblical personality to better fit her own concept of womanhood. She attempted to get the university men to follow Christ’s example who “was not ashamed to preach...to the young women at the well.”¹²⁷ In the same sweeping claim to be standing with Jeremiah, she equated herself with a Biblical woman in need of teaching. She bordered the line between two identities, fitting exclusively into neither the trope of Jeremiah nor Mary

¹²⁵ Grumbach, *Wye ein Christliche frau*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 88.

¹²⁶ Jeremiah 22:29

¹²⁷ Grumbach, *Wye ein Christliche frau*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 88.

Magdalene. Both characters fit her need in certain aspects, and thus, she utilized the personas in ways that she felt were necessary to best exhort the leaders of the university.

Grumbach employed a similar technique in her letter to Duke Wilhelm. In order to get Duke Wilhelm to understand her justification for speaking out against the university men, she created an identity from the Bible. Again, she wrote of herself as the weeping prophet Jeremiah. She gained authority from him. Jeremiah spoke out against the sins of false prophets who led to the fall of Jerusalem, and she cried out for the iniquities of the Catholic leaders who condemned Bavaria to false teachings. However, in order to fit within a gendered role, she seemingly equated herself with the cursed people of whom Jeremiah spoke in Lamentations 4:10: “The women, tender-hearted as they were, cooked their children and gave them to be eaten,’ and [Jeremiah] complained that the seers and priests were responsible for such misery for they did not proclaim the word of the Lord.” The women of the plagued Jerusalem were forced to boil their own children and consume them in order to sustain their lives. Grumbach wrote as if she was one of these cursed women, because she was a victim to the sins of false prophets/leaders who were condemning Germany. However, Grumbach was presenting herself as a weak woman in Jeremiah’s story in order to create an acceptable gendered identity. As seen elsewhere, she did in fact believe herself to be a part of Jeremiah’s story as a prophet and not a victim, so Grumbach embodied him, not the women. The way in which she blurred the boundaries between the characters is representative of how she saw her newly formed identity: somewhere between the indistinct lines of prophet and woman.

She propelled the discussion of womanhood further when she divined as a prophet. Facing down what she believed to be her imminent martyrdom, Grumbach forewarned that “many hearts will be awakened” and a “school of women” will rise in the wake of her death: “Yes, and whereas I have written on my own, a hundred women would emerge to write against them.”¹²⁸ She foresaw women gathering to strike against the authorities who wrongfully executed her for speaking the true words of God, and thus, threatened the men battling against the Reformation that their actions would only further result in an overturning of gender roles. She recognized women’s ability, through God, to interpret Scripture and to vocalize their authority on such. However, it is the fact that she saw a stronger use for this perceived role reversal that is so important here. She saw that the tensions between women’s identities that came with the Reformation made room for a new woman: a woman who was enlightened and who found authority to rise against the false leaders. Moreover, she acknowledged that this was a threat to men and to the male discourse on female identity. She utilized the tension between the genders to create a compelling (and terrifying to some) prophecy that reflected her inner desires and view of the world.

Conclusion

¹²⁸ Grumbach, *An ain Ersamed*, quoted in Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 120.

In an essay on our subject, Albrecht Classen deems Argula von Grumbach a “radical supporter of women’s rights and a defender of equality between the sexes.”¹²⁹ There is something compelling and hopeful in following such a grandiose idea. However, this claim is too broad and dangerously teleological. Grumbach was not a supporter of women’s rights, as there really was no such thing as “women’s rights” as we perceive of them today in the early modern era. She was indeed radical in that she transgressed typical gender limitations, but to call her a champion of gender equality is overreaching. Moreover, she did not stand up for all women’s place in society or her gender’s ability to speak out; instead she stood up for her *own* ability to speak out.

For our purposes here, this is where von Grumbach becomes important. It is the way in which she defended her actions by taking advantage of a specific moment in time that created fissures through which her voice could escape. In her sardonic poem to Johannes of Lanzhut, she wrote “*Will ich es gar nicht vnderlassen/ Zu reden im Haus vnd auff der Strassen.*”¹³⁰ Her brazen claim came at a point at the end of her public writing career where she was butting up against death threats from the city and some of its citizens.¹³¹ Grumbach was a brave woman who carved out a space to produce her own Protestant, female identity in a predominantly Catholic Bavaria.

¹²⁹ Albrecht Classen, “Footnotes to the Canon: Maria von Wolkenstein and Argula von Grumbach,” *The Politics of Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jean R. Brink, Allison P. Coudert, and Maryanne C. Horowitz (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1989), 145.

¹³⁰ Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach*, 182. Translated as “I cannot and I will not cease/ To speak at home and on the street.”

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 113.

While von Grumbach did defy many gender stereotypes, she continued to portray herself in some instances as adhering to the domestic roles of wife and mother. However, her disregard for her husband's place in society as well as his religious beliefs tell us that she grappled with her identity at home as well as on the page. There are some instances showing an in-between state, which shows us how she had to accommodate religious and social authority concepts of womanhood and also how she did not adhere to every aspect of those concepts. Grumbach's concern for standing up for the people by providing them with ample guidance and teaching reveals her self-appointed identity of preacher and prophet. The way in which she wrote of herself as biblical characters also portrayed her identity as a mixture of gender roles—she did not confine herself to Eve, Mary Magdalene, or the women who boiled their children, but broadened her self-perception to include the male prophets and apostles.

Chapter III: Katharina Schütz Zell

Katharina Schütz Zell, born on July 15, 1497, came from an artisan family and led a very devout life as a young girl; she received a vernacular education at a girls' school in her youth and voraciously studied Luther's 1522 translation of the New Testament, aiding in her conversion to the Protestant faith around 1522.¹³² On December 3, 1523, Katharina married Matthew Zell, a prominent pastor in Strasbourg, becoming one of the first women to marry a clergyman because she felt called to this marriage by God.¹³³ The marriage ceremony, performed by Martin Bucer, caused a great stir in the community, especially since Katharina took communion from the cup for the first time during the ceremony, which was a public act of defiance against the Catholic bishop.¹³⁴ Moreover, no one in the broader community could understand why a devout woman would want to marry, as they were accustomed to such women entering a celibate life within a convent.¹³⁵ Schütz Zell's actions as a young woman were already indicative of her future writings.

