



Kinship Networks, Power, and Agency in Upper Austrian Noblewomen of the Seventeenth Century

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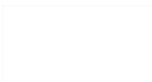
Michelle Esme Seitzmeir

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Abstract

This thesis looks at elite women in seventeenth-century Upper Austria to examine how kinship networks and institutions affected their agency and opportunities during the tumultuous events surrounding the Counter Reformation. Using three short biographies of noblewomen within the same social network, this thesis argues that the realities of choice, opportunities, and family obligations were complex and nuanced. Kinship networks served both as limiting agents upon women as well as a means for allowing them to play an active role in determining the trajectory or outcome of their lives. Rather than merely being constrained by the legal and social norms of the time, some elite women were able to leverage their social and family connections to exercise broad agency. The more connected a woman was to her family and kinship networks, the more freedom she had to act independently, and it was the absence of such connections that limited them the most. Women who lacked the requisite kinship networks could be denied their social or legal rights unless they could engage the power of a larger authority, such as the Catholic Church, to act on their behalf. The external pressures brought on by the Counter Reformation and rebellions of the period made the use of kinship networks as a means of leveraging power particularly relevant to elite women. Yet the use of these tools was not unique to that period, but rather part of an existing strategy used by noble women to exercise agency.

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Introduction

In a letter written in 1629 by Judith Starhemberg to her mother-in-law Juliana Starhemberg, Judith recounted the recent conversion to Catholicism of an acquaintance of theirs. Judith described how *Frau* Wandula von Alheim had converted to Catholicism after making the decision in what Judith described as a slovenly fashion and “in the wink of an eye.”¹ It was widely suspected that *Hern* Jörg Achaz would soon convert as well, since he and *Frau* Alheim were deeply, but secretly in love. “No one, except the entire world, knows” Judith remarked and added that there was not much *Frau* Alheim could do about it since she was engaged to another. As long as her fiancé lived, she could not have anyone else. “She is as wise in love as she is in religion,” Judith concluded.²

At a time when nobles in Upper Austria were being forced to choose either converting to Catholicism or giving up their land and titles in order to emigrate, and after a bloody rebellion had been fought and lost by the peasants for their right to remain Protestant, the news of another conversion was a hot topic of conversation. With each defection, the united front the nobility had once shown against the Kaiser in defense of their faith grew weaker. Religious differences divided every segment of the population, right down to individual households. Given the many years of conflict that had led to this point, along with the enormity of what was at stake for families and individuals, the characterization of *Frau* Althamb’s decision to convert as careless or casual was flippant

¹ Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, January 14, 1629. *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*. (Vienna: University of Vienna Institute for History) <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Frauenbriefe/>.

² Judith Sabina, Einzelbrief 5, January 14, 1629.

on Judith's part. Indeed, the issue of religious choice and conversion was a fundamental part of life for both peasants and nobles alike during this period.

Most discussions, however, focus almost entirely on religious choices by social class and very little discussion exists of the individual religious choices people were able to make and what may have driven such decisions.³ It is surely an oversimplification to assume that all religious choices were driven by deeply held beliefs or faith, or the converse that all conversions were driven by the need for financial and social self-preservation. Particularly for elite women, whose rights to own land and property were limited by law, it is unclear how much the threat of the loss of those affected their choices in conversion. The ability for a woman to choose her own religion within a household points to a relatively high degree of autonomy in decision making for women, but it tells us very little about the consequences or implications of that choice, nor does it inform us of how likely women were to make their own choice.

These same questions also hold true for secular decisions elite women faced, such as choosing a husband or what roles she would have taken on in the management of the household and estate. While the general consensus among historians holds that family considerations played a large role in the choice of a woman's husband or that noblewomen administered the estates in their husbands' absences, these descriptions often frame women in a very passive role and tell us nothing about how women responded.⁴ Yet it is implausible that a woman would have the autonomy to choose her

³ Felix Stieve, *Der Oberösterreichische Bauernafustand des Jahres 1626* (München: Universitäts Buchandlung, 1891); and Hermann Rebel, *Peasant Classes: The Bureaucratization of Property and Family Relations under Early Habsburg Absolutism, 1511-1636* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁴ Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998); Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); and Heide Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen

own religion against the express wishes of her husband or family, and yet otherwise passively accept the roles or situations that were assigned to them. Furthermore, the one-sided framing of family obligations reduces that dynamic to a coercive role rather than a mutually beneficial or reciprocal one.

Using three short biographies of noblewomen within the same social network, I contend that the realities of choice, opportunities, and family obligations were complex and nuanced, allowing noblewomen in Upper Austria during the early seventeenth century to play an active role in determining the trajectory or outcome of their lives. Rather than merely being constrained by the legal and social norms of the time, elite women were able to leverage their social and family connections to exercise their agency. The more connected a woman was to her family, the more freedom she had to act independently, and it was the absence of such connections which limited them the most.

Methodology and Sources

While much has been written about the legal and social frameworks in which these women lived and operated, there has been much less discussion about how their individual circumstances may have changed the context of a particular decision. I will use a micro-history approach to examine the context and consequences of individual noble women's lives and families in Upper Austria at the turn of the seventeenth century. By closely examining the correspondence of three noble women, I will attempt to build a more complete picture of each woman's life. These small biographies will provide the necessary context to better understand their individual choices and provide additional

in der Gesellschaft der Frühen Neuzeit," in *Frauen in der Geschichte des Rechts*, ed. Ute Gerhard (München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1997).

insight into how the constraints on their lives were shaped as well as how they were circumvented.

The micro-history approach is based on the idea that by focusing in on individual cases or situations, the subtleties and complexities of a situation can be explored in more detail than by looking at broader categories of people or events. The micro-historical approach was used, for example, by Carlo Ginzburg in his book *The Cheese and the Worms* to explore the beliefs and cultural history of a previously overlooked segment of the population by focusing on the life and trial of a particular individual.⁵ Ginzburg's micro approach allowed for an exploration of the religious beliefs of peasants of the time, an area which broader approaches have found difficult to study. As the private lives and thoughts of women are similarly difficult to access through traditional historical studies, this approach is ideally suited for this thesis.

Various scholars have debated the merits of the micro-historical approach. Historian Olwen Hufton's primary concern with it is the danger of over-generalization and the urge to create a common or unifying narrative to represent all women.⁶ Without question, the danger of speculation and of extrapolating the experiences of one individual to all is a pitfall that must be avoided. Yet the same danger exists when seeking to understand women's roles from a strictly legal or socio-economic perspective and without taking into account the individual's experience. Not only is there uncertainty in knowing if a law existed because it was trying to limit a perceived or a real behavior, but there is also no understanding of how the individual circumstances of a person's life might have influenced the interpretation or application of those laws. All three women

⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

⁶ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 6, 26.

described in this paper were born Protestant into same social class, region, and time-frame, and from a technical point of view, would have experienced the same opportunities and limitations in their lives. Yet the extensive breadth and diversity of their experiences demonstrates just how much variation could be found within the one socio-economic sphere.

Similarly to Ginzburg, Egyptologist Juan Carlos Moreno García employed a micro-historical approach to examine under-represented populations in traditional pharaonic accounts, such as farmers or non-elite women.⁷ His concern with the approach centers on its tendency to reduce historical analysis to a series of anecdotes unless balanced against the appropriate context.⁸ His recommendation of the use of many small cases to compare against official records, archaeological evidence, and existing pharaonic history essentially seeks to address this concern through volume and context. By giving voice to enough under-represented people, it becomes possible to build an alternative narrative to compare to the existing one, which is based primarily on large events and structures.

Historian Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon takes the opposite approach and states that the urge to contextualize micro-histories diminishes their significance.⁹ His recommendation is to examine each source in great detail in order to understand the immediate environment in which it was written and who it was written by, rather than to try to connect those events to previously “known” history. Magnússon argues that only

⁷ Juan Carlos Moreno García, “Microhistory,” *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, 1.1 (January 2018), <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6fr8p2hb>.

⁸ Moreno García, “Microhistory,” 12.

⁹ Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, “Far-reaching Microhistory: The Use of Microhistorical Perspective in a Globalized World,” *Rethinking History*, 21.3 (2017, 312-341), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2016.1252540>.

by doing so can we move past existing narratives and truly explore what the individual experience was. Certainly Magnússon's point about being open to new narratives is vitally important. The desire to shoehorn an individual's story into the bigger picture or the known or accepted paradigm means that the individual's story is lost and the larger story never changes. And Magnússon is not arguing for the absence of context, but rather careful contextualization, which allows for an individual story to be told. However, his approach of the deep dive into the individual contrasts with Moreno García's recommendation to aggregate many small cases.

In terms of this project, the limitations of the source material made it possible to only examine three women in depth. The three women chosen were chosen because of the relatively large numbers of letters written to or about them. Many other letters were available, but with only a handful written to or from each particular woman, they were not enough to build a complete picture of that woman's experiences. As a result, this project more closely follows Magnússon's model of the deep dive into the individual's life. Wherever possible, however, supplementary evidence from other women's letters of the period was brought in to help construct a larger baseline of similar cases against which the three women of this study could be compared.

The primary source material for this paper is a series of letters written by noblewomen in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Upper Austria, and published online by the University of Vienna on their website "*Briefe adeliger Frauen (16-18.Jh)*."¹⁰ An extraordinary treasure trove of material written within their family circles, the letters are a snapshot of the daily lives and business conducted by these women. As the researchers of the project behind the website point out, the letters tell not

¹⁰ *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh)*, *Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*, University of Vienna, accessed December 1, 2018, <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Frauenbriefe/index.html>.

only of facts and events, but also the thoughts and feelings of the writer.¹¹ Among the challenges included in using these letters is understanding the relationship between the writer and the recipient. The biography of each woman is designed to help flesh out and fill in the complexity of some of these relationships.

Many of the letters are transcribed from handwriting into a modern typeface exactly as they were written, although some have been summarized and the full text was not included. Written in an era before standardized spelling and grammar became commonplace, and using the dialect of the time, some of the content of the letters can be difficult to understand or translate. Two online resources for translation included the Grimm's historical German dictionary and the *Frünehochdeutsches Wörterbuch* published online by the Göttingen University library.¹² These resources did allow for almost all words to be translated or interpreted to some extent or another. Only in a few cases did the meaning remain completely unclear. All translations in this paper are my own, and for the sake of simplicity, I have not included the original German citations in the text along with the translated English. It is also necessary to mention that due to the challenges of writing a family history in which all the subjects share the same last name, for the sake of simplicity I have eschewed the convention of referring to the principal characters by their last name in favor of using their first names. I have also chosen not to use their full name each time I discuss them. Instead, each person is referred to by their full name when first mentioned, and after that simply by their first name unless context requires additional clarification.

¹¹ Projektbeschreibung, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*, accessed December 1, 2018, <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Frauenbriefe/beschreib1.htm>.

¹² Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*. Universität Trier. Last accessed May 9, 2019. <http://dwb.uni-trier.de/de/>; and *Frünehochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Last accessed May 9, 2019. <https://fwb-online.de/>.

A further issue with the letters includes the challenges caused by the handwriting of the authors and the condition of the letters themselves. Some letters include inconsistencies that may provide conflicting information. Two people may have described the same event but used different dates to do so, and I have tried to highlight the discrepancies when they occurred. In the case of Helena von Schallenberg in the third chapter, whose correspondence was printed both in a biography of her brother's life as well as on the University of Vienna website, different dates were used by the two publishers for some of the same letters. This can most likely be attributed to the illegibility of the handwriting of the original letters and various sections of some letters are marked by the transcriber as illegible and the space left blank. None of these omissions or inconsistencies are significant enough to bring the material as a whole into question, but it does add an element of uncertainty to some of the accounts. Some of this uncertainty also appears to have been felt by the original correspondents, with many letters including notes expressing hope that the reader had received her last letter, or that the recipient was even still alive, or to question if a story they had heard from a different source was true. While some letters, such as the one in the opening paragraph, can feel a little like gossip, their importance as a source of news and information about people and events cannot be understated.

Adding to the complications in interpreting the letters is the absence of both sides of the conversation, leaving only one side of the story available to interpret, which also creates room for misunderstandings, particularly when it comes to tone. The tone of the letters is critical, and not knowing the people involved, it can be hard to know if the authors were being sincere or joking or what their intent was. In one particularly racy passage in a letter written by a nun, for example, one of the researchers who transcribed

the letter added the note “[humor?]” in an attempt to explain or add context to the passage.¹³ By structuring each chapter as a biography and delving into the background and experiences of each woman, I will seek to add back in some of the missing elements of their story, thereby allowing me to place the letters into the larger picture of their life. While this still leaves room for interpretation in tone or intent, having a better understanding of the peripheral experiences and relationships in each woman’s life adds some of the nuance required for understanding their letters.

