

“How the Lord Revealed his Secrets to Me, One after Another”: The Life and Thought of Johanna Eleonora Petersen (1644-1724) in Recent Scholarship: a Review Article

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ABSTRACT. This article examines four recent books devoted to the life and thought of German Pietist author Johanna Eleonora Petersen (1644-1724). In the last four years two monograph studies of Petersen and two source editions of her autobiography have appeared in print. The monographs by Albrecht and Martin pursue gender and literary questions rather than strictly theological ones, a welcome advance. However, Petersen’s radical Pietist spirituality demands a more creative, more multi-disciplinary approach than we find in these two books. Readers would do well to bypass the English translation of Petersen’s *Leben* by Becker-Cantarino in favour of the earlier one by Cornelia Niekus Moore or the 2003 German edition by Prisca Guglielmetti. The latter is a welcome resource for professors and students.

Ruth Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 432 pages, Bibliography, Index;

Lucinda Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism” (A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The University of Texas at Austin, De-

- ember 2002), 367 pages (pages 157-225 are devoted to Johanna Eleonora Petersen), Bibliography;
- Barbara Becker-Cantarino (editor and translator), *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself: Pietism and Women's Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 140 pages, Bibliography, Index;
- Prisca Guglielmetti (editor), *Johanna Eleonora Petersen, geb. von und zu Merlau. Leben, von ihr selbst mit eigener Hand aufgesetzt* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 114 pages, Bibliography.

Introduction

This review article focuses on four recent books devoted to the life and thought of German Pietist author Johanna Eleonora Petersen (1644-1724). After suffering from centuries of neglect, in the last four years two monograph studies of Petersen and two source editions of her autobiography have appeared in print. These works reflect the international scope of current Pietism research: one monograph and source edition are in German, while the other monograph and source edition are in English. Ruth Albrecht's study grows out of her habilitation thesis presented at Hamburg University in 1999; Lucinda Martin's study of Petersen and Anna Nitschmann represents her 2002 doctoral dissertation at the University of Texas, soon to be published in revised form; Cantarino's English translation of Petersen's *Leben* appears in the University of Chicago series on women writers, "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe"; and Prisca Guglielmetti's German edition of the *Leben* belongs to a new series of German source texts representing the diversity of the Pietist movement.

German Pietism has been called the most significant Protestant renewal movement after the Reformation. Under the inspiration of such figures as Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705), August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) and Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), Pietism played a complex but im-

portant role in the rise of the Enlightenment and in the beginnings of modern education, politics, culture and religion. Pietism research has made significant advances in recent years. This can be illustrated by the two International Congresses for Pietism Research held in Halle in 2001 and 2005, by the recently completed four volume *Geschichte des Pietismus*,¹ by achievements in the sub-field of “radical Pietism” under the aegis of Marburg Professor Hans Schneider, by the formation of the Pietism Studies Research Group in North America, and by advances in the study of women as key figures within the Pietist movement.² But along with these achievements must go the recognition that in many ways Pietism is still a young research field. Ruth Albrecht recently lamented that there is “little or no use of the methods of gender history” in Pietism scholarship. “It still remains to investigate the individual personalities of Pietist women, and their writings, readership, and support networks”.³

Johanna Eleonora Petersen is highly deserving of the scholarly attention represented by the works here under review. She was recognized in her day as the most significant Pietist woman author. “The amount and intensity of her writing were incomparable... Her outstanding Bible knowledge was highlighted by everyone”.⁴ She and her prolific husband, pastor and

¹ Edited by Martin Brecht, Klaus Deppermann, Ulrich Gäbler and Hartmut Lehmann, the four volumes were published in 1993, 1995, 2000 and 2004 by Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht in Göttingen. For an account of the celebration held in Berlin on January 20, 2004 upon completion of the final volume, see Paul Raabe, “Rede zur Vollendung der *Geschichte des Pietismus*”, *Pietismus und Neuzeit* 31 (2005), 218-224.

² See Barbara Hoffmann, *Radikalpietismus um 1700. Der Streit um das Recht auf eine neue Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1996) and Ulrike Witt, *Bekehrung, Bildung und Biographie: Frauen im Umkreis des Halleschen Pietismus* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1996).

³ Ruth Albrecht, “Women”, in Hartmut Lehmann, ed. *Geschichte des Pietismus*, Bd. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 523.