Schütz Zell wrote a wide range of religious materials and published correspondence between 1524 and 1558. Her writings were often defensive, rather than aggressive like our previous subject, Argula von Grumbach (Ch. II). Schütz Zell's status

¹³² Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 111.

¹³³ Elsie Anne McKee, *Reforming Popular Piety in Sixteenth-Century Strasbourg: Katharina Schütz Zell and Her Hymnbook*, (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1994), 48-9.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

as a pastor's wife in Reformation-friendly, religiously-tolerant Strasbourg, Germany (in what is now the French region of Alsace-Lorraine) provided her with more community support than Grumbach experienced, and thus, Schütz Zell's writings did not have to function in similar, combative ways. The majority of Strasbourg's clergy married by 1524 and they created a new social class of citizens, which caused some tension between the already existing merchant and artisan families (to which Schütz Zell's family belonged) who coveted the autonomy granted with citizenship.¹³⁶ The city dismantled all but three convents, and families were encouraged to remove their female members left in nunneries and to make them marry in order to live a righteous life.¹³⁷ Therefore, the city was full of support for the reformers and did not provide a threat to Schütz Zell. However, she experienced a different set of tensions within the Protestant community itself. The first generation reformers, who were the vanguard of the religious schism and contemporaries with Martin Luther, were dividing amongst themselves over disagreements on Gospel interpretations and rituals, and with that, new sects formed, such as the Anabaptists and Calvinists. The succeeding generation of reformers in all sects also had differing ideas from the first generation. Many of Schütz Zell's writings in her later years deal with the changing tides of the reformed theology and civic policy. And unlike Grumbach, Schütz Zell's letters were met with a response, so we are better able to see how these clashing authority structures played a direct role in her life and in how she saw herself in the community.

¹³⁶ Miriam Chrisman, "Women and Reformation in Strasbourg, 1490-1530," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* 63 (1972), 155.

¹³⁷ Chrisman, "Women and the Reformation in Strasbourg," 164.

The roles Schütz Zell fulfilled in the community and the way in which she chose how to navigate burgeoning tensions and spaces specified what her construction of self looked like. Because she differed in many ways from Grumbach, a look into Schütz Zell's life can help us unpack how a wider spectrum of women were able to carve out space for themselves even though the Reformation influenced individual women's lives differently. Schütz Zell's roles as pastor's wife, church mother, and preacher and how she described those roles in her diaries, correspondence, hymns, and sermons differed vastly from Grumbach's and many male reformers' understanding of the same social roles. Examining how Schütz Zell engaged with the various discourses on identity reveals her journey in self-fashioning.

A Pastor's Wife

Schütz Zell saw herself in many roles as a woman, several of those stemming from the role of pastor's wife. Confessing her faith through marrying a member of the clergy provided Schütz Zell with a sense of authority, because she felt that she was living out the word of Scripture. The permission of clergy to marry was one of the ultimate Protestant distinctions from Catholicism, and the formation of the role of pastor's wife was seen as a defiant action against the role of the celibate nun. Akin to Luther, Schütz Zell saw her marriage as a complementary companionship: "Therefore also my devout husband Matthew Zell, at the time and beginning of his preaching of the Gospel, sought

me for his wedded companion; to him I have also been a faithful *assistant* in his office and household management, to the honor of Christ.”¹³⁸ Although she followed Luther’s authority on marriage, she added to it and described herself as an assistant, not only at home, but within his office as a church leader; this self-description is where one witnesses the fractured view of the female self. The role of assistant denoted a professional relationship and remarked on how she saw herself as something like a pastor-in-training. A companion in marriage situates her as a wife, and nothing more. Schütz Zell saw herself as a part of the male narrative on wifedom and womanhood when she described herself as a “wedded companion,” but broke the mold when she became an assistant.

Schütz Zell’s *Entschuldigung Katharina Schützinn für M. Matthes Zellen*

(*Apologia of Katharina Schütz Zell for Master Matthew Zell, her husband, a pastor and servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, because of great lies spread about him*)¹³⁹ is a booklet that aimed to answer several questions whilst combating negative remarks about her marriage to a clergyman. She addressed the fact that lay people, in her case women, were obligated to speak publicly against slander and wrong-doings in the community because they were compelled to do so by the Bible. Not only did Schütz Zell have to defend her marriage to Catholics and recently converted lay Protestants, but she also had to contend with her role as a woman who was in a very public, highly contested marriage.

¹³⁸ Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 441. Italics are mine.

¹³⁹ *Entschuldigung Katharina Schützinn für M. Matthes Zellen jren Eegemahel der ein Pfarrher und dyner ist im wort Gottes zu Straßburg. Von wegen grosser lügen uff jn erdiecht* will be referred to from here as “Apologia” for brevity and clarity.

Because her role was public, male leaders wished her to conform to her subordinate role as woman and wife. They opposed her self-description as assistant, and wished to reduce her to a companionate wife who did not serve her husband as a near equal. Luther's later letters to her, where he attributed all her success to her husband, revealed this sentiment. It also shows some of his inconsistency in his viewpoints on women, because he deviated far from the instance of congratulating Schütz Zell on being independent and strong in her marriage to a clergyman in the first year of her marriage. When Luther wrote to Schütz Zell in 1524, before her husband's death in 1548, he commented on her break away from women's normative, subordinate roles. As she was not yet a widow, like the biblical character Anna who set the precedent for women's public roles and their need to be widows, Schütz Zell's works must continue to function within the gender hierarchy. He wrote to her, addressing her as "*meiner lieben Schwester und Freundin in Christo*" and acknowledged her last name in a diminutive but personal tense, "Schützin."¹⁴⁰ He praised her gifts from God, which allow her to be within "his kingdom."