Of the three women included in this paper, the amount of supplementary information available about them to write a biography varied widely. For Juliana Roggendorf von Starhemberg in Chapter One, a large amount of biographical information was available about her husband and sons, due to the power and influence of the Starhemberg family. They are mentioned in various histories of the period for their political roles, and the extensive archives at the Starhemberg estate preserved not only Juliana’s letters, but also large amounts of material used by researchers on other projects. A somewhat fawning biography of the Starhemberg family written in 1830 by Johann Schwerdling can also be found online.¹⁴ While his extremely generous descriptions of the accomplishments of the Starhemberg family members need to be taken with a grain of salt, his biography serves as a valuable resource for filling in the names and dates of the people surrounding Juliana. In Helena von Schallenberg’s case in Chapter Three, her brother Christof von Schallenberg was a famous poet, and so various books have been

¹³ Katharina Gaishofer, in Helena von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 57, January 27, 1619, 57 Einzelbriefe. *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme.*

¹⁴ Johann Schwerdling, *Geschichte des uralten und seit Jahrhunderten um Landesfürst und Vaterland höchst verdienten, theils fürstlich, theils gräflichen Starhemberg* (Linz: Feichtingers Witwe, 1830) https://books.google.com/books/about/Geschichte_des_Hauses_Starhemberg.html?id=d5tAAAAcAAJ.

written to study his life and works. One of them, written by Robert Hinterndorfer, includes copies of letters as well as a brief biography of Christof's life and family, which provides useful supplemental information for looking at Helena's life.¹⁵ For the third subject, however, Eva Maria Tschernembl von Schallenberg in Chapter Two, the only real record of her life can be found in the few letters printed in the database. Some of her relatives had biographies written about them, such as her uncle Georg Erasmus von Tschernembl, who played a significant role leading the Upper Austrian nobles in their fight against the Kaiser. She was also married to the son of the poet Christof von Schallenberg, but she did not receive any mention in either of their biographies. As a result, the biographical details of her life can be understood with less clarity than the two other women, and only the period of time discussed in her letters can be examined in any depth.

A final layer of information for each chapter was found by researching the various themes and issues that each woman faced along with a brief discussion of the historiography surrounding those issues within each chapter. These provided valuable context and perspective for each woman's life and helped provide some background information to help fill in the missing pieces. Particularly in the case of Eva Maria Schallenberg, whose biographical details were extremely sparse, finding comparable histories and situations was important to understanding the decisions she made.

Historiography

As a result of the large-scale peasant rebellions that occurred during the early seventeenth century in Upper Austria, numerous studies have been undertaken to

¹⁵ Robert Hinterndorfer, *Christoph von Schallenberg: Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2 (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2008).

examine the period as well as the people surrounding those events. Most notable among these is Felix Stieve's book, written in the late nineteenth century, which forms the baseline for what is known about the largest rebellion in 1626.¹⁶ It is cited by all subsequent scholars, remaining essentially unchallenged in its account of the events and Stieve argues that the rebellions were caused by a combination of economic, political, and religious factors. Unsurprisingly, in large part based on the time frame in which it was written, Stieve's book almost entirely overlooks the roles and contributions of women of the period. His references to women generally follow the trope of "women and children," and for the most part, he discusses them only as victims in need of protection, rather than as active participants in daily life. Yet for the noblewomen of this study, while they did not actively participate in the fighting, as administrators of the estates they played a large role in the taxation and business practices against which the peasants rebelled and as Protestants, they too were targeted by the Counter-Reformation efforts. Stieve's omission of their contributions was one of the original drivers for this project as it inspired the desire to write women back into the events.

Similar efforts to write women back into history have driven the growth of gender studies and the volume of works on the subject are incredibly diverse and detailed. Historians such as Olwen Hufton and Merry Wiesner-Hanks have analyzed women's roles in society during the early modern period, considering women across various social and economic backgrounds, as well by geographic location and historical period.¹⁷ Their focus is largely thematic, considering themes such as marriage, motherhood, or

¹⁶ Stieve, *Bauernafustand 1626*.

¹⁷ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*; and Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*.

widowhood, and while each uses individual examples to illustrate a theme, the primary goal is to establish baseline norms. In terms of elite women, both Hufton and Wiesner-Hanks bring to light the secondary status that women held compared to men. Limitations on the right to own or inherit property and to represent themselves in legal matters, along with limited access to education and strong societal pressures towards family obligations served as hallmarks of the early modern woman's experience. While social class was critical and noblewomen were distinguished by having more rights and opportunities than poorer women, all women were ranked below the men of their own social class. Unlike a modern understanding of women's rights which groups men and women into the two defining categories of gender, Wiesner-Hanks and Hufton identify the additional early modern divisions along marital lines. These sub-categories differentiated the rights of single women versus married or widowed women and the many nuances of these differentiations create a complex picture of gender roles in the early modern period. While Wiesner-Hanks and Hufton share many elements in terms of their conclusions, some differences exist in their analysis, centering in large part around methodology and framework. Significant to this project is that while Wiesner-Hanks' focus is largely on the early modern period, Hufton's focus is broader and examined trends across time.

Historian Ute Gerhard highlights the complication with looking at the evolution of women's rights over time, which is that changes in women's legal rights do not necessarily correspond with the more familiar landmarks in history.¹⁸ Instead, she argues that changes to the law often come after changes to the traditional practices have become normalized and therefore care must be taken in drawing cause and effect conclusions

¹⁸ Ute Gerhard, *Frauen in Der Geschichte Des Rechts: Von Der Frühen Neuzeit Bis Zur Gegenwart* (München: Beck, 1999), 21.

between behaviors and laws. In light of this, it is not always clear if the legal limitations placed upon women which Hufton and Wiesner-Hanks outlined were reactionary or preventative. Gerhard also highlights the difficulties of differentiating between written law and practiced law, as laws may not always have been enforced the way they were written. She points to the analysis of exceptions and transitional cases as a way to understand the differences.

Historian Hermann Rebel's argument follows a similar vein as Gerhard's in that he does not always draw a direct line between larger historical events and its effects on people.¹⁹ However, rather than using a legal framework, Rebel approaches his analysis from an economic perspective, examining how financial issues such as inheritance and taxation turned the household into an administrative unit, thereby creating a class of dispossessed people. While his focus is on peasants during the events of the 1626 rebellion, Rebel's analysis differentiates itself from most historical accounts of the rebellion as it also includes women. However this inclusion is more of a by-product of his methodology, which relies heavily on analyzing inventories rather than an intentional inclusion. These inventories were performed after a person's death in order to settle their estate and his class-based analysis of them groups men and women of similar socio-economic situations together. Rebel assigns the men and women of each socio-economic group the same motivations, yet it is by no means self-evident men and women operated under the same circumstances or that the same choices were available to them. While his focus on peasant families does not always carry over into discussions of the nobility, the

¹⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*.

links Rebel draws between economic factors and personal choices such as a rejection of traditional marriage provide intriguing areas for consideration in the nobility.²⁰

Beatrix Bastl's book "*Tugend, Liebe, und Ehre: Die adelige Frau in der Frühen Neuzeit*"²¹ provides a counterpoint to Rebel's analysis of peasants by conducting an extensive, in-depth analysis of the themes in the lives of Upper Austrian noblewomen of the time. Unlike Rebel's economic analysis, Bastl's is prosopographic, which seeks to identify common characteristics of a group through a collective analysis of the subjects' lives.²² As a principal researcher for the University of Vienna letters website project, she uses the same letters as the ones used in my thesis, along with a large quantity of ones not available to me, to examine various aspects of the authors' lives, from forms of address, to celebrations surrounding childbirth, and conventions in dowries and marriage contracts. Bastl's detailed analysis, for example, of last wills and testaments includes both a discussion of what kinds of issues were outlined in the wills, as well as a quantitative analysis of how often those issues were addressed and who the beneficiaries tended to be.²³ Bastl's conclusions serve as a valuable baseline against which the individual details of each woman's letters can be compared, yet her analysis is entirely thematic, relying on the aggregation of data. For a project whose source materials are the intimate and personal letters of daily life, Bastl's approach allows her to objectively quantify the norms and customs of the period. Yet it also leaves open the opportunity to

²⁰ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 270.

²¹ Beatrix Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre: die adelige Frau in der frühen Neuzeit* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

²² Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 297.

²³ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 84-147.

examine the letters from a more personal perspective, delving into the unexplored tapestries of the authors' lives. Doing so allows a particular woman's action or behavior to be understood not only in terms of how it compares to other women or men of the era, but also how it compares to other choices made by that woman at different points in her life.

Including this kind of personal, chronological analysis is familiar ground for most biographies such as the one written by historian Hans Sturmberger about the Upper Austrian governor Adam von Herbersdorf. Sturmberger's research provides valuable insight into the political negotiations between the Kaiser and the nobility, including the larger political implications, as well as more personal consequences to many of the individual noble families. He also delves into great detail to understand and explain Herbersdorf's actions, including the personal motivations behind Herbersdorf's own conversion, going all the way back into his childhood experiences and his feelings as a fifteen year-old boy watching his father's Protestant church be destroyed.²⁴ Such analysis is necessary to understand how conversions were possible during the deeply divided and contentious time of the Counter Reformation but throws into sharp relief the extent to which such efforts are missing for women of the time. For Helena von Schallenberg for example, whom I discuss in Chapter Three, her conversion is only briefly mentioned by her brother's biographer, Robert Hinterdorfer, as having been upsetting for her father.²⁵

While Hinterdorfer cannot be criticized for this exclusion as he was not writing a

²⁴ Hans Sturmberger, *Adam Graf Herberstorff; Herrschaft und Freiheit im konfessionellen Zeitalter* (München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1976), 31.

²⁵ Hieronymus Schallenberg, letter 113, 19 June 1594. In Hinterdorfer, *Christoph von Schallenberg*.

biography about Helena, it does not therefore follow that nothing could be learned from understanding her choice with as much clarity as we do Herbersdorf's, or that its only significance was on how it impacted her male relations. Instead, exploring the experience of a person such as Helena within the larger context which historians such as Bastl and Stieve have created provides an opportunity to expand the discussion of women's experiences by focusing on the individual and the exception, rather than only on the collective.

Historical Background

Upper Austria at the turn of the seventeenth century was a part of the Hapsburg Empire and ruled loosely by the Kaiser. Lacking the administrative structures that would give the Kaiser direct control over the entire empire, local power was held in the hands of the nobility. These nobles administered their local holdings for their own profit and benefit, and in turn paid their taxes to the Kaiser and served as advisors in his court. Most noble families in Upper Austria during this period used a system of estate management called *Meierhöfe*, or demesne farms, in which the family retained ownership and management of the land that they used to produce materials for commercial purposes such as textiles or brewing.²⁶ Some lands were leased out to tenants as well, and these tenants would be required to pay rent, tithes, and provide *robot* or labor services to the seigneurial authority.

In the absence of administrative guidelines or limits on taxation, each estate was free to impose whatever taxation or labor requirements on their tenants that they wished,

²⁶ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 133.

a system which resulted in a rebellion against the nobles, which was known as the Second Upper Austrian peasant's rebellion, from 1594 to 1597. These uprisings were primarily economic in focus and directed against the excessive taxation practices of Upper Austrian nobles towards their tenants.²⁷ In order to protect their right to levy taxes, the nobles united against the peasantry seeking to quell the rebellion, yet the intermittent fighting and negotiations of the conflict dragged on over several years.²⁸ An "Interims Resolution" from Kaiser Rudolph II put an end to the conflict by requiring each estate owner to follow certain guidelines in drawing up agreements with their tenants regarding taxation, a system which stayed in place until the late eighteenth century.²⁹

As a consequence of this conflict and the Interims Resolution, the nobles lost some of their authority over their subjects, ceding their right to individually determine all of their tax structures to a partially centralized system under the Kaiser's authority. The fear of encroaching authority by the Kaiser made the nobility particularly sensitive to the Counter Reformation efforts by successive Kaisers through the early seventeenth century. Ninety percent of the Upper Austrian nobility of the period was Lutheran, and committed to opposing the Kaisers' efforts to return the region to Catholicism.³⁰ Despite strong religious beliefs, the nobles based their resistance to the Counter Reformation not just on

²⁷ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 6.

²⁸ Czerny, *Der Zweite Bauernaufstand in Oberösterreich, 1595-1597* (Linz: Ebenhörschen Buchhandlung, 1890) Reprint by Forgotten Books, 2017, 328.

²⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 6; And Sturmberger, *Adam Graf Herbersdorf*, 77.

³⁰ Georg Heilingsetzer, "The Austrian Nobility, 1600-50: Between Court and Estates," in *Crown, Church and Estates: Central European Politics in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991) 246-247.

religious grounds, but also on political grounds, viewing the Kaiser's attempts to dictate religion as an infringement on their historical right to administer their estates.