⁴ Ruth Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 136f.

theologian Johann Wilhelm Petersen (1649-1727), pushed Spener's thought and practice in more radical directions. Spener's innovative gatherings in his home in Frankfurt were intended to nurture Bible study and prayer among the laity in realization of the priesthood of all believers. In his manifesto, *Pia Desideria* (1675), Spener expressed his post-millennial confidence that better times were ahead for the church. He anticipated the conversion of the Jews, the decline of the Roman Catholic Church and confessional differences, and a new age of Christian harmony. While Spener remained a life-long pastor in the state Lutheran Church, Johann Wilhelm Petersen's outspoken millennialism and support of the prophetess Juliane von Asseburg resulted in his dismissal from his position as pastor and superintendent in Lüneburg.⁵ The Petersens would spend the next thirty years on their estate in Electoral Brandenburg,⁶ where they welcomed a host of colourful Pietist leaders and personalities. Through their letters and writings they promoted a Philadelphian piety that was sharply critical of the conflicts, divisiveness and low level of piety within the state Lutheran churches; they anticipated a new "Philadelphian" age of ecumenical peace, and God's redemptive restoration of all creation. Johanna authored some fifteen books while her husband published sixty-seven works with an additional one hundred in ms. In 1718 the Petersens both published autobiographies, providing scholars with unique access to their life and thought.⁷ Given Jo-

⁵ Petersen was dismissed from office in January 1692. See Markus Matthias, *Johann Wilhelm und Johanna Eleonora Petersen. Eine Biographie bis zur Amtsenthebung Petersens im Jahre 1692* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993).

⁶ Ruth Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen: Theologische Schriftstellerin des frühen Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 92-96.

⁷ Johann Wilhelm Petersen, *Das Leben Jo. Wilhelmi Petersen, Der Heil. Schrift Doctoris, 1717*; Johanna Eleonora Petersen, *Leben Frauen Joh. Eleonora Petersen Gebornen von und zu Merlau, Hrn. D. Io. Willh. Petersen Eheliebsten; Von Ihr selbst mit eigener Hand aufgesetzt, und vieler erbaulichen Merckwürdigkeiten wegen zum Druck übergeben, daher es als ein Zweyter Theil Zu Ihres Ehe-Herrn Lebens-Beschreibung beygefüget werden kan. Anno MDCCXVIII. Auf Kosten guter Freunde.*

hanna's prominence and productivity, it is surprising that till recently she has been almost totally neglected by scholars.

The purpose of this article is to examine recent scholarship on Johanna Eleonora Petersen and to assess its achievements in advancing our understanding of Pietism in general and of Johanna Eleonora Petersen in particular. For the two monographs we shall consider the purpose, argument, sources and method of each work, followed by an assessment of its contribution to the field. In examining the two source editions, we shall note the quality of the translation or edition and the accompanying introduction and apparatus, as well as the work's value as a resource for scholars and students. We shall argue that in terms of advancing the Pietism field, the contribution of this recent scholarship on Johanna Eleonora Petersen is mixed. Guglielmetti's edition of Petersen's autobiography is a welcome advance. Also welcome is the way the two monographs pursue questions and methods marked by gender and literary interests rather than strictly theological ones. However, it is clear that the religious, psychological and social questions that Petersen's life and piety raise demand a more creative, more multi-disciplinary approach than we find in the two monographs under consideration.

The Two Monographs

Ruth Albrecht takes as the focus of her study the "theological work" of Johanna Eleonora Petersen, illuminating the setting and conditions, results and achievements of Petersen's theological writing.⁸ The book has three parts: a biography of Petersen (83 pages), an examination of gender specific limitations that she encountered as a woman writer (79 pages), and a chronological examination of Petersen's writings (158 pages). This last part discusses Petersen's early writings up to 1691, writings during her main period of literary activity from 1691 to 1715, and her later writings from 1715 to 1719. Albrecht seeks to revise the

⁸ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 19.

caricatures of scholars who fail to take Petersen's theological writing seriously and who view her as a personality driven by emotional and visionary experiences.⁹

Albrecht argues that Petersen should be characterized not as a theologian *per se*, but as "a woman writer who addressed theological subjects" (*theologische Schriftstellerin*). Neither her training nor her involvements permit the former designation.¹⁰ Petersen's theological profile was determined by two poles: the word of God, and her own experiences, which became "the hermeneutical key to understanding holy scripture".¹¹ There is a complexity to Petersen's theology. While grounded in biblical interpretation, she availed herself of such resources as the original languages, personal experiences, visions, and contemporary notions from people like Jane Leade. "A distinguishing mark of her theological work is the tension between the effort to understand the Word of God, and to combine this with ideas that she drew from contemporaries".¹²

In the biographical section, Albrecht provides a detailed portrait of the Petersens' life on their estate in Niederndodeleben where they lived in relative peace and security. They were not only tolerated, but actually supported thanks to the confessional and political structure of Brandenburg-Prussia. Their estate became a "communications center for radical Pietists". Some visitors who lived with them on the estate for extended periods of time include Anna Margaretha Jahn from Halberstadt who lived there in 1695; Adelheid Sybilla Schwartz and her husband in 1697; Gottfried Arnold in May 1698; Swiss Pietist Samuel König in summer 1700; the radical Swiss preacher Samuel Guldin

⁹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 17.

¹⁰ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 14f. Albrecht goes against Martin Jung who describes Petersen as "Die Theologin Johanna Eleonora Petersen" and "eine Laientheologin des radikalen Pietismus". See Martin H. Jung, *Nachfolger, Visionärinnen, Kirchenkritiker* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 59-63.

¹¹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 354.