However, Luther believed God's greatest gift to Schütz Zell was "that He has given [her] such a husband, through whom [she] daily and unceasingly [was] better able to learn and hear this."¹⁴¹ Although Schütz Zell was a strong woman and had clearly made a mark with the first generation Protestant leaders, her work and abilities were still attributed to her husband. This transfer of her talents to her husband attests to the fact that

¹⁴⁰ Translated as: "my dear sister and friend in Christ"

¹⁴¹ Martin Luther, "To Katharina Zell, from Wittenberg, 17 December 1524, WA BR III, no. 808, pp. 405-6," quoted in *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook*, ed. & trans. by Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 206-207.

the gender hierarchy opposed Schütz Zell's actions. Women did not gain any sense of equality, even in the early stages of the religious movement as Max Weber's theory on women's place in the Reformation posits, but their roles simply shifted, allowing for a difference in how they functioned within the hierarchy. Therefore, women, along with men, were redefining the categories of the gender hierarchy and what constituted the authority and the subject.

Another voice opposing Schütz Zell's central and public assistantship, rather than supportive and more private companionate role, was Ludwig Rabus, the superintendent of the Church at Ulm and a second-generation reformed leader. Rabus lived with the Zells when he was a student and was Matthew's assistant until the pastor's death. Rabus succeeded Zell as pastor and remained close with Schütz Zell who acted as his "foster mother" for several years. Their relationship began to wane, however, when Rabus became a doctor of theology, because Schütz Zell believed that such titles were contradictory to the movement. She also believed that Rabus began to misconstrue Matthew's teachings.¹⁴² Rabus and Schütz Zell became distant; Katharina opposed his superintendent-ship leading her to publish letters of opposition to him when he refused to answer her privately. Rabus saw Schütz Zell as overstepping her womanly rights and became infuriated with her attempt to correct his works.¹⁴³

¹⁴² McKee, *Church Mother*, 176-77.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 178.

We see a moment of Schütz Zell's identity construction in the arguments between Schütz Zell and the young Rabus as she loudly opposed a male reformer and moved outside of the private sphere to rebuke him. Since by now her husband was dead, and she felt strongly that her role as pastor's wife dictated that she keep her husband's work intact and his flock safe, she felt the need to voice her opinion against Rabus. Schütz Zell pointed to another local pastor, Johann Lenglin, whom she saw following Rabus' footsteps, and quoted him when he said, "I would rather be papist than (Ana)Baptist or Schwenkfelder."¹⁴⁴ She then asked Rabus if he did not see that by trying so hard to negate the other sects of Protestantism, he was bound to "produce in time a new papacy (if not the old one)."¹⁴⁵ This, of course, enraged Rabus because not only did she criticize him but she also transgressed from the acceptable duties of a wife and woman.

In April 1557, Rabus replied to Schütz Zell's rebukes and claimed that she was led by the Devil: "Your heathen, unchristian, stinking, lying letter reached me.... there is no improvement left to hope for you—you are more and more hardened in your frightful error of false witness and devilish gossip about devout people."¹⁴⁶ Out of anger toward her accusations against his teachings, the second-generation reformer referred to Schütz Zell as a gossip. Schütz Zell chose to carry on the work of the first-generation men as she saw herself with the authority to do so, and rebuked Rabus for his sullyng of Zell's works. Rabus went on to state, "Your letter was produced not from the Spirit of God,

¹⁴⁴ Schütz Zell, *Ein Briefff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 176.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁴⁶ Ludwig Rabus, *Ein Briefff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 194.

who is a Spirit of truth, but from the devil's spirit...this I will diligently hold up as witness of your shameless mouth, since you dare boldly to slander and revile a servant of Christ..."¹⁴⁷ This reveals that Rabus believed that the act of speaking out was well outside of women's roles. During this era of the Reformation, he was acting as new force in the binary relationship, posed against both the first generation reformers and Schütz Zell's concept of her role in society. With so many colliding viewpoints, there were many spaces for Schütz Zell to transgress and carve out a space for her self.

Schütz Zell's public retaliation against Rabus' dissent reflected her perception of her role as pastor's wife. She wrote, "Such slander does nothing for truth or unity; what use is it to the poor simple hearers? And it does not change the minds of those with understanding; they only become more fixed in their thinking and faith."¹⁴⁸ Her initial appeal to Rabus was cited as an attempt to protect the lay people from his slander and to keep them in the splitting church. However, she was also pulled by her husband's dying wish for Rabus to portray a unified stance with other Protestant pastors, in particular, Caspar Schweckenfeld who was a Protestant theologian who disagreed with the Lutherans on the sacrament of the Eucharist.¹⁴⁹ Schütz Zells' choice to carry out her husband's previous wishes by rebuking Rabus points to the fact that she found strength in her role as pastor's wife. She claimed that she "gladly served many with counsel and deed, according to [her] ability," which God bestowed upon her in the form of being a

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 233.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 176.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 175-8.

pastor's wife. Schütz Zell felt "obligated before God to [serve and protect], and as [her] husband commended to [her] at the end." She felt that she had been a *Kirchen Mutter* since she was ten years old and that those duties meant "nutur[ing] the pulpit [preaching office] and school" and talking with clergy "not about dances, worldly joys, riches, or carnival but about the kingdom of God."¹⁵⁰ While Rabus believed that she was crossing the bounds of what a woman should be allowed to do—even as a pastor's wife—and Matthew Zell never instructed her to carry out his specific wish of defending Schweckenfeld, she still acted upon her dead husband's words. She believed her office as wife and membership in the priesthood of all believers granted her the right to do so.

A Church Mother

Schütz Zell's actions as a pastor's wife strayed even further from male discourse when she took on the self- definition of Church Mother. She referred to herself as *Kirchen Mutter* in various letters several times between 1555 and 1557, which were years of particular turmoil between her and the second-generation reformers. Schütz Zell saw a Church Mother as someone who had a lifelong love for the Church, whether it was Catholic or Protestant. She felt that even at the age of ten, "under the papacy," she loved the clergy, and then through "in the full development of the Gospel" with the emerging

¹⁵⁰ Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, 1557, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 467.