The dual nature of the nobility's opposition to the Counter Reformation proved divisive within the region. On the one hand, their religious convictions placed them on the side of the peasantry who were also fighting for their right to retain their Protestant faith. On the other hand, the nobles' wish to assert their historical political and economic rights placed them in direct opposition to the peasantry, who resented the taxation burden the estates placed upon them. The social structure of the time was founded on the idea of mutual obligations existing between rulers and subjects, which included the responsibilities between nobles and their tenants, as well as the obligations between nobles and Kaiser. To the nobles, the Kaiser's infringement on their rights was viewed as a violation of the mutual agreement implicit in monarchic rule.³¹ To the peasants, the nobles' heavy taxation burden was viewed as an abdication of the nobility's duty to protect their subjects. For the noblewomen of this study, this paradigm of mutual obligations can be extended one step further. Naturally they had as much at stake as their male relations in the outcome of the dual conflicts with the peasants and the Kaiser in terms of taxation and religion. Their identities and fortunes were just as bound up with the outcomes of those events as the men's were. But from their letters, it appears that personal relationships were framed in similar ways, with expectations of mutual obligations intrinsic to the distribution of power in their relationships.

During this same period, two other events occupied the Upper Austrian nobility. First, the Hapsburg Empire continued to be engaged in its battles with the Ottoman

³¹ Peter Thaler, "Conservative Revolutionary: Georg Erasmus von Tschernembl and the Ideology of Resistance in Early Modern Austria," *History of European Ideas*, 41, no. 4 (2014): 546.

Empire, and although these would be the waning years of that multi-century conflict, the Turkish wars of the late 1590s saw many casualties among the Upper Austrians who fought in those wars. Many of the nobles' castles had been designated as refuge areas in case of Turkish invasion, and the letters of the women reflected the ongoing anxiety and fear of that threat. Second, a crisis of succession among the Kaisers brought uncertainty to the negotiations between Kaiser and nobles, as each successive Kaiser took a different approach to the process of converting the lands back to Catholicism.

Kaiser Rudolf II, whose reign was marked by his erratic behavior, had issued a proclamation in 1598 declaring his intention to return the Hapsburg lands to Catholicism.³² The Upper Austrian nobles tried unsuccessfully to negotiate for a return to the previous, more religiously tolerant arrangement, but the only concession Rudolf made was the Letter of Majesty, which granted religious toleration, but only to the Bohemian Protestants.³³ Negotiations between the Upper Austrian nobility and the Kaiser dragged on through Kaiser Rudolf's reign, into Kaiser Mathias, his successor, and further on into Kaiser Ferdinand's reign, a period which spanned approximately 20 years. The Upper Austrian nobles took an active role in negotiations with all three Kaisers, traveling to the royal courts in Prague and Vienna to argue their cause in person. Many of the letters used for this project included updates on the progress of these negotiations and vividly describe what a central issue this was in daily life at the time.

The 1618 Defenestration of Prague and subsequent Protestant takeover of Bohemia drew the Upper Austrian estates to ally themselves with the Bohemians against

³² Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 79

³³ Marvin R. O'Connell. *The Counter Reformation 1560-1610* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975) 326.

Kaiser Matthias and his chosen successor Ferdinand, forming the Bohemian Confederation.³⁴ For the nobles, their choice to align themselves with the Bohemians marked a turning point in the decades long dispute and drew Upper Austria into the larger conflict of the Thirty Years War. Drawing again upon the idea of mutual obligations between rulers and their subjects, the nobles chose to withhold their homage to Ferdinand until he agreed to uphold their traditional rights and authority over the region, which included the ability to retain their religion. Kaiser Ferdinand sought assistance from Maximilian of Bavaria in order to form the Catholic League, which under the leadership of General Tilly, defeated the Bohemian Confederation at White Mountain in November of 1620.³⁵ The defeat of the nobles in their alliance with Bohemia, which would be known as the 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion, was fundamental in shaping the political outcome of Upper Austria, both for the individual families that participated as well as for the region as a whole.

For the region, one of the largest consequences of the 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion was the resulting Bavarian occupation of Upper Austria. As repayment for Maximilian's assistance with forming the Catholic League, Kaiser Ferdinand granted Maximilian administration rights over Upper Austria. He in turn would be allowed to use the tax revenues from the region in order to recoup his expenditures for supporting Ferdinand, which were around 12,000,000*fl.*³⁶ The crushing debt repayments imposed on the people by this agreement and the subsequent brutal occupation by Bavarian troops,

³⁴ C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (Jonathan Cape, 1938) reprinted by New York Review Books, 2005, 78-82; and Thaler, *Tschernembl*, 556-557; and Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 83-85.

³⁵ Wedgwood, *Thirty Years War*, 119-126.

³⁶ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 237.

combined with Ferdinand's Counter Reformation efforts and the appalling mismanagement by Herbersdorf, Maximilian's appointed governor, would push Upper Austria further towards the brink of disaster. For the noble families that took part in the rebellion, they expressed their continued opposition by refusing to make any payments towards this debt, and in retaliation, Herbersdorf had them arrested beginning in March of 1621. Despite their eventual release from prison over the next few years, the nobles received additional punishment through the confiscation of their property, which they fought with varying degrees of success.

Tensions between the nobles and the Kaiser continued to escalate over the following years, with Herbersdorf torn between his allegiances to the Kaiser and Maximilian, as well as his ambitions in society within Upper Austria. The complex web of Upper Austrian nobility relationships certainly added another layer of nuance to the politics of the time and made his task of enforcing unpopular resolutions by the Kaiser much more difficult. These included conflicting instructions from the Kaiser and Maximilian on the speed at which the Counter Reformation should proceed. Despite his sporadic attempts at making social connections, Herbersdorf found the estates resolute in their refusal to convert or pay the back taxes owed to Maximilian.³⁷ An investigative commission sent by the Kaiser to investigate the events of 1620, ominously named the *Strafkommission*, or Punishment Commission, finally succeeded in bringing the nobles in line. On May 7, 1625, after years of confiscations and imprisonments, they capitulated and pledged their loyalty to Kaiser Ferdinand, promising to pay the back taxes, forfeit some of their political powers, and obey him in the future. In a particularly embarrassing

³⁷ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 201-204.

scene for the nobles, they were forced to kneel in front of the Kaiser while making this pledge rather than just bowing.³⁸ The Kaiser had reasserted his dominance over the rebellious nobles and even in the face of the bloody and widespread peasant rebellions which would follow in coming years, the nobles would no longer offer any form of unified resistance to his policies. Individual negotiations regarding the confiscation of property and exile for any nobles remaining Protestant would continue over the next few years, but politically and financially, the nobles' opposition to the Kaiser had ended. The consequences of this 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters, as the fallout from the various families' participation in these events shaped their political and economic futures.

While 1625 marked the virtual end of the nobles' resistance, for the peasants, the worst was yet to come. Herbersdorf's brutal repression of local protests of Catholic priests by Protestant peasants in 1625 escalated the tensions between Herbersdorf and the peasants. The nobles, still preoccupied with their own negotiations for salvaging their money and position, sided with the Kaiser rather than with their subjects. The divisions formed between peasant and noble, which had been brewing for decades and which the Peasant Rebellion of 1594-1597 had exacerbated, meant that while the peasants and nobles wanted the same things in terms of religious toleration, their political and economic differences made an alliance impossible. The final breaking point for the peasants was the October 1625 issuance of the *Reformationspatent*, a decree by which the Kaiser officially banned Protestantism and set a convert-or-exile date of Easter 1626.³⁹

³⁸ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 191-192.

³⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 248-249.

That date would instead be met with the start of the 1626 *Bauernkrieg* or Peasant Rebellion in which an estimated 40,000 peasants rose up against the Counter-Reformation, the brutal Bavarian occupation, and the oppressive taxation burden required to pay for the Bavarian soldiers. It ended only six short months later when Herbersdorf's stepson, General Pappenheim, crushed the rebel forces and effectively ended all resistance. The nobles provided no assistance to the rebels during this period, despite the fact that they shared an interest in protecting their right to maintaining the Protestant faith. They waffled a bit on this, and an emissary to the Kaiser reported it was easy to see that the nobles were still looking for a way to use the rebellion to their advantage.⁴⁰ They did not find one, and so ultimately the nobles stood by and let the tragic events unfold.

As the rebellion drew to a close, and the subsequent investigations by the Kaiser's commissioners concluded, the final deadlines for conversion or exile was extended through April 1628, and the nobles actively petitioned for additional extensions or exemptions to this deadline.⁴¹ By the end of the decade and beginning of the next, fewer holdouts to Protestantism remained in Upper Austria, with virtually all of them converting or moving. Many moved to Regensburg, and that region became known for its community of Upper Austrian Protestant exiles.⁴² Those that remained, for the most part converted, although a few held out and remained Protestant, primarily peasant women.⁴³ Others who converted may have done so in name only. Several schemes were uncovered

⁴⁰ Stieve, *Bauernafustand 1626*, vol. 2, 113 (132,3).

⁴¹ *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezeugungssysteme.*

⁴² Julius Strnadt, *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberösterreich: Nach 275 Jahren Seinen Lieben Landsleuten Erzählt* (Wels, 1902; Reprinted by Forgotten Books, FB&C, London, 2015), 103.

⁴³ Strnadt, *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberösterreich*, 106.

of people trying to bribe the priest to obtain a certificate of confession (as proof of their Catholicism) or hiring others to attend confession in their name.⁴⁴ These reports were all of peasants and no nobles were recorded having participated in similar schemes. Several smaller rebellions took place in 1632, 1636, and 1648, but again, these only included peasants and the nobility sided with the Kaiser in quashing them. The status quo established during this period would last another 150 years before Kaiser Josef II's reforms in the late eighteenth century.

Overview

For the three women I study in this paper, these events shaped the world in which they lived. Taxation practices influenced how they managed the estates, shortages and inflation resulting from the wars and Bavarian occupation affected what they could buy and sell from their estates, loved ones travelled frequently to negotiate on behalf of the family at the Kaiser's court, or even to fight in the wars, leaving them behind to manage the estates on their own. Despite Judith Starhemberg's disparaging remarks in the opening story, given all of these events, it was impossible for *Frau* Altheim to have made her choice to convert to Catholicism casually in the face of its many consequences. While we do not have any more information about *Frau* Altheim in order to explore her choice, we do have the letters of three women: Juliana Roggendorf von Starhemberg, Eva Maria Tschernembl von Schallenberg, and Helena von Schallenberg. I will consider each woman's life over the course of the next three chapters, building an outline of their lives

⁴⁴ Strnadt, *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberösterreich*, 105-106; and Albin Czerny, *Bilder aus der Zeit der Bauernunruhen in Oberösterreich, 1626, 1632, 1648* (Linz: Ebenhöchschten Buchhandlung, 1876; Reprint by Bibliobazar, LLC, 2018), 178.

in order to understand the roles they played, and then considering what their individual choices and opportunities can tell us about the constraints upon their life and how the women navigated through them.

In chapter one, I will discuss the life of Juliana Roggendorf von Starhemberg, who as a member of a wealthy and powerful family within the Upper Austrian nobility, enjoyed a privileged lifestyle both as a wife and widow. She successfully managed a large estate and then taught her sons the skills to take over when her choice to remain Protestant forced her into exile. Due to her strong connections in the community, close knit family networks, and a strong understanding of business, Juliana embodies the narrative of the powerful elite woman who actively shaped the outcome of her life as well as that of the people who surrounded her.

Chapter two will evaluate Eva Maria Tschernembl von Schallenberg's experience. Lacking the resources or connections available to Juliana, Eva Maria's life was lonelier, estranged from her husband and fighting with her in-laws, and left alone with a mentally ill brother-in-law to manage the family estate, she chose to remain Protestant despite her husband's conversion. Eva Maria's story demonstrates the limits of agency among noble elite women and the extent to which their power was dependent upon others to allow them to exercise it.

Finally, chapter three will consider Helena von Schallenberg, an aunt by marriage to Eva Maria. Helena was a lady in waiting at court for almost fifteen years before she converted to Catholicism against her father's wishes and entered a convent, where she rose to the position of Abbess. Within the confines of the convent, Helena maintained a connection to her nephews, pushing them to marry as well as convert, and actively

maneuvered on behalf of her family and her convent to protect them from harm or scandal. Helena leveraged the power of the Church and of conventions such as the use of credit to protect her interests and to push back against the limits placed upon her.

Taken together, the three women demonstrate the ways in which Upper Austrian noblewomen were able to affect the trajectories of their own lives within the confines of the legal and social restrictions placed upon them. For each one of them, their religious choice was more than simply an expression of faith, but also a fundamental expression of their individual personalities and demonstrated the ways in which they either accepted or rejected the constraints upon them. Their experiences paint a picture of women who defined themselves first as nobles, and then as individuals within a family. Their family connections and networks were essential in their ability to maneuver, and in the absence of an effective support system, they sought creative and resourceful ways to defend their interests.