¹² Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 357.

and his family; Niklaus von Rodt with his daughter and son-in-law; and the Hessen radical theologian Heinrich Horch.¹³ With so many visitors coming and going, it is not surprising that Petersen should emphasize the importance of having her own room in which to read, work and pray. Jane Leade, as well, noted the importance of having her private place where she could meet with God, and he with her.¹⁴ This was a practical requirement for a successful woman author, yet much harder for a woman to come by than a man at this time.

Albrecht examines the Petersens' relation to English Philadelphianism and Jane Leade. Albrecht's argument is ambivalent and somewhat unclear on this point. She states that the Petersens undoubtedly "considered themselves to be Philadelphians who were bound up with like-minded people in the spirit of these ideas". Johanna Eleonora and Johann Wilhelm Petersen were supporters of the Philadelphian notion that people from various faith backgrounds and from different places should join with each other. Their many contacts, maintained in person or by letter, and their vigorous book production, were all intended to prepare for "the Philadelphian epoch of the church, which they imagined as in some measure already at hand".¹⁵ Both of the Petersens exchanged letters in German with Jane Leade which were translated for her by Loth Fischer.

Leade believed that the return of Christ would not occur until a Philadelphian Church was established on earth to receive Him. When she sought to extend the Philadelphian organizational network to Germany, the Petersens drew back. They were opposed to any new church or sect structures. Indeed, they never fully separated themselves from the Lutheran Church, nor did they join a particular Pietist group, pursuing rather "an independent and non-committed existence". What they did establish was a reading community [*Lesergemeinde*] throughout Ger-

¹³ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 104f.

¹⁴ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 103f.

¹⁵ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 112, 113.

many. "To this extent, the two Petersens cannot be reckoned among the members and champions of the London-based Philadelphian Society, even if their strivings in many respects agreed with Leade and her disciples".¹⁶ So, according to Albrecht, the Petersens saw themselves as Philadelphians, but they really were not.

In discussing questions of gender in Part II, Albrecht observes that among late 17th century women writers, Johanna Eleonora Petersen was "the only one who sought to provide careful exegetical legitimation for her writing".¹⁷ She used Gal. 3:28 to show that the distinction between men and women had no significance for the gifts of the spirit and for the grace of God. "She understood herself as a woman directly blessed by God who felt she should and must use the gifts he had bestowed for the good of her neighbour".¹⁸ Leade, on the other hand, grounded her writing upon her visions to which she attributed the same authority as the Old Testament and New Testament. She described God as the "author" of her writings. Like Leade, Bourignon considered herself to be God's medium of revelation. Van Schurman defended the educational abilities of women and her own abilities as an educated woman. Finally, Guyon saw her mystical commentary on the Bible as being guided by the divine author.¹⁹

In Part III, Albrecht pursues a chronological examination of each of Petersen's fifteen works, published between 1689 and 1718, in terms of context, ideas, and the responses they prompted from friends and enemies. Petersen's 1696 book, *Anleitung zu gründlicher Verständniß der Heiligen Offenbarung Jesu Christi*, an interpretation of the *Apocalypse*, is her most extensive discussion of chiliastic/millennialist ideas. Albrecht suggests that the book crossed a barrier for a woman writer in the early modern

¹⁶ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 113, 114 and n. 491.

¹⁷ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 181.

¹⁸ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 192, 197.

¹⁹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 181-183.

period. Although the work did not follow the traditional genre of a commentary, Petersen was blazing new ground in commenting on a portion of Scripture.²⁰ Johanna would later identify the *Anleitung* as the most significant and important of all her works. J. H. Feustking brought a 3-fold critique against the work: the subject was too difficult for a woman; the commentary was written in German; and the book was not subject to pastoral censor. She was incapable of true theological argument, or "Elenchus", the preserve of academic theologians.²¹

The idea of a final restoration of all creation, including the devil and the fallen angels, found its first Pietist expression in Petersen's *Ewiges Evangelium* of 1698 and *Bewährung des Ewigen Evangelii* of 1701. Emanuel Hirsch called this notion "perhaps the most important theological-historical contribution of radical Pietism".²² Johanna published *das Ewige Evangelium* anonymously, possibly due to Spener's request that she avoid public promotion of these ideas. Petersen's main argument derived from the love of God, which embraces all creation including the devil, and the redemption of Christ, which redeemed all creation including the devil.²³ The work called forth a flood of criticism. Territorial authorities, including Brandenburg-Prussia, Württemberg, Nürnberg, and Bern, subjected the book to censor to prevent its publication in their territories.²⁴ Her teaching on this point drew opposition and enmity from friends such as Spener, Francke, Gichtel, Breckling and Horch.²⁵

Equally significant and innovative is Petersen's autobiography, first written in 1689 and expanded in 1718. In Pietism one sees a blossoming of autobiographical literature as men and

²⁰ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 264, 245.

²¹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 261.

²² Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 271, 273 and n. 403. Hirsch stated that the doctrine of a universal restoration (*Wiederbringung*) is "vielleicht der bedeutendste theologiegeschichtliche Beitrag des schwärmerischen Pietismus".