Lutheran Church she continued her devout care for the institution.¹⁵¹ She saw the *Kirchen Mutter* as one that nurtured the clergy and the flock, and who worked to “defend [the Church] with mind and body.”¹⁵²

One act of her role as *Kirchen Mutter* began with her inviting refugees and exiled guests into her home, whether or not they adhered to Lutheran faith.¹⁵³ During the second generation, once Schütz Zell was a widow, her past acts of welcoming religious radicals into her home was seen as extremely dissident since second-generation leaders were more vehemently against differing sects than their predecessors. In a 1557 letter, Rabus wrote, “But you have begun such trouble in the church in Strasbourg right in the beginning and even with your devout husband, that I think God’s judgment will catch up with you one of these days.”¹⁵⁴ Schütz Zell did not follow this line of thinking, however. On Zell’s deathbed, he extolled his wife’s practices and asked her to continue to be a mother to those in need.¹⁵⁵ She used this remark to support her future actions, regardless of how those actions fit within the newly forming perceptions of the second-generation Protestants. Schütz Zell wrote,

Indeed I have begun much “trouble” which was not customary for our women (and also I have not have many successors!), when I received the poor exiled and miserable ones who were fleeing water and fire [persecution], I have *spoken and written* for them.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵¹ Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 466.

¹⁵² Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, 1557, quoted in McKee *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 467.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹⁵⁴ Ludwig Rabus, *Ein Brieff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 352.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 447.

¹⁵⁶ Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 447. Italics are mine.

In an era when women rarely published, and in light of the gender roles set out for women, Schütz Zell pushed the limits of what was acceptable—not only did she care for the poor and non-conformists, she invited them to her home, a private space, and then publicly spoke out for them. She nurtured them, and acted in faith. These actions fractured the borders between the private and public, and were well outside of the scope of limitations Luther set. In turn, they decentered the male-constructed discourse on women's identity. She still adhered to the familiar and normative role of mother, in order to accommodate acceptable female identity, but transgressed from this role by broadening the category of whom she mothered and by being public about it.

Schütz Zell wrote for the “poor exiled” in the beginning of her self-appointed career as a Church Mother in *The Bohemia Brethren Hymnbook*. She aimed to act as a protector for those outside of her home, and protected them through providing her own translations of Scripture. The hymnbook was a liturgical book created by Michael Weisse in 1531, and was later published as a series with annotations and an introduction by Schütz Zell in the mid-1530s. Her efforts in editing and publishing the hymnbook reflected her concern over the ordinary Christian population and the inadequate religious infrastructure to provide these people with resources that would enrich their religious

knowledge and experience.¹⁵⁷ This concern can be seen in a note she made in the introduction to the book explaining why she formatted it into several volumes:

This book was a concern to me: there were too many songs to be printed all together; that would be too expensive for people to buy. So I took the book in hand, for the use and service of children and the poor, and divided I into several small booklets costing two, three, and four pennies.¹⁵⁸

Schütz Zell believed that everyone should have access to the teachings of the Bible, and that the children's and the poor's circumstances restricted their ability to obtain educational texts such as the hymnbook. By reaching out to those in need of supplemental care, Schütz Zell acted as a Church Mother. She was doing the job of a holy, ordained person by spreading the Gospel and translating Scripture. She coupled these defensive actions with the duties of a maternal figure. In her claim that the hymnbook was for the betterment of children and the poor, she reflected the charitable and protecting qualities of motherhood.

Schütz Zell continued to adhere to traditional gender viewpoints. Her sense of self was rooted in some acceptable concepts of the gender binary because she understood herself as a maternal character. However, because she published written works that helped people learn about the Gospel and acted as a public teacher, she was still transgressing from the typical and socially accepted female roles. In *The Bohemian Brethren Hymnbook*, she wrote about poor, marginalized, and laywomen, but aimed to

¹⁵⁷ McKee, *Reforming Popular Piety*, ix.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33-4.

imbue their lives with a sense of religiosity. In order to teach lay Christians that their mundane vocations, particularly women's jobs, were the work of God and something that they should teach to others, she wrote to women in her introduction: "And teach your children and relatives to know that they do not serve human beings but God, when they faithfully (in the faith) keep house, obey, cook, wash dishes, wipe up and tend children, and such like work which serves human life..."¹⁵⁹ She claimed that women's vocations were important and that their position in the household entitled them to teach other family members about how such mundane vocations were a link to God: "*so zum menschen leben dienen: und sich inn den selben wercken mögen zu Gott keren: auch mit der stymm: des gsangs.*"¹⁶⁰ She addressed normative concepts of womanhood and acted as a "good" mother by further spreading these viewpoints. However, Schütz Zell extended her role as mother to a public figure who helped teach women about how Scripture related to their every day lives.

Schütz Zell used her office of Church Mother in other ways to teach and console fellow Christians. Such actions of teaching may even be deemed as a form preaching, although it was not from a pulpit. Other "miserable ones" that Schütz Zell cared for in her home were the men who fled from Kentzingen in 1524 leaving their wives and children behind. Kentzingen was a small Alsatian town that received the fury of the Catholic Bishop once many converted to Protestantism. When the Bishop forced their priest,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Translated: "...[such work] serves human life, and also (while doing that same work) they can turn to God with the voice of song."

Master Jacob Otter of Speyer, out of the city, nearly one hundred and fifty reformed men followed him out in solidarity. However, the prince's military blockaded their return home. The Zells took the refugees into their parsonage and cared for them for four weeks. Schütz Zell's main concern was the women those men left behind as reports of abuse from the Catholics in Kentzingen came to Strasbourg. Moreover, she wrote to those women awaiting their fate in the riotous city in order to strengthen their faith.