Chapter I.

Estate Management and Kinship Networks:

Juliana Roggendorf von Starhemberg

In her last will and testament, Juliana Roggendorf von Starhemberg, knowing that she would die in exile from Upper Austria, and recognizing that “it is everywhere the Lord’s earth,” asked that not too much money be spent on her burial, so if she could not be buried next to her husband, at least to be buried in a church near a window, in order for her crypt to be in the light.⁴⁵ In death, just as in life, Juliana put her family first, but ever pragmatic, she had a fall back plan to ensure that things ran as she wished them to. Her life had been one of great privilege, being both born into and then married into the high nobility of Upper Austria, yet it had taken place during a period of intense upheaval for the region, which left her separated from her husband for much of their married life and then exiled from her homeland as a result of her religious convictions.

A series of letters written by Juliana to her husband and sons, her last will and testament, along with additional letters received by Juliana from her extended family provide a multi-dimensional view into her life and experiences. While the Starhemberg biographer Johann Schwerdling discusses Juliana only in terms of her roles as wife, widow, and mother, these letters flesh out that picture, demonstrating not only the ways

⁴⁵ Juliana von Starhemberg Testament, March 12, 1632 in *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh)*, *Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme* (Vienna: University of Vienna Institute for History) <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Frauenbriefe/testament1.htm>.

in which she fulfilled these roles, but also the scope of additional roles she took on.⁴⁶ While initially unsure of her ability to manage the estate in her husband's absence, Juliana became remarkably adept at it, and served as an advisor to her sons once they came of age. More than any of the other women included in this study, Juliana cultivated and maintained a network of connections which allowed her to not only manage her own estate, but also to assist her extended family. This kinship network served as a fundamental element in allowing Juliana to reach beyond the social constraints of her legal positions as wife, widow, or mother, and gave her rights and influence beyond those traditionally associated with her position. In this chapter, I will begin with a brief biographical overview of Juliana's life and then explore in more detail her role in estate management along with the kinship networks she developed.

Biographical Overview

Born a Baroness von Roggendorf in 1574, little is known about Juliana's early life before her marriage to Reichard von Starhemberg at the age of 18. He was 22, and for both husband and wife, this was a slightly early marriage by the standards of the time, where the average age for first marriages was the mid-twenties.⁴⁷ According to Beatrix Bastl in her analysis of marriage patterns among nobility of that time and region, the more difficult the financial circumstances were, the higher the average age of marriage.⁴⁸ Juliana and Reichard's young ages at the time of their wedding suggests that both

⁴⁶ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*.

⁴⁷ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 77; Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 13; and Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 155.

⁴⁸ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 155.

families must have been very well off and that Juliana had a large dowry to bring with her. She must have received a good education as her letters are written in fairly standard German. Despite using some dialect when she wrote and inconsistent punctuation, overall her letters are fairly legible. Comparing her writing, for example, to those of her sister-in-law, Anna Maria Khevenhüller, Juliana's German is much more conventional and in line with modern day spelling rules. Juliana used the conventional spellings of "Wolgeborner" and "freundlicher" whereas Anna Maria used a more spoken dialect spelling of "Wolgeporne" and "fraindliche."⁴⁹ Capitalization and punctuation rules were only gradually being introduced by printers in an effort to standardize and streamline printing processes, so Juliana's slightly more conventional spelling may not necessarily mean she had a long formal education, but it does point to a larger exposure to printed books.⁵⁰ In addition, Juliana's letters demonstrate a knowledge of world and political events, as well as an increasing comfort and familiarity with handling business transactions for the estate, including managing the household finances as well as complex taxation issues. This indicates that she gained her knowledge of business and tax issues on the job rather than as part of her education during her youth and I will explore this issue a little further later on in this chapter.

It is unknown if Juliana spent any time at the royal court or in the home of another noble family before her marriage, but her family was well connected within the Austrian nobility. The Roggendorf family was a notable Lutheran family from Lower Austria, near

⁴⁹ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 11, November 12, 1613; and Anna Maria Jörgers, Einzelbrief 1, July 12, 1619. *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme.*

⁵⁰ Anja Voeste, "Proficiency and Efficiency: Why German Spelling Changed in Early Modern times." *Written Language and Literacy: The Historical Sociolinguistics of Spelling* 18, no. 2 (2015): 257.

Melk and Castle Schallaburg, known for its Lutheran school, and Schönbühel Castle, which was owned by cousins of Reichard Starhemberg.⁵¹ As a result, the Roggendorf and Starhemberg families were likely well known to each other, and Reichard and Juliana were not the only couple from these two families to marry.⁵² Juliana and Reichard were married on the 24th of March 1592 and their marriage appears to have been a successful one despite Reichard's extensive travels during the course of it. While none of their letters explicitly describe their feelings about their marriage, they do show an affectionate tone, with Reichard bringing Juliana and the children gifts back from his trips, and Juliana expressing her worries about Reichard's health, as well as reporting updates about their children, and wishing repeatedly for his return.⁵³ Compared with the tone of the letters between the spouses discussed in Chapter 2, Juliana and Reichard's marriage could even be considered a happy one.⁵⁴

Juliana and Reichard had six children, four of which survived into adulthood. The eldest, a son by the name of Heinrich Wilhelm, was born in 1593. Several children followed in quick succession, with Gundaker born in 1594, Erasmus in 1595, Reichard (Jr.) who died in infancy in 1596, Gotthard, who also died in infancy in 1597, and finally Kaspar in 1598.⁵⁵ Following Kaspar's birth, Reichard wrote his will in November 1598

⁵¹ Burgen-Austria, <http://www.burgen-austria.com/archive.php?id=250>.

⁵² Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 217.

⁵³ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2,3,4,5, June-July, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezeugungssysteme*.

⁵⁴ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 357.

⁵⁵ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 246-264.

distributing his estate among his surviving four sons.⁵⁶ This relatively quick arrival of children in a six year period and nothing after that is somewhat unusual compared to other noble families of the time. Historians have identified the use of wet-nurses as having been common at the time among elite women, which tended to result in more children, leaving elite women pregnant for much of their married lives.⁵⁷ Juliana's sister-in-law Elisabeth, for example, continued to have children through the age of 46, having had thirteen children, six of which died young.⁵⁸ Unfortunately there is no discussion of why this may not have been the case for Juliana as the letters are silent on this topic.

Most of Juliana's letters during her children's younger years are to her husband about business matters, so until her sons left for their *Kavalierstour*, or Grand Tour, around the ages of fourteen or fifteen, there is no information about her experience as a parent. Once they left for the *Kavalierstour*, however, Juliana's letters reflect her involvement and concern for the boys. She stayed in close contact with the children and their tutor, Eisenman, throughout their travels in France and Italy, keeping track of their health and studies and ensuring that the tour progressed smoothly.⁵⁹ The tone of these letters is relatable in its maternal concern for her children. In one letter, Juliana scolded the boys for writing such poor letters to her and copying down only that which their tutor had written out for them, "like 12 year old children... which I disliked greatly since we

⁵⁶ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 214.

⁵⁷ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 181.

⁵⁸ Elisabeth Starhemberg, 25 Briefe, 1620-1629. *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh)*, *Beziehungen und Bezeugungssystem*.

⁵⁹ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbriefe 6,7,8, 1609-1610, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

no longer consider you to be children.”⁶⁰ In other letters, however, she praised them for their progress in their studies and let them know she would be sending more money via Eisenman, but warned them to spend it responsibly.⁶¹ She worried about their health, hoped that they were going to church, and tried to arrange for them to meet the right people while on their trip.⁶² From a personal perspective, these letters provide a glimpse into Juliana as a mother and make her very relatable, even four centuries later. From a historical perspective, they demonstrate some of the ways in which elite women could take an active and involved role in the care and raising of their children, even from a distance.

The Starhemberg sons were still on their *Kavalierstours* when in February of 1613, while at court in Vienna to welcome the new Kaiser Matthias, Reichard suffered a stroke and passed away at the age of 43.⁶³ Juliana traveled to Vienna and had his body shipped back to Upper Austria where he was buried in the Starhemberg crypt in the church at Hellmonsödt.⁶⁴ Legal authority over the estate passed not to Juliana, but rather to the *Gerhabs*, or trustees despite the fact that the elder Starhemberg sons at the time of their father’s passing were around 20 years old. Rather than immediately inheriting their shares of the estate, they continued instead on their *Kavalierstour* while their mother and trustees oversaw the management of their estates.⁶⁵ Not having a copy of Reichard’s will

⁶⁰ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 7, August 26, 1609, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁶¹ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 6, February 26, 1609, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁶² Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 8, 11, 1610-1613, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁶³ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 214.

⁶⁴ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 214-215.

⁶⁵ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 12, August 26, 1613, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

available, it is unclear who the trustees may have been. Erasmus was the most logical choice to serve as at least one of them, as he was the only other surviving brother of Reichard's at that time.

Despite Juliana not having been given legal authority over the Starhemberg estates, she maintained functional control over them until Heinrich Wilhelm and Gundaker, her two eldest sons, returned around 1616. They then assumed control over the Wildberg estate while she Juliana continued to oversee Riedegg, although they relied heavily on her for advice and support.⁶⁶ The same care and attention to detail which Juliana had provided to them while they were on their *Kavalierstour*, she now turned to supporting them in their new roles running an estate. Juliana continued to manage the Riedegg estate until political pressures forced her to go into exile to Niederwallsee in Lower Austria in 1628 in order to maintain her faith as a Protestant. She would only live four years in exile before passing away after an extended illness at the age of 59 and was buried, according to her wishes, next to Reichard in in the Starhemberg crypt in the church at Hellmonsödt back in Upper Austria.⁶⁷

Estate Management

Like many of the other women studied in this project, Juliana demonstrated a tremendous ability and aptitude for estate management that she acquired over the course of her lifetime. Historical consensus holds that elite women served as estate managers in their husband's absence, or after his death, but only so long as she remained a widow. In

⁶⁶ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbriefe 12, 13, 1613-1616, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁶⁷ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 216.

the event that a widow remarried, her roles and responsibilities towards her first husband's estate reverted entirely to his side of the family.⁶⁸ For husbands and wives to have collaborated or shared roles was the norm for households at the time, where power and responsibilities were invested less within a particular individual than they were within a household.⁶⁹ It goes almost without saying that the hierarchy of power within that household started with the husband, but the partnership that was formed by the marriage invested the wife with both the rights and responsibilities to represent that household in business.⁷⁰ There is no clear definition of what exactly the role of estate manager entailed, so for purposes of this discussion, it is based upon the tasks described in the letters, which included overseeing the harvesting and sale of agricultural products, accounting for all tax collections and expenditures, as well as supervising and holding accountable the various staff employed to actually perform the work. Historically, the task of estate management by wives is framed as a default duty, much like marriage or motherhood- an expected milestone for an elite woman, with the difference being that it was only expected of her if her husband was not there to do it himself.

Yet it is not self-evident that husbands ever had estate management as one of their primary duties. Their education on the *Kavalierstour* focused on preparing them for political life at court or for military careers, not for running or managing a business. Furthermore, the fundamental paradigm of political life during this period was that of mutual obligations between ruler and subject, and in the strongly hierarchical society of

⁶⁸ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 233-235; and Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen," 37, 45-47.

⁶⁹ Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen," 34.

⁷⁰ Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen," 37.

the time, the primary responsibility of the noble was to serve his king, not his subjects. To do so, the nobles would have to be on hand at the royal court, and not at home on their rural estates. The experiences of the families in this study show this to have been the case, with the men focusing their time and efforts on political matters at the royal courts, petitioning and negotiating for their causes, leaving the running of the estates to others.

Such trips were not necessarily voluntary, but could be dictated by the royal courts. In April of 1610, for example, Archduke Matthias wrote to request the presence of the Upper Austrian Estates at court in order to consult with them, and requested that Reichard be among the delegates.⁷¹ Juliana strongly disapproved of this trip and worried that this was the most dangerous trip he had ever been on, with no friends at court and no companions who shared the same faith as him.⁷² His brother Erasmus and their cousin Georg Erasmus von Tschernembl were not going on the trip with him and attempted to console her instead. She wryly remarked that they were only proving to her how dangerous the trip really was, for “the more dangerous the situation, the more consolations are offered.”⁷³ That Archduke Mathias requested Reichard’s presence in particular highlights the extent to which noblemen were required to serve at the pleasure of the royal court, having little choice themselves in whether or not they wanted to stay at home and manage the estate. In fact, as the letters demonstrate, it was women who prepared themselves for this job. For some women, their responsibilities to manage the

⁷¹ Schwerdler, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 212.

⁷² Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 8, June 30, 1610, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁷³ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 8, June 30, 1610, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

estate continued even when their husbands or male guardians were home, thereby providing continuity in business operations.