²³ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 285.

²⁴ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 290-294.

²⁵ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 300f.

women document their piety and experience of God as part of a program of renewal. Gustav Benrath considered Johanna Eleonora Petersen's *Leben* to be one of the most influential of all Pietist autobiographies, alongside those by Johann Konrad Dippel and Johann Henrich Reitz. Petersen's 1689 autobiography "belongs to the early phase of Pietist autobiographical writing, while the autobiographies of A. H. Francke, P. J. Spener, Gottfried Arnold and Johann Wilhelm Petersen belong to the later period". Petersen was herself influenced by the earlier autobiographies of Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon.²⁶

Albrecht's work deserves commendation on many grounds. This is the first study of Johanna Eleonora Petersen that takes into account all of her published writings. As well, Albrecht consulted unpublished sources, mainly letters, found in archives in Frankfurt, Gotha, Halle, Hamburg, Kiel, Schneeberg, Schönau and Wolmirstedt. Albrecht admits that she was only able to make selective use of the couple's extensive and wide-reaching correspondence due to the lack of a comprehensive edition.²⁷ Albrecht's bibliography offers an invaluable listing of previous Pietist scholarship; she has obviously mastered this vast field of scholarly literature.

Albrecht raises some questions that invite further research. The Petersens' attitudes towards Jews, and hopes for the conversion of the Jews, invite further study. When Johann Wilhelm first met Johanna, he was surprised to learn that she had a good command of the Hebrew language which, he said, she had learned "from a man very experienced in the oriental Hebrew language". Frankfurt was a center of Jewish scholarship and it is likely that it was a Jewish scholar who taught her.²⁸ When a former house guest, Johann Peter Späth, converted to Judaism, he claimed it was due to the influence of Johanna Eleonora Pe-

²⁶ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 336-338.

²⁷ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 38.

²⁸ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 63.

tersen. Her claim that she herself had borne a child of promise, "in purity", who would be a "new messiah", convinced Späth that the virgin birth of Christ was no argument for his divinity; Christ too could simply be a human messiah.²⁹ The whole complex of radical Pietist-Jewish relations demands further research. Also inviting further study is the phenomenon of radical Pietists moderating their views and practice in later life. The Petersens returned to the Lutheran church in their later years. One finds the same pattern in Friedrich Breckling, Gottfried Arnold, Heinrich Horch, Samuel König and Johann Philipp Marquard.³⁰ This pattern begs for further investigation.

There are, however, some problems with Albrecht's book, most notably in the way she has organized her findings. Her decision to discuss Petersen's biography, gendered experience, and published writings in three discreet parts is unfortunate and surprising given Albrecht's emphasis that Petersen's experiences became "the hermeneutical key to understanding holy scripture".³¹ As a result, Albrecht's investigation provides few illuminating insights into the intersection of these slices of Petersen's experience. Her life was lived whole, but the whole escapes Albrecht's grasp. The intersection of context, life and thought remains elusive. Albrecht offers little sense of significant development and change in Petersen over time. There are no startling interpretations, no arguments that one can sink one's intellectual teeth into and engage with in terms of the how and why of Petersen's career.

One wishes, for example, that Albrecht would speculate about the conjugal relationship between the Petersens. Johanna's attitudes to sexuality and marriage beg for some psycho-historical discussion. Did she engage in normal sexual relations with her husband or not? If not, does the accusation against him of impregnating a servant girl make some sense? Also,

²⁹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 87, 110, 252f.

³⁰ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 114 n. 493.

³¹ Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 354.

what of their conflicts with the servants?³² The conflicts they experienced in *Niederndodeleben* suggest in the Petersens a certain self-centered distance from the common crowd, an attitude that stands in contrast to the way Spener dealt with his servants.³³ Unfortunately, none of these questions is pursued.

Finally, it is surprising that a gender historian would so quickly surrender use of the designation "theologian" in the case of Johanna Eleonora Petersen. Martin Jung has argued convincingly that Petersen belongs to a tradition of "lay theologians"; the academic variety cannot lay sole claim to the title. Jung describes Petersen as "Die Theologin Johanna Eleonora Petersen" and "eine Lientheologin des radikalen Pietismus", preferring the term "theologin" to "Erbauungsschriftstellerin". He notes that Protestantism from early on had a tradition of lay theologians that included the likes of Caspar Schwenckfeld, Menno Simons, Jakob Böhme, Nikolaus Ludwig Graf von Zinzendorf and Gerhard Tersteegen. This tradition is consistent with Luther's priesthood of all believers. Petersen deserves to be included among these, for she involved herself in the theological disputes of her day. "If ever a woman deserved the title, then it is she".³⁴

Lucinda Martin's 2002 dissertation, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", addresses social and gender issues in relation to early modern Pietism and Enlightenment, fields in which women's experience and contribution have long been neglected. Noting that German scholarship has tended to view Pietism as a "strictly *German*, exclusively *Lutheran*, mostly *male* phenomenon", Martin challenges each one

³² Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 106f.