In "Letter to the Suffering Women of the Community of Kentzingen, who Believe in Christ, Sisters with Me in Jesus Christ" one can see the many ways in which Schütz Zell fashioned her self and broke with traditional female roles and images. Schütz Zell's main objective in writing to the women of Kentzingen was to harden their faith by asserting the idea that their suffering is God's will and a way of revealing His love to them. She broke tradition and redefined the character of these women when she described them using the Biblical male figure, Abraham. She related the story of Abraham and his choice to sacrifice of his son Isaac as being similar to the women in Kentzingen. She saw that Abraham had faith in God and knew that Isaac could be brought back to life, and similarly, the suffering women should also have faith in God to know that they were under His protection. Schütz Zell then asked, "So I beg you, loyal believing women, also to do this: take on you the *manly*, Abraham-like courage while you too are in distress and while you are abused with all kinds of insult and suffering."¹⁶¹ By describing them like a biblical character, she was ascribing these women knowledge of the Bible, which was a

¹⁶¹ Katharina Schütz Zell, "Letter to the Suffering Women of the Community of Kentzingen, who Believe in Christ, Sisters with Me in Jesus Christ" quoted in McKee, *Church Mother*, 51. Italics are mine.

sign of high respect. The way in which she described them, however, is even more important for our discussion. This was one of the rare occasions when Schütz Zell used a gendered term to refer to a virtue.¹⁶² This is an exemplary moment when the reader can see the fissure between the male vision of the world and the newly forming reformed female's perspective.¹⁶³ While Schütz Zell adhered in one instance to dominant concepts of the gender binary by referring to strength as manly, it was not lasting. Moreover, her utilization of a gendered term reveals the fact that women could aspire to any biblical role and use Scriptural authority to support such an action. Here, Schütz Zell redefined the limits of gendered language, and restructure her concept of the difference between women and men.

Another aspect of the Church Mother role that highlights the tensions between how Protestant men perceived the role of pious mother is seen in Schütz Zell's relationship with Rabus. Schütz Zell recalled an early instance with Rabus where he asked her to stay with his new family: "So, when I was to leave the parsonage and he should move in, [Rabus] begged me not to desert him but to remain in the house and to be his and the church's mother, and his wife and children should obey me."¹⁶⁴ Rabus did not see Schütz Zell's role as she did—as one who served the church, protected it from those that wish ill to it, and supported the correct type of preaching¹⁶⁵—young Rabus saw

¹⁶² McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 396.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁶⁴ Schütz Zell, *Ein Brieff*, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 468.

¹⁶⁵ McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 466.

her as a matronly figure who should continue her role as caretaker in the private sphere after widowhood.

Other aspects of Rabus and Schütz Zell's relationship point to how the tensions between the first and second-generation reformers aided in how she perceived her identity as church mother. In her letter to Rabus about his continuous public disrespect of first generation leaders in his sermons every Sunday, she characterized herself as Daniel in Babylon, praying for the sins of everyone involved in this dissension. She feared that Rabus' actions were driving people from the church, and in wanting to protect those who were being misled as well as those doing the misleading, she publicly declared herself to be like a male figure in the Bible who prayed for the exiled Jews in Babylon.¹⁶⁶ I believe that Schütz Zell saw herself in Daniel, who was a foreigner in Babylon, because she too was a foreigner in her space and time by breaking through the limits of identities set for her, but she continued to care for those around her and rallied for their safety. Again, Schütz Zell redefined the traditional paradigms and situated herself somewhere in between. She found her own sense of identity outside of the male-constructed discourse on women by transgressing concepts of motherhood. However, in some areas we see that Schütz Zell continued to retain traditional elements of the gender hierarchy, because such concepts so heavily dictated how sixteenth-century people understood their identity and place in the world.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 179.

A Preacher and A Teacher

Schütz Zell's complex identity also included the facet of preacher. She did not preach from the pulpit, but she did care for a flock and worked to disseminate reformed Christian values and scriptural interpretations. We saw elements of this concept of preaching in her role as church mother and in her self-perceived function as pastor's wife. When Schütz Zell utilized the biblical character of Anna in her writings, she described herself as being like a biblical character to justify her actions of preaching and teaching (thus, following Protestant theology of *sola scriptura*). She transgressed from the male reformer's use of Anna (Ch. I), and that is where we see how Schütz Zell formed an individualized identity.

Anna (Luke 2:33-40) was Schütz Zell's primary identifier in her later years. The gospel of Luke deems Anna an "ancient," widowed prophetess. Anna lived in the temple where the baby Jesus was presented, and there she prophesied about the birth of the savior. Schütz Zell associated Anna's story to that of the widows in 1 Tim. 5:3-10-- who "remain in prayer all day and night" and are at least sixty years of age so their family is no longer in need of them¹⁶⁷-- thus, revealing her agreement with Luther and male leaders in that women obtain the most freedom to speak out once they enter a state of full widowhood.¹⁶⁸ However, Schütz Zell broke the constraints of the age limit set by Anna's

¹⁶⁷ Luther's Bible, quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 434.

¹⁶⁸ See further discussion of this in Chapter I.

story, and she spoke out when she deemed it necessary regardless of her age and familial status.

We see that Schütz Zell held Anna in high regard and strongly identified her in an exchange she had with Rabus. Rabus also utilized the Biblical character of Anna in his writings, and he asserted that Anna's role was praying, and as a widow, she should attempt to get people to come to church and sermons, as she had no other roles to fulfill.¹⁶⁹ Both modern scholars and contemporaries believed that Rabus was attacking Schütz Zell anonymously when he praised Anna's role in this manner as he went on to state that women who did not act in such a way were, in fact, driving people away from the Church, and that women doing anything more than such were bordering on preaching, which was a massive transgression against Scripture.¹⁷⁰ Schütz Zell responded to Rabus' attack:

If you meant me (as I gladly believe) so I confess that from my youth and girlhood till now, in my father's house and not only in my afflicted widowhood, but also in the time with my dear devout husband...with the dear Anna I have waited on and cared for the living and the stone temples, and also praised the Lord and always spoken of Him to all who have held the hope of Israel. Yes, I have borne the exiled and sick temples of God in stinking conditions and work, and built them up, while other preachers and otherwise highly evangelical women were involved in...worldly pursuits...though they made much fine appearance [to cover their behavior] with subtle spiritual words.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 437.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 437.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 437,

Here, we see that Schütz Zell admitted to breaking the age and marital status restraints placed on Anna. She also showed how she differed from “other evangelical women” who merely created an appearance of being spiritual rather than caring for the sick and exiled people of the world. In saying this, Schütz Zell correlated her lived experience with Anna’s because she was not just appearing to be faithful, but was actually living faithfully and according to Scriptural precedence.