The ongoing nature of women's roles as estate managers can be seen in the case of Rosina Tschernembl and Eva Maria Schallenberg, who I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Two. Their letters described Rosina's efforts to procure the use of a ships-mill from her brother, Helmhart Jörger's estate. Helmhart was on house arrest at this time due to his participation in the 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion, and as a result, he would have been home and available to attend to his business affairs. Yet Rosina and her daughter Eva Maria made the arrangements for the mill with his wife.⁷⁴ A few years later, Eva Maria corresponded again with Helmhart's wife to arrange use of the mill rather than with him.⁷⁵ While all of the letters from women to their absent husbands demonstrate the extent of their involvement in estate management while their husbands were gone, Rosina and Eva Maria reaching out to Anna Maria even while Helmhart was home indicates that their management responsibilities were a much more full-time job.

Considering then that marriage to an estate owner would come with the expectation of managing it, it is likely Juliana and her family would have taken this into consideration when the marriage was arranged, even though Reichard had not yet inherited his share of the Starhemberg estate. These estates had been managed by his mother, Magdalena Starhemberg until her remarriage in 1577, and then overseen by

⁷⁴ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 24, October 14, 1627, 24 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*.

⁷⁵ Eva Maria von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, October 1627, 28 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*.

trustees until Reichard inherited his portion, known as the Wildberg portion, in 1593.⁷⁶ This included the Wildberg, Riedegg, Lobenstein estates, all located north of the Danube, as well as some properties in Linz and Lower Austria.⁷⁷ Reichard's younger brother Erasmus inherited the Schaumburg portion which included the Schaumburg and Eferding estates south of the Danube in addition to several other smaller properties.⁷⁸ In total, the Starhemberg estates covered a fairly large portion of land north and south of the Danube near Linz, and included several large castles as well as agricultural production. Like most estates in Upper Austria, the Starhemberg estates relied on the demesne method of farming, in which the family retained ownership and management of the land which they then used to produce materials for commercial purposes such as wheat, barley, oats, beer, and wine.⁷⁹ The Starhemberg estates relied heavily on their rents, tithes, and *robot* (labor services) taxes for income, more so than on the sale of the agricultural products which they produced. By the seventeenth century, the *robot* was often paid out rather than being served in actual labor, and the estate would hire all the labor instead. This became an extremely profitable enterprise for them, as the *robot* labor they collected far exceeded the labor required to actually run the estates. Hermann Rebel's analysis of the Starhemberg estate of Wildberg, for example, provides insight into the scale of these taxation changes. While rent income from tenants went down from 960*fl* to a low of 687*fl* during the period of 1581-1634, *robot* payments increased from 632*fl* to 2,343*fl* during

⁷⁶ Magdalena Starhemberg, 5 Briefe, March, 1576-July, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme.*; And Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 7, August 26, 1609, *Briefe adeliger Frauen.*

⁷⁷ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 213.

⁷⁸ Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 213.

⁷⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 133.

the same period.⁸⁰ Total wages needed to run the Wildberg estate in 1635 were only 636*fl*, allowing the remainder of those revenues to be used to fund 82% of the total Starhemberg labor, craft, and professional needs across all their holdings.⁸¹

Although the Wildberg estate itself was part of the holdings for which Juliana would become responsible, she never lived there. Early in her marriage, she and Reichard lived at Reichard's brother Erasmus' estate in Eferding, south of the Danube. When in 1598, Erasmus married Elisabeth Ungnad von Weissenwolf and their first daughter, Elisabeth Polixena was born, Juliana and Reichard chose to move to Riedegg, north of the Danube.⁸² Maybe while Erasmus was still a bachelor it was easier to consolidate households, but with each brother starting a new family, they chose to set up separate households. In what would become a familiar pattern, Reichard was not in Upper Austria for this process, but rather in attendance at Kaiser Rudolf II's court in Prague along with other Protestant nobles, negotiating for continued toleration of their Protestant faith.⁸³ This left Juliana to oversee the project herself, and between February and June 1599, she moved the household to Riedegg and began undertaking extensive renovations of the old castle which would continue for ten years.⁸⁴

At Riedegg, Juliana began her education in estate management under the guidance of the longtime caretaker for the Wildberg and Riedegg portions of the estate, Siegmund Vierher. He had been the estate manager since at least the 1570's and one of the trustees

⁸⁰ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 134.

⁸¹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 133-135.

⁸² Schwerdling, *Geschichte Starhemberg*, 224-225, 266.

⁸³ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, July 6, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁸⁴ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, June 24, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

for Magdalena Starhemberg, Reichard's mother, after her husband's death.⁸⁵ Letters between Magdalena and Vierher (as Juliana referred to him) demonstrate the complicated relationship that this entailed. As a nobleman and one of her trustees, Vierher had legal authority over Magdalena and she addressed him respectfully and deferentially with the title "Ädler Vierher" or Noble Vierher.⁸⁶ Yet as the estate manager and wife/widow of the owner, Magdalena expected him to defer to her on business matters.

A disagreement between the two on the distribution of revenues from a wine tax highlights both the roles and complexities of this relationship. In one letter Magdalena wrote to Vierher, "I remind you that, according to your word, I expected that you would distribute the tax from Schwanz and Gallneukirchen to my city, and not to my children's or your own."⁸⁷ In her next letter, it was clear that Vierher had accused her of trying to negotiate to her own advantage at her children's expense, and she defended herself from this accusation and agreed to consider a renegotiation.⁸⁸ The conflict here between trustee and widow provides an insight into one of the main justifications for the trustee system: to protect the family's interests from any one person's actions. Olwen Hufton contends that wealthy wives and widows who successfully managed estates were often considered a threat by her husband's family, as they had the power to divert money from the family into her own pockets.⁸⁹ Magdalena's conflict with Vierher demonstrates one example of

⁸⁵ Magdalena Starhemberg, 5 Briefe, March, 1576-July, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁸⁶ Magdalena Starhemberg, 5 Briefe, March, 1576-July, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁸⁷ Magdalena Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 4, June 28, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁸⁸ Magdalena Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, July 2, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁸⁹ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 235.

how such fears played out and how the trustees may have seen their role as a check and balance to the other's power.

Historians generally concur that trusteeship was common among noble families for ensuring the continuity and preservation of the family interests, but how these trusteeships are interpreted vary widely. According to Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, widows may have felt constrained by the supervision of the trustees, and considered them a limiting factor on their actual legal authority.⁹⁰ Yet historian Dagmar Friest interpreted this slightly differently, arguing that although practices varied widely by region, widows were able to exercise much of their legal authority and therefore in practical terms, they were generally not limited in their actions by the presence of trustees.⁹¹ Based on the letters in this study, the trusteeship was often placed in the hands of several men, although it is unclear if the group divided up responsibilities or if they made decisions as a committee.⁹² The fact that the elder Starhemberg sons, although the same age their father had been when he married, were not automatically given control over their estates but rather placed under trustee control demonstrates that trusteeships were not just about gender. Furthermore, they imply that the transfer of an inheritance depended in some part on the individual and their willingness to act on behalf of the family. Therefore the presence of trustees did not imply a lack of skill or proficiency on the part of the recipient. Instead, it was a means of ensuring that an individual did not act

⁹⁰ Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner, *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Pearson Education, 1999), 15.

⁹¹ Dagmar Friest, "Religious Difference and the experience of widowhood in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Germany" in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Pearson Education, 1999), 169-170.

⁹² Magdalena Starhemberg, 5 Briefe, March, 1576-July, 1576, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 7, August 26, 1609, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

in a way contrary to the family's interests. As Magdalena's letters demonstrate, that relationship could be contentious.

For Juliana, although more than ten years had passed since Magdalena had stepped down from her role, the idea of assuming a role similar to Magdalena's must have been a daunting one, considering she lacked the confidence and experience that Magdalena clearly had. This lack of confidence can be felt when early in her role as manager, Juliana wrote to Reichard that according to one of their foremen, the oat harvest in 1599 was a bad one and so she recommended they hold off on selling until prices rose as a result of the shortage.⁹³ She was extremely careful about how she approached this, tiptoeing around this statement in her letter to Reichard, delicately suggesting that "although you my dearest treasure wish to hurry and sell the oats, I would not recommend it, although your wish, my dearest sir, shall be done."⁹⁴ Whether her uncertainty was a reflection of her concern about this particular decision or an indication that she was still learning how to navigate her role is unclear. Reichard must have taken her recommendation though, as in a later letter, she wrote again that because of the bad harvest and rising oat prices, they have not yet sold their harvest.⁹⁵

Juliana's letters to Reichard during this time also included careful reports about the details on the management of the estate, including updates on hay cutting schedules, grape and oat harvests, disputes over hunting, as well as tax collection updates, along with news of their family and neighbors.⁹⁶ From her letters, it is clear that Juliana was not

⁹³ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, June 24, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁹⁴ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, June 24, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁹⁵ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 4, July 4, 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁹⁶ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, 4, 5, June July 1599, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

directly responsible for handling all these issues, as there were various foremen, caretakers, overseers, and tax collectors employed to do the actual work. Juliana's main role seemed to be in oversight of all the employees. In this role as overseer Juliana was vigilant, either providing corroborating accounts or bringing particular issues to Reichard's attention.

Over time, Juliana developed more confidence in her management of the estate and in her letter to Reichard in 1610, she described how bad weather had made the grain, wheat, and oat harvests questionable, and a looming war meant that any tenants who owed more than 100*fl* had been drafted into the military, making tax collections difficult. They might as well give the grain away for nine schillings, Juliana told Reichard with no hint of her previous deference or timidity.⁹⁷ Her tone had shifted from simply overseeing and reporting on the events to directing them and making decisions. Her skill in managing the estates was also in evidence as she coached Heinrich Wilhelm through a tithing dispute among his tenants.⁹⁸ She wrote a letter which carefully explained the division of assets, and reassured Heinrich Wilhelm that the issue was complicated, but that his employee Burgmilner would soon learn how to manage these things.⁹⁹ It did not sound like there was any expectation of Heinrich Wilhelm needing to understand it or master it, and with Juliana explicitly stating that he should give her letter to the tenants in order to resolve the issue, clearly her word carried weight on the estate among staff and tenants.

⁹⁷ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 8, June 30, 1610, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁹⁸ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 13, July 7, 1616, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

⁹⁹ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 13, July 7, 1616, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Juliana's skills could also be seen in her handling of events during a time of crisis. In 1620, anticipating that General Tilly's troops would pass through the Wildberg and Riedegg estates, she instructed her son Gundaker on how to receive them in order to minimize damage.¹⁰⁰ She had received reports that 1,000 troops on horseback were trying to take the town of Eferding by force and she was concerned for his safety at the estate in Wildberg, sending him a vicious guard dog who particularly attacked soldiers, along with a letter of *salvanguardia*, or letter of safe conduct, for protection. The *salvanguardia* could be purchased from the occupying army and would declare the listed properties as safe from plundering, although its efficacy in doing so was limited by how well paid and disciplined the soldiers were.¹⁰¹ As a result, Juliana also outlined in detail for Gundaker how to manage the passing troops. He should have oats on hand to use as payment, and direct his two towns to bake bread and brew beer for the passing troops and to set up provisioning stations so that there would be no need for plundering. This would also help ensure that the burden of caring for the troops would be shared equally by farmers and townspeople.¹⁰² It is significant that despite her son being of age and having already inherited the Wildberg estate, as well as having received an education designed to prepare him for a military career, it was Juliana that was telling him what to do in a military situation. She had written to his caretaker the day before to make the arrangements about the oats, she purchased and copied the *salvanguardia*, and she was sending the guard dog to protect him rather than keeping it for herself despite her being in as much danger as he

¹⁰⁰ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 14, August 5, 1620, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁰¹ Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-1648* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 181.