³³ See Douglas H. Shantz, "'Back to the Sources': Gottfried Arnold, Johann Henrich Reitz and the Distinctive Program and Practice of Pietist Historical Writing", in C. Arnold Snyder (ed.), *Commoners and Community* (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2002), 89.

³⁴ See Martin H. Jung, *Nachfolger, Visionärinnen, Kirchenkritiker* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 59-63. "Klar ist: Wenn überhaupt eine Frau des Pietismus diesen Ehrentitel verdient hat, dann sie" (page 60).

of these assumptions.³⁵ She draws parallels between Pietism and movements in England such as Quakerism and Philadelphianism. She argues that women played leading roles in Pietist dissenting circles, supporting the movement financially and through their writing. To make her argument, Martin pursues case studies of “two of the most influential Pietist women” – the chiliastic prophet Johanna Eleonora Petersen and the Moravian “Mother” Anna Nitschmann. The case studies demonstrate that Pietist women “claimed and used social and religious power through their words and deeds”.³⁶ Martin concludes that women’s contributions to Pietism were “at least as important as those of their male counterparts”.³⁷

In Chapter 3, “Johanna Eleonora Merlau Petersen as Prophetic Author and Activist”, Martin summarizes Petersen’s early life, relying on the account provided in her *Leben*. Following Günter Niggel, Martin contrasts Petersen’s autobiography with those of Spener and Francke: Spener’s is focused upon devotional edification, with few intimate details of his inner life; Francke’s offers details of his inner experience according to a rigid conversion scheme; while Johanna’s focuses on her conflicts and dealings with a sinful world.³⁸ Martin emphasizes Johanna’s connections with the Frankfurt Pietists, including her early leadership role alongside Philipp Jakob Spener (1635-1705) and Johann Jakob Schütz (1640-1690). She shows that it was only gradually that Johann Wilhelm Petersen “came to adopt the chi-

³⁵ Lucinda Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Texas at Austin in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (The University of Texas at Austin, December 2002), 3.

³⁶ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, 7.

³⁷ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, Abstract.

³⁸ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, 175f and n. 58. See also Günter Niggel, *Geschichte der deutschen Autobiographie im 18. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1977), 6-11.

liasm that Schütz and Merlau were promoting in Frankfurt".³⁹ After their marriage, Johanna and he enjoyed "an extraordinary intellectual and spiritual partnership". On their many evangelistic trips, Johanna Eleonora was responsible for leading discussions with the women while Johann Wilhelm met with theology students and craftsmen. Johanna's noble family connections "opened many doors for the couple in their promotion of Pietist causes".⁴⁰ Martin speculates that "perhaps most of their books should be considered co-productions because of the couple's unique working relationship".⁴¹

Martin identifies the key influences on Johanna Eleonora Petersen as the English Quaker William Penn and Jane Leade. "Petersen drew upon the writings of Leade the English Philadelphian as well as "aspects of Quakerism that she learned directly from William Penn during his visit to Frankfurt in 1677".⁴² It was a Quaker strategy to gain admittance to continental religious circles through aristocratic women activists, illustrated by Penn's trip to Frankfurt to visit Petersen.⁴³ If the Quakers provided Merlau a working model for mystical, non-hierarchical religion, the Philadelphians offered her a theological basis for such a religion".⁴⁴

³⁹ Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", 177.

⁴⁰ Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", 188.

⁴¹ Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", 11, 180-182. Martin claims that Johanna Eleonora Petersen "published at least 20 theological treatises in her lifetime and collaborated on many more with her husband". Albrecht finds 15 treatises authored by Petersen, and emphatically rejects the idea that she published some of her works under her husband's name, or co-authored his works. See Albrecht, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 122.

⁴² Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", in "Introduction", 11f.

⁴³ Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", 194.

⁴⁴ Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism", 197.

In the final section of the chapter, Martin argues that Petersen and other women Pietists “severed religious authority from the male-dominated institutions to which it had long been bound”.⁴⁵ In her *Glaubensgespräche* Johanna justified her religious speech and writing. These activities were based not upon her ordination or education but upon her faith and experience of the Holy Spirit. “Precisely by invoking their lowly status as women, as mere ‘vessels’ or ‘tools’ for God’s work, women Pietists elevated their status above that of male ministers”.⁴⁶ Johanna asserted that in coming days women would prophesy in ever greater numbers. Martin concluded that “the Petersens were instrumental in unleashing the wave of prophetic and mystical activity that began in the early 1690s, but the couple also exercised influence on the Pietist movement in other ways – providing models of organization and contributing ideas to other Pietists and their surrounding cultural milieu in general”.⁴⁷

There are some concerns with Martin’s work. Her source research is inadequate; she makes little use of archival sources⁴⁸, and examines only five of Petersen’s published theological works, including (in order of discussion) the autobiography, *Leben Fr. Joh. Eleonora Petersen* (1689, 1718), *Das Geheimniß des Erst-Gebornen der von Anfang ist, und der da ist Gott das Wort der Gott-Mensch Jesus Christus* (1711), *Der Geistliche Kampf der berufenen, auserwählten und gläubigen Überwinder* (1698), *Gespräche des Herzens mit Gott* (1689), and *Glaubensgespräche mit Gott* (1691). Surprisingly, Martin overlooks Petersen’s 1696 commentary on *Revelation, Anleitung zu gründlicher Verständniß der Heiligen Offenbarung Jesu Christi* (1696), considered by Albrecht to be Peter-

⁴⁵ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, 217.