Moreover, Schütz Zell promoted Anna’s ability to teach and spread prophetic knowledge rather than to bring people to the church by showing that she associated Anna with a woman who cared for the poor and afflicted. It is clear that Rabus’ use of Anna’s story highly offended Schütz Zell and caused her to respond publicly. Once again, the dichotomy between the first and second generation created a space for her voice. Even while he was leading reformer and at one time a foster child to the Zells, Rabus positioned himself in opposition to the first-generation leaders and his actions led Schütz Zell to pose herself against him.

One marked instance where Schütz Zell emphasized Anna’s prophetic nature was in her letter to Strasbourg defending her marriage to Zell. Because of the tensions concerning clerical marriage in the beginning years of the Reformation, Schütz Zell was able to carve out a space for her voice. She then acted as a preacher by working to protect her husband’s flock. In “Apologia,” Schütz Zell supported her right to speak out publicly but additionally claimed that in her defense of Zell’s choice to marry as a clergyman, she was doing the community good by stopping them from slandering and lying about others

since it was a sin to do so. She spoke out because she wanted the parishioners to feel safe and in good hands: “Namely, I have considered the doubt and fear that many a simple, honest person receives from such untrue sayings, when he hears such unchristian things spoken with such great mischief and authority.”¹⁷² Not only did she continue her Church Mother role by attempting to care for fellow Christians, she also followed Anna’s example by attempting to bring people back to church—which Rabus asserted as the main purpose of Anna’s character.¹⁷³ This shows that while Schütz Zell was comfortable with breaking the age restraint, she also adhered to some limiting elements of Anna’s character.

Where Schütz Zell broke with the traditional vision of Anna is in the fact that at this point in her life, she was not a widow, something that Rabus and Luther both believed to be an important element in the situation for women’s speaking out. In fact, she was newly married! Furthermore, she stated, “What I say is true, although he [Zell] does not seek any defense and does not even know about this writing of mine. And I certainly believe that if he were to learn of it he would no allow me to do such a thing.”¹⁷⁴ Not only did Schütz Zell not ask permission from her husband to speak outside the private sphere, she knew that he would disapprove and published the “Apologia”

¹⁷² Katharina Schütz Zell, “Katharina Schütz’s Apologia for Master Matthew Zell, Her Husband, who is a Pastor and Servant of the Word of God in Strasbourg, Because of the Great Lies Invented About Him,” quoted in McKee, *Church Mother*, 63.

¹⁷³ See footnote 22.

¹⁷⁴ Schütz Zell, *Apologia*, quoted in McKee, *Church Mother*, 64.

regardless. She saw it as so much a part of her duty, and so much a part of Anna's duty, that she continued her plan of action.

Adding to her unique sense of self, Schütz Zell continued to define Anna outside of the paradigms and limitations set by men. In 1553, Schütz Zell referred to the fact that she too should be able to teach like Anna, "to prophesy about Christ." However, she added the caveat that she should "conduct [herself] appropriately (according to the teaching of St. Paul) under the men's office (1 Cor.: 14:34, 1 Tim. 2:12), so I myself seek to hear others and to be admonished" unless what she heard was untruthful. In such a case, she claimed the right to "not be silent, but speak to you, and point out your wrong preaching and your slander of the innocent, and answer you."¹⁷⁵ Clearly, Schütz Zell believed that Anna had the right to preach, but that she herself did not have this right due to St. Paul's the restrictions until she was older and had entered true widowhood. She did see that she could speak out when absolutely necessary, however. In this way, she broke the limitations set by others and wrote a new character description for Anna—one that fit her own new sense of self in the later years of her life.

Conclusion

Katharina Schütz Zell broke the confines set for her through her actions and, especially, through the way in which she spoke about herself. At the end of her life, two

¹⁷⁵ Schütz Zell, "1553 Letter," quoted in McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 415.

poignant episodes demonstrated how far her sense of individual identity was from the male-constructed identity: the death of her husband and the burial of her close friend. She preached at both gravesites when the clerical community refused to do so—she fulfilled their roles when she deemed it an absolute necessity.

Upon Matthew Zell's death on January 10, 1548, Schütz Zell gave a sermon, which was an unusual act for any lay person, and more so for a woman.¹⁷⁶ At the end of her report of the sermon, Schütz Zell concluded, "... [G]rant that I may be one of those widows who will receive their own loved ones again from the dead on the day of the resurrection."¹⁷⁷ Here she referred to Hebrews 11:35 that equates Abraham's faith in God who asked him to sacrifice his son, Isaac, with widows who faithfully wait to see their family again at the resurrection. No longer did she feel it necessary to ask for *manly* courage. She was courageous and did not qualify it as a man's characteristic. She found strength in faith and in her self. Schütz Zell rewrote this biblical character by equating Abraham's courage and faith with strong women. She utilized this new biblical identity as a means to reflect her internal struggle, but also as a lesson to those hearing her sermon. She stepped up when no one else would, and preached from the heart. Schütz Zell saw herself as an assistant to Matthew; she even helped after his death at his graveside by preaching to those he had left behind and to her own, grieving self. Luther

¹⁷⁶ Stjerna, *Women and the Reformation*, 129.

¹⁷⁷ Schütz Zell, *Lament and Exhortation of Katharina Zell to the People at the Grace of Master Matthew Zell, Minister at the Cathedral in Strasbourg, Her Upright Husband, Over his Dead Body, the 11th of January 1548*, quoted in McKee, *Church Mother*, 123.

may have seen wives as helpers to their husbands, but he assuredly did not see this as an aspect in such a role.

Another example of when Schütz Zell stepped up to perform the duties of a preacher was at the death of her close friend, Elisabeth Scher Hecklin, in 1561. City clergy were not willing to assist in conducting the funeral service, therefore Schütz Zell carried out the pastoral duties.¹⁷⁸ At the gravesite, she rebuked the clergy for reneging on their obligations.¹⁷⁹ The community decided to leave her alone, despite their clear distaste for her actions. Their reaction reveals to us that Schütz Zell was exceptional in many ways, and that her actions laid a foundation for the following generation of women.