¹⁰² Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 14, August 5, 1620, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

was. This dynamic cannot be adequately explained with a strictly legal interpretation of women's roles or with the trope of helpless women and children being passive victims of violent times. Instead Juliana demonstrated active participation in protecting the family and the estate from destruction. The lack of explanation or apology with which these instructions were issued indicates that it was not an unusual occurrence and the only hint in Juliana's letter that there was anything out of the ordinary was her signing it "in haste" rather than with her usual more formal signature and title.¹⁰³

Juliana's evolution in skills as manager indicates that she learned as she went, rather than being formally prepared for this through an education. Historian Heide Wunder cites a passage from a German-speaking nobleman written in 1656 that encouraged noble families to prepare their daughters by educating them for the roles they would take on as the wives of estate owners.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to know whether his encouragement of families to do so indicates that it was lacking and therefore needed, or if he was encouraging an existing trend to continue. In Juliana's case, it was almost certainly lacking and she learned through experience. An intriguing comment in a letter to Juliana indicates that may have been the case for non-noble women as well. One of Juliana's daughters-in-law, Anna Sabina, who married Gundaker in 1623, wrote to Juliana asking for her help in getting Anna Sabinl (a servant of Juliana's recently deceased sister-in-law Elisabeth who is referred to by the nickname "Anna Sabinl" rather than the more formal "Anna Sabina") to come help her out at home. She had heard that Anna Sabinl was looking for a place where she could learn some business, and therefore

¹⁰³ Juliana Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 14, August 5, 1620, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁰⁴ Veit Ludwig von Sechendorff as quoted in Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln von Frauen", 49.

perhaps could be useful to her in business matters.¹⁰⁵ Anna Sabina assured Juliana that there would be no heavy labor required in this job, she just needed someone she could trust.¹⁰⁶

This request for what we might describe as an administrative assistant in modern times, raises the intriguing possibility of how a woman who needed help running the estate could have taken on an assistant to help her. It is logical to assume that if women were charged with running estates, they might have been more comfortable having a female assistant rather than a male one, yet there was no discussion in the literature about what kinds of jobs these might have been or what other business opportunities were open to women. Historian Julius Strnadt, in his discussion of people who refused to convert to Catholicism, mentioned that the last few remaining Catholics in the town of Peuerbach were the tax collector and *her* two daughters.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, due to the way Strnadt phrased the sentence, the woman in question could have been either the tax collector herself, or married to the tax collector. Furthermore, in the case of Anna Sabina, not having a clear definition of what Anna Sabina was including under the header of ‘business matters’, it is tempting to want to define it in modern terms. While uncertainty exists in both cases, neither the idea of a business apprentice nor the idea of a female tax collector can be written off as entirely unlikely because of Maria Fink.

Maria Fink, the Starhemberg Castle caretaker, provides an example of a woman working in estate administration as a job rather than just as a part of her marital

¹⁰⁵ Anna Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, September, 1630, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁰⁶ Anna Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, September, 1630, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁰⁷ Strnadt, *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberösterreich*, 106, emphasis added.

obligations. The Fink family was not part of the tightly connected net of Upper Austrian nobility, so nothing is known about where she came from, her social class, or marital status. Somewhat sadly, the primary reason she would be remembered in history was not for her work, but for her vilification for refusing to capitulate to the rebels. Julius Strnadt, in his account of the 1626 Peasant Rebellion, quoted descriptions of her as “the hated caretaker Finkin” because of her refusal to assist the rebels as they plundered the castle looking for munitions and supplies.¹⁰⁸ She even placed one of the rebel leaders under arrest until Governor Herbersdorf ordered him released, then defied Herbersdorf as well, waiting for final confirmation from the Bishop of Passau before releasing her prisoner.¹⁰⁹ Fink’s resolve in resisting the rebels, her authority to be able to order an arrest and command the guards, as well as her questioning of Herbersdorf’s authority, despite his being both the governor of the region and a Count, was a remarkable example of a woman exercising broad power and authority over people and resources. Furthermore, her deference to the Bishop of Passau’s authority implies that she was Catholic. Religious choices will be explored in more detail in Chapters Two and Three, but in Maria Fink’s case, it may have contributed to her epitaph of “hated” due to her pro-Catholic stance in a strongly Protestant region.

Looking at the women beyond Juliana’s family circle, more examples of women can be found who established themselves as authorities on business matters. One of Elisabeth Starhemberg’s letters described a widow, Frau von Haim, as “an experienced

¹⁰⁸ Strnadt, *Der Bauernkrieg in Oberösterreich*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 254.

business woman who looks out for her own advantage.”¹¹⁰ Indeed, Frau von Haim was able to negotiate the purchase of Riedegg in 1629 for 10,000*fl* less than the Herr von Megau was offering, a pretty remarkable feat in any real estate market, although it is unclear exactly how she managed that.¹¹¹ Elisabeth speculated that it involved the possible marriage of Frau von Haim or one of her daughters to Kaspar Starhemberg as a negotiating point, but as neither of them ended up marrying him, this seems unlikely in hindsight.¹¹² Another account of Frau von Haim describes her as having been “particularly disliked” by the rebels in the 1626 rebellion and that she lost a great deal of her property to them through plundering.¹¹³ Elisabeth did not sound too fond of her either, although that may have stemmed from a personal resentment since Frau von Haim was the one taking over Juliana’s old home after she was forced into exile. And like Maria Fink, as a Catholic in a Protestant region, she may have been disliked for her religious convictions more so than her business acumen. Both women demonstrated a certain amount of independence in their actions, and disliking them may have been society’s way of pushing back on women who had stepped beyond their traditional bounds.

Kinship Networks

One factor which may have enabled Juliana to successfully navigate the difficult areas between social norms and legal rights was her strong connections within the Upper

¹¹⁰ Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 24, November 9, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹¹¹ Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 22, 24, September-November, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹¹² Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 25, December 11, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹¹³ Stieve, *Bauernaufstand 1626*, 93.

Austrian community. She formed the core of a kinship network that was connected to virtually every family in the Upper Austrian nobility, and on which many depended. Female kinship networks can be defined as the creative ways in which women worked within the limitations of a patriarchal economy to build connections and communities in order to benefit each other in personal, religious, or economic ways, using wills, favors, and other forms of support.¹¹⁴ For Juliana, helping Anna Sabinl find a position with her daughter-in-law for example, was just one way of providing such support. More than simply favors among friends, the connections and support offered by Juliana and the women of her network formed an integral part of the infrastructure of Upper Austria.

For the elite women of Juliana's circle, such support often came in the form of caring for each other's children when business or politics took them away from home. When Juliana's sister-in-law Elisabeth had to travel to Vienna to attend the royal court with her husband, the children stayed behind with Juliana. The same held true for Anna Maria Jörger's, a sister-in-law of Juliana's, or her daughter-in-law Judith Sabina's children.¹¹⁵ Judith Sabina did not always leave her children with Juliana, but particularly in the case of her son who was often sick, she felt that the air in Vienna was contributing to his illness so she did not like having him there.¹¹⁶ According to Hufton, such beliefs that city life was more dangerous for children than country life were not uncommon nor

¹¹⁴ Jennifer Kolpacoff Deane, Julia A. Eckerle, Michelle M. Dowd, and Megan Matchinske "Women's Kinship Networks: A Meditation on Creative Genealogies and Historical Labor," in *Mapping Gendered Routes and Spaces in the Early Modern World*, ed. Merry Wiesner-Hanks (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015), 230-231.

¹¹⁵ Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 3, July 11, 1626, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, January 14, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹¹⁶ Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 10, November 28, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

unfounded.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, considering the turbulent times, life in the country was not safer. One of Elisabeth's children died while staying with Juliana during the 1626 rebellion and their farm was plundered, although it is not clear if the child died from illness or as a result of an injury. The shock of these events left Elisabeth confined to her bed writing that it was almost too much to bear since "suffering was already her daily meal."¹¹⁸ In such difficult circumstances and considering the complexities of long-distance travel, having some options for childcare must have been of supreme importance to these women. For Juliana to have taken in so many children from her extended family underscores this importance, even among elite women who had wet-nurses and nannies.

Kinship networks also served as a communication network, connecting the labor force among women, thereby making it easier for women to access a wider pool of resources. Many of Juliana's letters revolve around helping people find household staff, with some of the most involved discussions centering on the hiring of wet nurses. Based on the discussion in the letters, the selection of a wet nurse was a complicated issue, with the woman's health, cleanliness, and moral character all part of the discussion for her suitability.¹¹⁹ Historian Merry Wiesner-Hanks found the same to be true in her discussion of the subject, although interestingly, she found that it was generally the husbands who decided to hire the wet nurse and then contracted with her husband to do so.¹²⁰ At least in

¹¹⁷ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 198.

¹¹⁸ Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 11, 12, 13, May 1626- September 1626, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 6, July 31, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹¹⁹ Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 1, 6, 1619-1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Anna Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 1, 3, 7, 1630-1631, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 6, July 31, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹²⁰ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 91-92.

the case of the Upper Austrian nobility, this does not appear to have been the case. Among the three women who discussed the issue with Julianna, none mentioned their husband as part of the decision. Judith Sabina did say that she took the doctor's advice to switch wet nurses, but when he suggested finding a third one, she chose instead to take the advice of her women friends and wean the baby instead.¹²¹ Furthermore, one of the candidates Juliana found was unmarried, which although Anna Maria considered her inappropriate and hoped Juliana could find her a more suitable one instead, they proceeded to negotiate with her for employment.¹²² Anna Maria requested that Juliana should send the potential wet nurse to Steyregg so that Anna Maria could interview her in person and if she liked her, make her an offer. No mention was made of needing to coordinate schedules so that a man could be present for the interview or negotiation process.

An additional interesting insight which Anna Maria's letters to Juliana provided was her acknowledgement of the reciprocal nature of these kinship network relationships. After asking for Juliana's help with the wet nurse, Anna Maria then asked Juliana to take in one of her older daughters until her father decided what would become of her.¹²³ Anna Maria apologized for asking for so much of Juliana, and said to let her know how she could return the favor. When Juliana was sick, Anna Maria offered her services as a healer, but it is not clear if Juliana took her up on the offer or if she asked for any help in return.¹²⁴ However, as I will discuss in greater detail below, Anna Maria's brother was

¹²¹ Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 7, August 23, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹²² Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 1, July 12, 1619, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹²³ Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 3, July 11, 1626, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹²⁴ Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 1,2, July-October 1619, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

one of the Kaiser's favorite advisors and Anna Maria used that connection to ensure the protection of her relatives.¹²⁵ Juliana's maintenance of a mutually beneficial relationship with someone who had such close connections to the highest echelons of power was surely a strategic move for Juliana's own family and only expanded the resources available to her.

Anna Maria's request to have Juliana take in her older daughter was not an unusual one for the time, but rather another way in which kinship networks grew and manifested themselves. It was expected among noble families that daughters would spend some time in the household of another noble family, preferably a higher ranked one, in order to improve her education, connections, and chances of marriage.¹²⁶ For Anna Maria to use Juliana's house as a temporary stop until her father could find something more permanent implies a somewhat negative perception by Anna Maria of Juliana's social standing. But with relations at the royal court, this was not entirely unexpected. For others, however, the Starhemberg household was a coveted position. Regina Strein, for example, was born a Baroness von Schwarzenau, and came to live with Juliana at a young age, where she remained and was raised by Juliana as if she were her own daughter.¹²⁷ In her will, Juliana left Regina jewelry encrusted with diamonds and pearls, gold necklaces and crowns, silver plates and cups, clothing, bedding, and 1500*fl*.¹²⁸ No one else received anywhere close to this level of generosity and it was clear that Juliana cared deeply for her. From a legal perspective, Juliana had the right to leave her

¹²⁵ Sturmberger, *Herberstorff*, 120.

¹²⁶ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 163.

¹²⁷ Juliana von Starhemberg Testament, March 12, 1632, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹²⁸ Juliana von Starhemberg Testament, March 12, 1632, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

belongs to whomever she chose, but in practice family interests were generally prioritized over outside ones.¹²⁹ For Juliana to have left her primary wealth and valued possessions not to her sons and their wives, but rather to Regina shows how much Regina's service was both appreciated and valued by Juliana. It also demonstrates the extent of Juliana's authority that she did not feel obligated to follow social convention in her will.

Similarly, while Juliana acknowledged all her sons in her will, she particularly thanked her son Kaspar for his interest free loan of 2,000*fl* to her.¹³⁰ Her particular distinction of this event raises the question if her other sons had loaned her money but charged her interest, or if it was the only time she needed to borrow money from them. It is noteworthy as it indicates that even amongst families, the discretionary use of interest might have been able to be used to influence particular investments or decisions. Kaspar was one of the sons who converted to Catholicism, although he did not do so until after Juliana's death. Perhaps an interest free loan to his Protestant mother was a quiet and private way he could assist her without making too large of a public gesture. Not only was Juliana's bequest of 1,500*fl* to Regina very generous, it was also the bulk of Juliana's disposable income according to her will. As a result, a loan of 2,000*fl* was a pretty major loan for Juliana to have taken out. Kaspar's choice to not charge interest may have been an effort to allow her as much financial independence as possible.

Juliana's efforts to help her friends and relations with their financial transactions reflects the large degree of authority from which Juliana operated. Through her network,

¹²⁹ Isabelle Chabot, "Lineage Strategies and the Control of Widows in Renaissance Florence," in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Lynda Warner, 130.

¹³⁰ Juliana von Starhemberg Testament, March 12, 1632, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

she helped the women writing to her secure wagons and equipment for their farms, hide valuables from marauding soldiers, borrow money, and support local charities.¹³¹ She even was asked to assist in legal matters such as the resolution of estates and making sure that someone's will was properly executed.¹³² Juliana had been related to that person not only through Reichard's side of the family, but also through the Roggendorf side, so she would have known all the people involved intimately and therefore her assistance in that case is not surprising. A more surprising request of Juliana came from Susana Tschernembl, widow of the rebellious nobleman Georg Erasmus Tschernembl, who wrote to Juliana from exile in Geneva asking for her assistance in recovering any portion of his estate.¹³³ It is not known if Juliana was successful, but it does demonstrate the broad reach that a kinship network such as Juliana's had, as well as Juliana's perceived influence.