⁴⁶ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, 219.

⁴⁷ Martin, “Women’s Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism”, 223.

⁴⁸ Martin’s chapter on Anna Nitschmann makes impressive use of archival source materials located in the Unitätsarchiv in Herrnhut.

sen's most significant work. Martin would do well to expand her source base to include the rich archival and published materials cited by Albrecht. Also, Martin's conclusions about women's contributions to Pietism tend to go beyond the limits of her evidence. Two case studies do not provide a basis for broad generalizations about women and Pietism. Finally, Martin is overly dismissive of German scholarship and its approach to women and religious radicals within Pietism. With her provocative and insightful arguments, Martin complements the work of Albrecht. One wishes that Martin's conclusions were moderated a bit, and had a less strident tone. Any further evaluation should await publication of her book.

The Two Source Editions

In examining the two source editions, we shall consider the quality of the translation or edition and the accompanying introduction and notes, as well as the work's value as a resource for scholars and students. The only previous English edition of Petersen's autobiography is the one by Cornelia Niekus Moore, published in a 1990 source collection of European women writers. Based upon the 1718 expanded version of Petersen's autobiography, Niekus Moore only translated about two thirds of the work, with much of the second part left out.⁴⁹ Thanks to Barbara Becker-Cantarino's 2005 edition, English readers now have access to the complete text of Petersen's 1718 *Leben*. Becker-Cantarino provides an introductory essay and bibliography amounting to fifty-seven pages, followed by her translation and notes which take up forty pages.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cornelia Niekus Moore, "The Life of Johanna Eleonora Petersen" in Jeanine Blackwell and Susanne Zantop, eds. *Bitter Healing: German Women Writers, 1700-1830* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 57-78.

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the series editors chose to add their own 14 page bibliography and a 21 page introduction in which they offer "a framework" for understanding texts published in the series, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe*. The editors present in brief compass the three thousand year history of the derogation of women in Western culture, with a glimpse of the

Becker-Cantarino's essay, "From Noblewoman to Radical Pietist", presents Petersen as one of the few early modern women who "found her own voice". "She insisted on her right as a believer, though a woman and a layperson, to publish her readings of the Book of Revelation and of theological questions".

In her autobiography Petersen defended her "other path", her choice of becoming a Pietist, of a marriage outside of her class, and the publication of her religious thoughts against the accusations and lies of other people. She described in detail her secular life: her rather desolate childhood in the wake of the Thirty Years' War, her service at court, her life as a Pietist in Frankfurt, and her marriage. Her religious visions concluded the volume as a climax of her inner biography, her destiny since childhood.⁵¹

Becker-Cantarino recounts Petersen's experience in Frankfurt with the emerging Pietism of Philipp Jakob Spener. Her own gatherings in the Saalhof palace attracted visitors such as William Penn, George Fox, Robert Barclay, George Keith and other Quakers. Petersen was the first German woman writer to publish an autobiography, probably influenced by an earlier autobiography by the learned Dutch woman Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678).⁵² Petersen's *Leben* recounts her visions and dreams, three from before her marriage and three after. Becker-Cantarino concludes that "Johanna Eleonora Petersen gave a voice to Pietist women; she was not a feminist but helped prepare the way for women's individual and collective expressions in the religious community and beyond".⁵³

"other voice" up to the time of Queen Elizabeth I. The result is a cluttered and incohesive book.

⁵¹ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, editor and translator, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself: Pietism and Women's Autobiography in Seventeenth-Century Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 1.

⁵² Barbara Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 1.

⁵³ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 43.

Compared to Niekus Moore's English edition, Becker-Cantarino's edition is disappointing on several counts. The editor brings to the work a superficial and dismissive understanding of German Pietism as a world of thought. On two occasions Becker-Cantarino observes that Petersen's theological debates are of interest today "only to specialists" and theologians. What is important is that "Petersen's life story contains a new understanding of spirituality and self-worth", and "It helped to change perceptions about women".⁵⁴ Becker-Cantarino's view of things is unfortunate, for theological concerns lie at the heart of Petersen's life and spirituality; these cannot be understood without taking her theological notions seriously.

In terms of the translation itself, Becker-Cantarino's English rendering is wooden and jarring. Her stated goal as translator was to stay as close as possible to Petersen's original style, grounded as it was in the language of the German Bible – "Luther's German".⁵⁵ But the result is a non-idiomatic English translation, with long, complex sentences which often make little or no sense.⁵⁶ Three examples follow, but many others

⁵⁴ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 2, 43.

⁵⁵ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 60.