Women like Schütz Zell gained authority through the Protestant Reformation to exemplify new roles, and rewrite their own selves outside of the male-written paradigms for women. Even though Schütz Zell never spoke from a pulpit, she was a preacher, teacher, educator, wife, woman, Christian, and whatever else she decided she wanted to be. Through her publications and her actions in comparison to the male voice, one can see how the binary tensions between the first and second generation reformers and the gendered discourses of the Reformation provided a space for Schütz Zell to carve out a space for her self.

¹⁷⁸ The details of why city clergy were not willing to conduct the service are unclear. McKee hypothesizes that it is because of Elisabeth's close connection to Schwenckfeld. McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 225.

¹⁷⁹ McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell*, 225-6.

Chapter IV: Conclusion

Divined by God to only speak His words, the Old Testament prophet Balaam set out on a journey driven by greed to curse the Israelites for Balak, the king of Moab. On his journey, an angel confronted Balaam in an attempt to thwart the prophet's task. At first, the angel only revealed itself to Balaam's donkey, and each time the angel drew its sword to attack Balaam, the donkey maneuvered its master away from the angel's blows. Each time, Balaam struck the donkey in anger. Finally, "the Lord opened the mouth of the ass, and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou has smitten me these three times?"¹⁸⁰ When the angel revealed himself to Balaam, he confirmed that the donkey was trying to save her rider. Balaam repented to the angel for acting in anger and against God, and then was permitted to continue his journey under the restriction that he only spoke God's words.

Martin Luther, Katharina Schütz Zell, and Argula von Grumbach each wrote about Balaam's speaking donkey. Each uses the tale differently. When speaking about infiltrating preachers, Luther pointed to the story in Numbers to show how God has used lesser creatures as a conduit for His voice in times of need. Luther worried that too many people believe they have the right to speak out in church, and that such actions would only lead to discord and chaos, and no one would learn the true Gospel. An even greater threat is that if many men begin to fight over the pulpit, women will throw their voice

¹⁸⁰ Numbers 22:28

into the mix and attempt to preach as well. Luther said that while God authorized some women such as the Virgin Mary, Deborah, and Hannah to speak, that did not give every man and women the right to the pulpit. He cited St. Paul and his declaration on the silence of women in church, and he upheld it. Luther believed that women should only teach and comfort at home. However, if God sees the need for a specific person to speak up in order for His purpose to be better fulfilled, “He will demonstrate with signs and deed, just as He made the ass to speak and chastise his lord, the prophet Balaam.”¹⁸¹

Luther saw women as equal to an animal that had miraculously been given the ability to speak. Only in the case of an emergency will God grace them with His words. However, this divine moment is merely transient, and they must return to the position, beneath the weight of their master, after they are used to make a stunning example of God’s powers.

Schütz Zell saw the donkey in a slightly different light. Balaam’s donkey was not simply a lesser being chosen to speak for her shock factor who will return to her original animal state once she is no longer a needed. Schütz Zell saw the donkey as being cognizant and protecting. It was not so much her ability to speak, but her ability to move her master out of danger’s way that Schütz Zell saw as relating to her own life and identity. When none of Rabus’ fellow pastors rebuked his actions, Schütz Zell saw it as her duty to move the reformed congregation out of danger’s way by stepping up and speaking against Rabus herself. Schütz Zell invited the pastors to dinner, and when none fulfilled his duty she “thought of what the Lord Jesus said to the Jews: ‘If these keep

¹⁸¹ Martin Luther, “Infiltrating and Clandestine Preachers,” 1532, quoted in Susan C. Karant-Nunn and Mary Wiesner-Hanks, *Luther on Women: A Sourcebook* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 63.

silent then the stones must speak' (Lk. 19:40)."¹⁸² However, Schütz Zell saw herself as "more than a stone." She was an active character who could effectively change and protect those she served, unlike an immovable rock. Schütz Zell was Balaam's donkey who saw more than the prophet Balaam. She was not an object simply to be acted upon, but was a protector who has a greater vision and understanding than her male "masters."

In her cutting poem, "Johannes of Lanzhut," Grumbach demonstrated her individual take on Balaam's story. Grumbach focused on the indignant, covetous master rather than the donkey. She claimed that St. Paul's words on silence did not restrict her, and that she was free to publicly spread God's words as she pleased. Therefore, she did not use the example of the donkey as scriptural justification to speak out; she felt that such a conclusion was already foregone. Rather, she used the story as an example for Johannes to see his actions as parallel to the donkey's master. God allowed the donkey to speak so that she could correct "[t]he wise man Balaam" and even when the master whipped her, she would not budge. Grumbach continued, "It's not unlike the case today/ As I know well from what folk say./ Fight not against the case of God/ You'll just become a laughing-stock."¹⁸³ Grumbach saw Johannes as the "wise man" who believed he spoke the words of God, but was really hunted by an angel for his wrong-doings. Johannes was becoming a laughing-stock by going against God's words and following the traditional, Catholic authorities. Many lines later at the end of her poem, von

¹⁸² Elsie Anne McKee, *Katharina Schütz Zell: Volume One: The Life and Thought of a Sixteenth-Century Reformer* (Boston: Brill, 1999), 405.

¹⁸³ Peter Matheson, *Argula von Grumbach: A Woman's Voice in the Reformation* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1995), 182-3.

Grumbach closed out her poem and reminded Johannes again of his public identity: “Just learn from Balaam’s ass, my good,/ Johannes of Lanzhut.”¹⁸⁴ For her, the story was about the incorrectly titled “wise man” (which, not so coincidentally, she uses the same word “*strafft*” to refer to the University men at Ingolstadt in the title to her published letter).

Unlike Luther who saw the donkey as a tool, Schütz Zell saw herself as a donkey with the power to speak out to protect her fellow Christians. On the other hand, Grumbach saw the donkey similarly to Luther, as a tool used for others to better hear God’s words. However, she did not identify with the donkey as Luther believed women who speak out should—rather she used her exegetical knowledge to teach Johannes Lanzhut and her readers of the hypocritical title “wise man” and the danger of not following God’s words regardless of their duty.