Part of what made Juliana particularly influential was the power and wealth of the Starhemberg family, which was of course, not limited just to herself, but extended also to her sons. They used their political influence to negotiate and maneuver to their benefit through the political and religious conflict of the time. In 1620, after the Upper Austrian nobles refused to pay the debt the Kaiser incurred during his alliance with the Bavarians, Governor Herbersdorf began a series of arrests which included Juliana's two eldest sons, Gundaker and Heinrich Wilhelm, along with others such as her brother-in-law Erasmus

¹³¹ Anna Maria Jörger, Einzelbrief 5, February 22, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Anna Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 3, 6, November-December 1630, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 12, May 29, 1626, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbriefe 1, 2, 4, June-September, 1624, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Juliana Starhemberg Testament, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹³² Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 2, March 10, 1620, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹³³ Susana Tschernembl letter to Juliana Starhemberg, in Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 119.

Starhemberg, Sigmund Ludwig von Polheim, Karl Christof von Schallenberg, and Helmhard Jörger, among many others.¹³⁴ Herbersdorf had each person guarded by two armed men, their cell windows were walled shut, and bars installed on the castle's outside walls.¹³⁵ Yet these actions were largely symbolic as there was little chance any of them would try to break out of prison. Instead, the nobles used their power and connections to influence Herbersdorf and the Kaiser to have them freed. Juliana's son Heinrich Wilhelm was released first. Anna Maria (the same one discussed earlier in relation to the hiring of the wet-nurse) used her brother's influential position at court to apply pressure on Herbersdorf to ensure that her husband Helmhard Jörger was given the nicest treatment while in prison and then released into house arrest in 1622.¹³⁶ Once released, the rebellious nobles were punished instead through the confiscation of their property, which they fought with varying degrees of success. The Starhemberg family in particular was successful in fighting these confiscations, a frustration for Herbersdorf who saw their holdings as an especially valuable prize.¹³⁷

Heinrich Wilhelm's early release from prison was most likely due to his close friendship with Herbersdorf. Heinrich Wilhelm had joined the military soon after his return from his *Kavalierstour*, and served as captain in Herbersdorf's regiment, where they developed a strong relationship.¹³⁸ In fact, Herbersdorf and Heinrich Wilhelm's

¹³⁴ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 118; and Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbriefe 9-11, December 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezeugssysteme*.

¹³⁵ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 119.

¹³⁶ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 120.

¹³⁷ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 124.

¹³⁸ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 177.

friendship was so close that after Heinrich Wilhelm's regiment behaved particularly badly while in Bavaria, Maximilian called him in for punishment. Herbersdorf personally vouched for Heinrich's good character and though Maximilian was less than impressed, he let Heinrich Wilhelm off the hook, expressing irritation at Herbersdorf's passionate defense of Heinrich.¹³⁹ It was a difficult position for Herbersdorf, as he was torn between his allegiances to the Kaiser and Maximilian, as well as his ambitions in society within Upper Austria. Due to these ambitions, as well as hopes of making inroads into the Starhemberg family holdings, Herbersdorf was careful to cultivate a relationship with the Starhemberg family. He even went so far as to invite Juliana was invited to his step daughter's wedding in 1624 despite the strained relationship between the two of them.¹⁴⁰

Within a society as tightly woven as the Upper Austrian nobility, where virtually everyone was related in some way to each other, the importance of an outsider like Herbersdorf making personal connections was crucial to establishing legitimacy. In fact, one of the reasons he was selected for the position was that he came from nearby Styria, not Bavaria, and it was hoped the Upper Austrians would therefore be more likely to accept him as one of their own.¹⁴¹ The same held true for the Kaiser's royal court, where personal connections such as the one between Anna Maria and her brother at court was used to influence Herbersdorf's treatment of Helmhard. Juliana had already cultivated a relationship with Anna Maria, but this connection grew closer when a step-daughter of Anna Maria's married one of Juliana's sons. This marriage brought the Starhemberg

¹³⁹ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 177-178.

¹⁴⁰ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 176; and Thaler, "Conservative Revolutionary," 563.

¹⁴¹ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 97-98.

family influence even closer to the epicenter of power. The intricacies of court life will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, but for purposes of this discussion, what is notable is the web of relationships that affected all aspects of life, including political, economic, and social, and how many of those relationships were female.

By 1628, however, either Juliana's influence had begun to wear thin or Herbersdorf had given up on trying to win her over. The Kaiser's deadline of April 1628 for nobles to convert or exile had passed. Herbersdorf wrote to Juliana asking under whose authority she was still living in Upper Austria and when she would be leaving.¹⁴² Not only did Juliana continue to live and practice her faith in Upper Austria past the deadline, she held services and went so far as to allow her Protestant tenants to attend mass at Riedegg.¹⁴³ In May of 1628 she was called before the Kaiser's administrator to defend her claim to stay in Upper Austria, a bid which was unsuccessful, as she emigrated in 1629 and moved across the Danube to the castle at Niederwallsee in Lower Austria.¹⁴⁴ Two of Juliana's sons made the decision to convert, with Heinrich Wilhelm going first in 1630 and Kaspar followed in 1633, thereby allowing them to reclaim or retain some of the Starhemberg properties that otherwise would have been lost.¹⁴⁵ By 1628 in Upper Austria, "aside from some Godless, stubborn, and nasty women", virtually everyone in the towns had converted.¹⁴⁶ The Protestant nobles who resisted had their

¹⁴² Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 337.

¹⁴³ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 337.

¹⁴⁴ Elisabeth Starhemberg, Einzelbriefe 19, 22, June 1628- September 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁴⁵ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 337.

¹⁴⁶ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 337.

property confiscated and were forced into exile. For Juliana, the decision to go into exile while retaining her religion was almost a foregone conclusion, as converting would have not changed the outcome in any way for her. As she had no legal standing or control over the Starhemberg property, converting to Catholicism would not have changed her rights over her estate. It would be unfair however to reduce her decision to resignation, for Juliana was no stranger to making up her own mind in matters of religion. Her husband had been a devout Calvinist, yet Juliana remained a Lutheran.¹⁴⁷ Now, in the face of the Kaiser's ultimatum to convert or forfeit all property and leave Upper Austria, Juliana chose to remain true to her faith.

The decision to convert was therefore both intensely meaningful and personal. On the one hand people stood to lose their belongings and standing in society, any career ambitions, as well as a central element of their identity- their position as Upper Austrian nobles. To give that up and go into exile with only their name must have been an immense sacrifice. On the other hand, to give up their faith and core beliefs in exchange for material gain must have seemed an impossible choice as well. That Juliana was able to return to Upper Austria for her burial was due in large part to the choices made by two of her sons to convert. However, the same influence which she carried in society almost certainly also played a role here. As in life, in her death Juliana was able to use her family connections to achieve her goals. A savvy and experienced business woman, she demonstrated the extraordinary power that women were able to wield within their communities and families despite legal or social restrictions which confined them to the home.

¹⁴⁷ Heilingsetzer, "The Austrian Nobility, 1600-50," 249.

Chapter II.

Marriage and Religious Choice:

Eva Maria Tschernembl von Schallenberg

The story of Eva Maria Tschernembl von Schallenberg's life serves as a fascinating counterpoint to Juliana Starhemberg's. Born and married into the same social circles as Juliana, technically they shared the same opportunities and challenges as noblewomen. Yet while Juliana's life demonstrated the many ways in which a woman might exercise agency within the rigid confines of Upper Austrian high society, Eva Maria's life highlighted how much that agency was contingent on being given the opportunity to express it. While Juliana had been the center of an extensive support network for her sons and extended family, Eva Maria's life draws into question how much of that would have been possible without the support of Juliana's husband, trustees, and sons. The two women were subject to the same social norms and laws, but their opportunities varied widely based in large part on the actions and choices of their closest male relations. Juliana certainly made the most of the opportunities available to her and seemed to be able to take control and manage any situation that she encountered. Eva Maria, on the other hand, was more overwhelmed by circumstances, and her life offers some insight into what was possible without support.

Relatively little information is available about Eva Maria's life, with only two sets of letters written over a seven year period from 1621-1628 which either mention her or were written by her. The first set of letters was written by Eva Maria's mother Rosina

Jörger to Eva Maria's husband, Karl Christof von Schallenberg, during the period of Eva Maria and Karl's engagement. Only one or two of these letters included anything written by Eva Maria herself, yet they offer insight into both Eva Maria's experience with the process of getting engaged and married, as well as how her family dynamics contributed to the process. The second set of letters were written by Eva Maria to her husband Karl and her brother-in-law Georg over the final two years of her marriage. They describe the evolution of an unhappy marriage and the problems that culminated in religious differences and a split from her husband. Her turbulent marriage was marked by the death of both her infants, her husband's participation in the Peasant Rebellions of 1626 and subsequent blackmail and arrest, the mental illness of her brother-in-law, and the breakup of the marriage which coincided with her refusal to follow her husband in his conversion to Catholicism. Feuding with her relatives over money and with no immediate family, Eva Maria was left alone with no support to help her.

In a society in which women's legal rights were defined by their relationship to men, at each stage of her life: as a single woman, married woman, and then as a widow, Eva Maria lacked the full support of the people who were designated to be her legal representatives. While she retained the basic legal rights afforded to her by her position as a noblewoman, the lack of kinship network support left her vulnerable to being overlooked or disregarded. In light of this vulnerability, her decision not to convert to Catholicism was more than an expression of her faith, but also an expression of her rights as a noblewoman. In this chapter, I will again begin with a brief biographical overview and then explore the agency elite women had in the marriage process, as well as religious choices and confessional divisions within a marriage.

Biographical Overview

The daughter of Hans Christoph Tschernembl and Rosina Jörger, little is known about Eva Maria's life. There were no records of her birth and therefore it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how old Eva Maria might have been. Her parents were married in 1591 and her father died in 1605, so at the time of her marriage in 1622 she could have been between the ages of seventeen and thirty-one.¹⁴⁸ Karl Christof was twenty-six at the time of their marriage, and with marriages for the nobility in Upper Austria at the time following the European Marriage Pattern, where first marriages for men generally took place around the age of twenty seven, and for women around twenty two, it is possible to estimate Eva Maria's age at the time of her wedding in her early twenties.¹⁴⁹

Very little of Eva Maria's daily life or preferences comes through in the letters, although in a few of her letters to Karl before the wedding, Rosina described Eva Maria baking cookies for him.¹⁵⁰ As they had a cook along with other staff who performed the work of daily chores, it is unlikely that Eva Maria cooked to sustain and feed the family, but rather more as a hobby, making delicacies for guests or as gifts. Grammatically, her writing style was very similar to Juliana's in Chapter One, indicating it is likely she was educated in the same way that Juliana was. She did mention books twice in her letters, so it appears she did some reading. In one instance, Eva Maria asked for a copy of *Hans Sachsen*, a poem by Goethe, although she did say in the letter that the book was for "my

¹⁴⁸ Stammbaum Tschernembl in *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*. (Vienna: University of Vienna Institute for History), <https://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/Frauenbriefe/tschbaum2.htm>.

¹⁴⁹ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 155.

¹⁵⁰ Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 11-12, December, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

only friend in the world” and not for herself.¹⁵¹ That she felt the need to characterize this friend as her only one points to a degree of loneliness and isolation that she may have felt. In the other instance in which she discussed books, it came after her religious books were confiscated as part of the Counter Reformation efforts of the Kaiser in 1628. She complained that with them gone, she could not read any more sermons, which indicates that part of her daily life at home involved religious reading and devotional time.¹⁵²

Like the majority of other Upper Austrian nobles at the time, the Tschernembl family was Protestant. The exception was Georg Erasmus Tschernembl, Eva Maria’s uncle, who converted to Calvinism along with a small group of other Upper Austrian nobles, including Reichard and Erasmus Starhemberg, Sigmund Ludwig von Polheim, and Hans Wilhelm von Zelking.¹⁵³ The Tschernembl family was a prominent one in Upper Austria, and in 1619-1620, as the conflict between the Upper Austrian nobles and the Kaiser came to a head, Georg Erasmus Tschernembl led the nobles in their alliance with the Bohemians against Kaiser Ferdinand.¹⁵⁴ The subsequent failure of this alliance led to Georg Erasmus’ exile from Upper Austria to Geneva in 1622, along with the loss of his fortune and properties in Upper Austria, which included the Schwertberg, Windegg, and Hart estates.¹⁵⁵ As mentioned in Chapter One, his widow reached out to

¹⁵¹ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 9, October 17, 1626, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁵² Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 25, May 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁵³ Karl W. Schwarz, *Georg Erasmus Tschernembl (1567-1626)*, Evangelisches Museum Österreich, <https://museum.evang.at/persoenlichkeiten/georg-erasmus-freiherr-von-tschernembl/georg-erasmus-tschernembl-1567-1626/>.