⁵⁶ The following passage offers an example of this complexity: "But when I realized that my friend's mind and God's word were one, that all doubts about not knowing anyone had disappeared, that he followed the word of the Lord in all simplicity and talked to me as if it were not so simple to understand that one should do it, and that there was enough knowledge though I saw no one using it – then I was strengthened by my new friend in believing that we should not look at men as examples, but that we should look at the example of the Lord, the word of truth. Compared with him, all men are liars". See Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 75. Niekus Moore's translation of this same passage is as follows: "But I noticed in this friend that his intentions agreed with the Word of the Lord, and all doubts I had hitherto felt were dispelled. As I had known no one who lived according to the Word of the Lord in true simplicity, I had become convinced that it was not meant to be followed in all simplicity that it was sufficient to know of it. But this friend convinced me

could be added: "I prayed to God that he save me from the Popish"; "I had not yet entered the following of Christ"; "May the Lord himself reveal his truths clearer and clearer to us, for his sake".⁵⁷ In each case, Niekus Moore's translation is much better in terms of clarity, idiom and grammar: "I prayed to God that he would protect me from such papism"; "I had not yet begun my true imitation of Christ"; "May the Lord reveal his truths to us ever more clearly for His sake".⁵⁸ Becker-Cantarino often misses Biblical allusions; in some cases, nuances of meaning are lost as a result. The Biblical text from Matthew 10:24, "The disciple is not above his Master", reads in her translation, "a youth is not better than the master".⁵⁹

Finally, Becker-Cantarino's edition is marked by sloppy copy-editing; numerous typos and errors turn up throughout the book.⁶⁰ She refers to Prisca Guglielmetti, editor of the recent German edition of Petersen's life, as "Guglia" Guglielmetti.⁶¹ Three times in the introduction and notes Becker-Cantarino refers to Philipp Jakob Spener as "Johann" Jakob Spener⁶²; on two other occasions she gets the name right. Given Spener's important place in the Petersens' lives, and his prominence as the leading Pietist spokesman of the era, it is disconcerting that an editor could confuse his name. The overall effect of Becker-Can-

that one should not look to the examples of others, but to the example of the Lord, and to the Word of truth, against which all men are liars". See Niekus Moore, "The Life of Johanna Eleonora Petersen", 66f.

⁵⁷ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 69, 70, 98.

⁵⁸ Niekus Moore, "The Life of Johanna Eleonora Petersen", 64, 65, 78.

⁵⁹ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 78.

⁶⁰ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 3, 6 n. 12, 8, 29 n. 70, 55, 57, 60, 69.

⁶¹ Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 60.

⁶² Becker-Cantarino, *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen Written by Herself*, 2, 61, 81.

tarino's edition is that of a working draft that needs a couple of more drafts before it is ready for the light of day.

Modern German editions of Johanna Eleonora Petersen's *Leben* have been few and far between.⁶³ Martin Jung's 1999 edition appeared in his collection of Pietist women autobiographies. Jung takes liberties in modernizing the texts in order to ease the way for the modern German reader.

The original texts are quite difficult to understand because the women of the 17th and early 18th centuries had no higher education. They wrote as the ideas came to them, without consideration for grammatical construction. The texts, therefore, have been revised by me in such a way that they can be more readily understood by readers today.⁶⁴

Jung provides a brief one page historical introduction to Petersen's work, and minimal footnote apparatus and bibliography.

Prisca Guglielmetti's 2003 edition of Petersen's *Leben* is a welcome resource for professors and students. The series in which Guglielmetti's Petersen edition appears, the *Kleine Texte des Pietismus* (KTP), is aimed at "those interested in the history of piety and culture, students and teachers of theology, literature, cultural studies and history in universities, colleges and schools, and school and church libraries".⁶⁵ In keeping with the approach used in other volumes in the series, Guglielmetti first

⁶³ Guglielmetti identifies five of them, published in 1812, 1816, 1866, 1921 and 1999. See Prisca Guglielmetti (ed.), *Johanna Eleonora Petersen, geb. von und zu Merlau. Leben, von ihr selbst mit eigener Hand aufgesetzt* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2003), 111.

⁶⁴ Martin H. Jung, *"Mein Herz brannte richtig in der Liebe Jesu": Autobiographien frommer Frauen aus Pietismus und Erweckungsbewegung* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 1999), v: "Die Originaltexte sind teilweise äußerst schwer zu verstehen, weil die Frauen des 17. und frühen 18. Jahrhunderts keine höhere Bildung hatten. Sie schrieben, wie ihnen die Gedanken kamen, ohne überlegt zu gliedern und auf den Satzbau zu achten. Die Texte wurden deshalb von mir so bearbeitet, daß die heutige Leserinnen und Leser unmittelbar verstehen können".

⁶⁵ Guglielmetti, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 116.

offers the German text of Petersen's *Leben* (pages 5-48), followed by line by line commentary (pages 50-88), a "Nachwort" (Afterword, pages 89-109), and a list of relevant primary and secondary sources (pages 110-114).