These differing and nuanced interpretations can be partially assigned to the commentator’s social class and geographical region. Grumbach’s nobility allowed her more room to speak out, because she was under less economic restraints, and thus, had more time and freedom to publish and be involved in public controversies. Also, Bavaria’s polemic religious tensions provided her space to speak, since she felt it her Protestant duty to fight Catholic control in the region. Moreover, she was allotted more education than her middle-class contemporaries, such as Schütz Zell. Schütz Zell’s mid-level economic standing pushed her toward becoming a pastor’s wife, as it was one of the highest and most influential positions available to women of her social background.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 195.

Nearly all pastor's wives came from the same class as Schütz Zell. Also, Strasbourg was a highly tolerant region, which supported reformed citizens and writers, until the second generation of Protestants began dividing against one another. Schütz Zell found a space in these tensions to speak out in defense of her and her husband's flock. Comparing Grumbach and Schütz Zell's economic backgrounds leads to asking questions about women of the lower strata. Working women and those with little to no education did not leave behind written evidence of their beliefs. However, we catch glimpses of them in sources like Schütz Zell's letter to the Kentzingen women. Sources such as this deserve to be mined for further insight, as not a lot is known about these women. It can be assumed that they were influenced by the reformed beliefs on marriage and women's place within the home.

The Reformation redefined women's roles in public and private spaces. The affirmation of daily life and the dissolution of celibacy heightened the significance of women's place within the home. Without the possibility of living in a convent, women had to find new ways to live piously and to communicate their beliefs within the community. The home was now the only space where such communication was permitted, and in public life, women had to live and act in ways outlined by Scripture. This helped shape the community and set it apart from Catholic society. However, it severely limited women's voices. Both women had to address their gender as a factor in their choice to speak out, which greatly shaped their identity. Women such as Schütz Zell

and Grumbach broke through this silence, but their voices remained gendered, even if their actions were not.

Schütz Zell saw marriage as a companionate relationship, while Grumbach saw her own, individual work as more important than her husband's. The idea of a companionate marriage was unique to the reformers, as demonstrated by Luther's writings, and it did elevate women's role. Schütz Zell elevated the concept of companionship even higher by deeming herself an assistant to her husband. She played an active role in his affairs as a pastor and continued his work after his death when she found it necessary for the protection of his flock and legacy. However, for Grumbach, perhaps because of her noble lineage, her marriage was of little importance to her. Grumbach addressed her role as wife differently than Schütz Zell and much less frequently. She did not have to defend her marriage, but she did justify her religious values taking precedence over care for her husband. She did not have to act as a role model, like Schütz Zell as a pastor's wife, but she did believe that her voice had to cross into the public realm when the sanctity of the reformed religion was threatened.

Both Grumbach and Schütz Zell believed they had the right to speak out and preach. However, Schütz Zell waited to enter the public role and speak out at the grave of her friends and husband when no man was left to speak. She often interpreted Scripture for those in need and dolled out advice to the downtrodden and religiously oppressed. Her self-identified role as *Kirchen Mutter* prompted these actions. She felt that she had to protect and mother her fellow Christians.

Grumbach, on the other hand, did not emulate the mothering nature of Schütz Zell. Her prime focus was on the oppression of people by the Catholic Church, rather than between Protestant sects, and this caused her fight to take a different form than Schütz Zell's. Grumbach's place in society, and the fact that she held a higher social ranking than her husband, prompted her to be more public with her writing. She directed herself against men and was prepared, though unanswered, to defend her writings in public debate.

Both women saw themselves reflected in biblical characters who spoke out, such as Anna and Abraham. However, each emphasized and transgressed from differing aspects of these characters. Grumbach saw Anna's role as prophet as more important than her role as preacher, which was Schütz Zell's interpretation of Anna's role. They both blurred gender boundaries when it came to writing about themselves in respect to Scripture since they saw their religious vocations as more important their sex. Schütz Zell and Grumbach were defiant in their vocation and refused to be silenced by St. Paul's admonition against women who spoke in church. While they did not effect great lasting political or religious change, both women fashioned a powerful self. Both women utilized biblical characters to justify their respective social roles of wife, preacher, mother, and prophet.

In an article on the demystification of exorcisms in seventeenth-century Loudon, France and London, England, Greenblatt quotes Ben Jonson's *Volpone*:

And, since the most was gotten by imposture,
 By faining lame, gout, palsey, and such diseases,
 Thou art to lie in prison, cramp't with irons,
 Till thou bee'st sicke, and lame indeed.¹⁸⁵

Greenblatt argues here that all who participated in public exorcisms-- the possessed, the exorcist, and the audience—shaped the identity of each individual in turn. By acting possessed, one became possessed. The push from the audience and exorcists for the possessed women to react in certain ways, which would affirm the reality of demonic presence, influenced the actions of all those on display. The ongoing, perpetual interactions and negotiations between each member fashioned a distinct self, constructed by and within social, religious, and cultural belief systems. The warring reformed sects in attendance at the public exorcisms, the ecclesiastic's and state's affirmed beliefs in response to the oppositional audience, inherent gendered beliefs from both religious backgrounds, and the possessed's desire for power and influence created a circular relationship, which constantly evolved into a unique identity.

Schütz Zell and Grumbach are like these possessed women negotiating between differing authoritative forces. It is in the space between those tensions, being played out on a grander public scale, that these women formed their identity. They had to work within and against the gender hierarchy, the fight between Catholics and reformers, the

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, "Loudon and London," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 2 (Winter 1986): 342.

division between the burgeoning sects of reformers, between their understanding of their new role in the community and families, and in the Protestant interpretation of individual authority to speak out. Both women found a powerful and individual identity in these spaces. While they were not able to directly effect social change, they were examples of women's importance and power. This begs historians to further delve into reformed women's writings to reveal evidence of an identity that transgressed from Luther's overbearing ideology, which historiography so often stamps onto women in this era.

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