Guglielmetti's approach to text editing is restrained in an effort to offer readers the complete text as it appeared in 1718. "The peculiarities of the printed original have been retained, such as spelling, use of capitals, punctuation, and double hyphens".⁶⁶ The differences in Guglielmetti's and Jung's editions of Petersen's *Leben* can be illustrated in the following paragraph, which reads in Guglielmetti's edition as follows:

Etliche Zeit hernach kam meine Schwester nacher Stuckgard, bey des seel. Vaters Bruder, und ich muste die Haußhaltung über mich nehmen, und von allen Rechnung thun, welches mir sehr schwehr war, weil der seel. Vater, so offt er nach Hause kam, mir sehr hart begegnete, und alles was zubrochen, oder sonst nicht gleich recht nach seinem Sinn war, von mir foderte, und offt unschuldig sehr hart straffte...⁶⁷

The same passage in Jung's modernized edition reads:

Etliche Zeit hernach kam meine Schwester nach Stuttgart zu des seligen Vaters Bruder, und ich mußte die Haushaltung auf mich nehmen und von allem Rechnung ablegen. Das war mir sehr schwer, weil der selige Vater, sooft er nach Hause kam, mir sehr hart begegnete und alles, was zerbrochen oder sonst nicht gleich recht nach seinem Sinn war, von mir foderte und mich oft unschuldig sehr hart strafte...⁶⁸

Guglielmetti and Jung represent two sides of an on-going scholarly discussion about editing early modern texts. The same de-

⁶⁶ Guglielmetti, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 49. "Die Eigenheiten der Druckvorlage bleiben insofern gewahrt, als Orthographie, Groß- und Kleinschreibung sowie Zeichensetzung, inclusive Doppelbindestrich, beibehalten wurden".

⁶⁷ Guglielmetti, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 13.

⁶⁸ Martin H. Jung, "Mein Herz brannte richtig in der Liebe Jesu", 52.

bate has also taken place between Anselm Steiger and Thomas Kaufmann.⁶⁹ Steiger and Guglielmetti advocate offering texts that are as true to the letter of the original as possible; aids to understanding can be provided in the introduction, commentary and notes.

Guglielmetti's line by line historical commentary is impressive for its thoroughness and usefulness. She captures the many biblical allusions in Petersen's writing; they abound on every page.⁷⁰ Especially prominent are Petersen's references to the Psalms and to Paul's epistles. Guglielmetti identifies historical, literary, political and geographical allusions in the text. Over against Becker-Cantarino, Guglielmetti frequently cites relevant contemporary scholarship to illumine the context of passages, including works by Markus Matthias, Hans Schneider, Martin Brecht, Andreas Deppermann and Hans-Jürgen Schrader. The editor's "Nachwort" discusses the prominent place of autobiography in German Pietism, especially among Pietist women writers. Guglielmetti observes that in contrast to the autobiographies of English Puritan women, which follow a carefully prescribed process of conversion and make little reference to everyday life, Petersen's autobiography is not primarily a conversion story. There is no reference to a spiritual battle or crisis of conscience. The emphasis is rather upon her growth in understanding and her conflicts with the authorities.⁷¹ Rather than comparing Petersen's *Leben* with Puritan models, Guglielmetti suggests comparison with the *Schelmenromane*, the pica-

⁶⁹ See Ralf Bogner, Johann Anselm Steiger, "Prinzipien der Edition von theologischen Texten der frühen Neuzeit: Mit einer Vorstellung und Begründung der Prinzipien für die geplanten Editionen von Werken Johann Gerhards", *Editio: Internationales Jahrbuch für Editions-wissenschaft* 12 (1998), p. 97-105.

⁷⁰ For example, Guglielmetti notes Petersen's allusion in paragraph 23 to Jesus' words, "The disciple is not above his Master". Guglielmetti cites Matthew 10:24, Luke 6:40, John 13:16, and John 15:20 as Biblical sources for Petersen's allusion. See Guglielmetti, 26 l.35, 69.

⁷¹ Guglielmetti, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 96-98.

resque adventure stories of the day, as well as with medieval saints' lives.⁷² Petersen's *Leben* highlights events from her life which reveal the working of God's grace, sometimes in miraculous ways. In all, Guglielmetti's is an exemplary text edition, and highly commended.

Conclusion

We conclude that recent scholarship on Johanna Eleonora Petersen represents a mixed contribution in terms of advancing the Pietism field. One must welcome the pursuit of questions and methods marked by gender and literary interests rather than strictly theological ones. It is unfortunate, however, when this pursuit takes a step back in relation to previous scholarly achievements as in the case of Becker-Cantarino's edition. It has also become clear that Petersen presents huge challenges to scholarly interpreters. The religious, psychological and social questions that radical Pietist religion raises demand a more creative, more multi-disciplinary approach than we find in the two monographs under consideration. Finally, readers would do well to bypass the English edition provided by Becker-Cantarino in favour of the earlier one by Cornelia Niekus Moore or the German original edited by Guglielmetti.

⁷² Guglielmetti, *Johanna Eleonora Petersen*, 100-103.