¹⁵⁴ Thaler, “Conservative Revolutionary,” 556; and Sturmberger, *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 121.

¹⁵⁵ Thaler, “Conservative Revolutionary,” 563; and Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 9, December 1, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Juliana Starhemberg for her help in trying to regain some of their lost properties, but was unable to do so. For Eva Maria, the fate of Georg Erasmus was significant as her father Hans Christof died in 1605 and her brother Hans Christof (Jr.) died in 1621, which left Eva Maria without a close male relative on her father's side of the family. Her brother did leave behind a young son which Rosina appeared to be caring for.¹⁵⁶ Based on the modern use of the word "*Burschen*" to describe him, that would make him somewhere around the ages of ten or early teens, although it is unclear if that word was actually used in the original text as that part of the letter is transcribed rather than copied.¹⁵⁷ No mention was made of the mother of the boy, so it is not known if she was already dead as well or if the boy was perhaps illegitimate. He was certainly too young to have acted as a trustee for Eva Maria.

Rosina's side of the family, the Jörger family, was also wealthy, prominent, and strongly affected by the events of the 1619-1620 nobles' rebellion. Among Rosina's brothers, Karl Jörger was imprisoned and died under torture in 1623 for his role in the 1619-1620 nobles' rebellions and his extensive estates were confiscated by Herbersdorf on behalf of the Kaiser.¹⁵⁸ His widow was stripped of all her belongings with the exception of one jewelry box which Herbersdorf permitted her to take with her into exile.¹⁵⁹ Hans Jörger's massive estate Tollet, which was considered the most valuable in Upper Austria, was confiscated and Herbersdorf himself bought it from the Kaiser for

¹⁵⁶ "Stammbaum Tschernembl" in *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 2, 5, September-October, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁵⁷ Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 2, September 16, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁵⁸ Sturmberger. *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 122, 348.

¹⁵⁹ Sturmberger. *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 124.

only a third of its value.¹⁶⁰ Finally, Helmhard Jörger, who served as one of Eva Maria's trustees, had his various estates, including the largest at Steyregg, confiscated. Although his connections through his wife's sister enabled him to get some concessions from the Kaiser, he died in 1631 in poverty and with no surviving heirs.¹⁶¹ The impact of the declining Jörger and Tschernembl family fortunes and positions would result in Eva Maria finding herself with no male relatives to support her through the events of her life.

Subsequent to her father and brother's deaths, Eva Maria lived with her mother and nephew in Enns, a town on the eastern end of Upper Austria, bordering on Lower Austria. Not having a copy of her father's will or of the marriage contracts, it is impossible to know how much money Rosina and Eva Maria were left with or what kind of means they had to live on. Most likely Hans Christof's share of the Jörger's fortunes would have gone to Eva Maria's nephew, so she was unlikely to have inherited any of the Jörger estates. Based on Rosina's letters in which she described her preparations for the wedding feast, Rosina only described the difficulty she was having in finding goods due to shortages, rather than of having any difficulty paying for them.¹⁶² Given that Rosina was writing to her prospective son-in-law, it is possible she may have been down-playing any financial difficulties they were having. But based on the size of Eva Maria's dowry, it is unlikely that they lived in too much poverty. Eva Maria was supposed to receive 10,000*fl* as part of her wedding dowry and inheritance, to be held in trust with her uncle

¹⁶⁰ Sturmberger. *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 361.

¹⁶¹ Sturmberger. *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 391; And Irene Keller and Christian Keller *Helmhard Jörger IX (1572-1631)*. Ausstellung "Die Jörger von Tollet und ihre Zeit", 2010, <http://www.ooegeschichte.at/epochen/reformation-und-renaissance/ausstellung-die-joerger-von-tollet-und-ihre-zeit/gegenreformation-und-untergang-der-joerger/die-joerger-helmhard-joerger-ix/>.

¹⁶² Rosina von Tschernembl, 24 Briefe, 1621-1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Helmhard Jörger and 4,000*fl* held by Heinrich Wilhelm Starhemberg, one of her other trustees.¹⁶³ Compared to other elite women of the period, Eva Maria's dowry was fairly substantial. Helena Schallenberg, for example in Chapter Three, only had a dowry of 1,000*fl*, whereas one of the novitiates at her convent brought with her a dowry of 15,000*fl*.¹⁶⁴ The largest dowry described in the letters was a rich widow with 30,000*fl*.¹⁶⁵ For that much to have been left to Eva Maria as her dowry, it is not unreasonable to assume that she had enough to live on until her marriage.

Eva Maria married Karl Christof von Schallenberg in 1622, then moved with Rosina to his estate at Luftenberg, where Rosina assisted Eva Maria with the estate management until her death in 1628.¹⁶⁶ Eva Maria and Karl only had two children, a son and a daughter, but both died in infancy.¹⁶⁷ Karl spent much of their marriage in Vienna, negotiating on behalf of the nobles with the Kaiser for religious toleration, and when that failed, for an extension on their deadline to emigrate.¹⁶⁸ In 1628, Karl chose to convert to Catholicism rather than going into exile, although it was too late for him to retain ownership of the Luftenberg estate which was confiscated by the Kaiser. As a result, Eva Maria was forced to move to Vienna, and her choice to remain Protestant led to a separation between herself and Karl. Karl died suddenly later that same year, sometime

¹⁶³ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 22, 23, March 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁶⁴ Helena von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, 18 Briefe 1582-1597, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh)*, *Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*; and Helena von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 57; 57 Briefe 1613-1629. *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁶⁵ Helena von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17; 18 Briefe 1582-1597, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁶⁶ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, March 4, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁶⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, 28 Einzelbriefe, 1627-1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁶⁸ Sturmberger. *Adam Graf Herberstorff*, 335.

around June 1628, which left Eva Maria a widow by herself in Vienna. The last information found about Eva Maria was that she married Stephan Schmid von Ullenburg in 1633 and died a few years later in 1639.¹⁶⁹

Marriage Choice and Agency

For elite women in Upper Austrian society in the early seventeenth century, their social and legal status was derived in large part from their marital status. Position and status were determined by the household and a person's relative position within that household.¹⁷⁰ Therefore a woman married to a nobleman with extensive properties derived her status and position as one half of that household. The defining element of *Herrschaft*, or the power to rule, was that power was held by a household rather than an individual within that household.¹⁷¹ As we saw with Juliana in Chapter One, the responsibilities of ruling an estate were divided between husband and wife, with Reichard negotiating on the estate's behalf with the Kaiser, while Juliana managed the business affairs for the estate. The children of such a household therefore did not share the same legal and social status as their parents until they achieved a similar householder status. For sons, that meant inheriting property and establishing their rule over their own estate. For daughters, it meant marrying into an estate in order to become part of the *Herrschaft* equation.

¹⁶⁹ Stammbaum Tschernembl, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁷⁰ Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln, 31.

¹⁷¹ Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln," 37.

The contract negotiations surrounding Eva Maria and Karl Christof's wedding provide an intriguing insight into the marriage process of the time for elite women, including the variances in rights and responsibilities between the people involved. Karl's stepfather, Job Hartmann Enenkel, had written to Rosina informing her of Karl's interest in marrying Eva Maria. As an unmarried woman, Eva Maria did not have the legal authority to negotiate on her own behalf, but Rosina could as the widow of her husband's estate. Rosina represented Eva Maria in tandem with her brother Helmhart, in his role as Eva Maria's trustee. They in turn negotiated with Karl's stepfather Job Hartmann, rather than directly with Karl himself, as he too was not yet legally able to represent himself. The fact that both unmarried men and women were represented by trustees underlines the importance of the trustees' role to represent the interests of the family rather than the individual.

Based on the tone of her reply, Rosina was cautious and deliberate in her approach to the negotiations. Rosina responded to Karl in a business-like manner, writing that "having received your letter from March 5th" and having asked her friends and acquaintances about him and finding that no one spoke against him, she was willing to discuss the matter further with her brother Helmhart. If they reached a decision, her daughter could marry him, but until they did, both her daughter and Karl would be considered free and not bound by any understanding.¹⁷² The tone of Rosina's reply was contractual, leaving no room for misunderstanding but also conveying remarkably little enthusiasm or emotion. That Rosina found it necessary to ask around about Karl meant that he was not personally known to her, despite the incredibly tight connections between

¹⁷² Rosina von Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 1, March 6, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

the Upper Austrian nobility. This likely indicates that Rosina and Eva Maria may have had little opportunity in Enns to mingle with other families. It also points to the business nature of the marriage process, which was consistent with the Protestant view of marriage as “a contract based on mutual consent” rather than a sacrament.¹⁷³ For Catholics, marriage was a sacrament equal in significance to baptism, confirmation, communion, confession, last rites, and holy orders in terms of imparting grace upon the recipient. Protestants, on the other hand, only recognized baptism and communion as sacraments. Marriage, while still important, was therefore less of a spiritual ceremony, and instead primarily a transactional union of two houses. Rosina’s business-like reply and methodical approach to her daughter’s potential marriage reflects this belief.

While Eva Maria’s input or opinion was not even mentioned, this does not mean that the marriage was taking place without consulting her or that there was no room for affection in selecting a spouse. Various historians have examined consent in early modern marriages, such as Allan Tulchin’s study of marriage contracts from early modern France and Johanna Rickman’s discussion of consent and child marriages in early modern England.¹⁷⁴ Both found that while consent was fundamental to a marriage, it varied depending on social status, age, and geographic location. Beatrix Bastl found that among the Upper Austrian nobility, the bride’s consent was widely acknowledged but could be manipulated by her family’s wishes.¹⁷⁵ Perhaps the best way to understand what

¹⁷³ Allan Tulchin “Low Dowries, Absent Parents: Marrying for Love in an Early Modern French Town,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 44, no. 3 (2013): 722.

¹⁷⁴ Tulchin “Low Dowries”; And Johanna Rickman “He Would Never Consent in His Heart: Child Marriages in Early Modern England,” *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 6, no. 2 (2013): 293-313.

¹⁷⁵ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 157.

kind of input Eva Maria might have had in choosing her spouse can be found in the letters of other woman within her social circle.

Anna Sabina Starhemberg, who was married to Juliana's son Gundaker, wrote of a wedding she had attended where of the 30 guests in attendance, none came from the bride's side of the family because they disapproved of the groom and thought the bride could have done better. "This lady as well as her sister, who married Boiger (the knight Peuger), were so young and well raised that she could have chosen her happiness much better and been able to stay within her class."¹⁷⁶ Anna Sabina described this as the bride's choice, and that she actually married beneath her social class which indicates that a family's approval and permission were not always the same thing. It also implies that for the lady to have chosen someone from a lower social and economic class, she may have done so out of affection, but that this was not viewed (at least by Anna Sabina) as a good or enviable choice. In another example, Tugendlieb Schallenberg, Karl's aunt, had also turned down her first offer of marriage from an older widower. She spent several subsequent years as a lady in waiting at Karl's mother's and then brother's houses before marrying Georg von Schrattenbach.¹⁷⁷ Again, the decision not to marry was described specifically as her choice, implying once again that amongst the Upper Austrian nobility, the bride's wishes were considered in the selection of a husband.

Other examples provide insight into the kind of manipulation of the bride which Bastl referred to, where despite taking the bride's wishes into account, her wishes were not always the determining factor in deciding if a marriage should take place. Karl

¹⁷⁶ Anna Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 4, November 31, 1630, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁷⁷ Robert Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christoph Von Schallenbergs," in *Literatur, Geschichte, Österreich: Probleme, Perspektiven Und Bausteine*, Band 18. München: Lit Verlag. 430, #46.

Christoph's mother, Marusch von Lappitz, turned down her first offer of marriage from Rudolf von Preysing, although it is unclear if she did this willingly or not.¹⁷⁸ Marusch had reached out to her sister Christina for advice about the marriage and Christina responded encouragingly. "I have not seen Herr Rudolf since he was a small, naughty boy" she wrote, but the family was honest and devout, and he had been married twice already and those marriages had apparently been happy ones.¹⁷⁹ Christina reassured Marusch that she had nothing to fear from Herr Tschernembl, her trustee, and if she wanted to accept Herr Rudolf, she should and the trustee would certainly not deny her.¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately no record exists of why the marriage did not take place, but when Marusch married Christof Schallenberg a few years later, she did not invite Herr Tschernembl to the wedding and he scheduled the wedding for the busiest time of the year, which Christina felt was purposely designed to make it harder for people to attend.¹⁸¹ Whether the hostilities between Marusch and Herr Tschernembl were the result of the failed wedding negotiations or the cause of them, it does indicate that both the bride and the trustees had to agree before a proposal moved to the contractual negotiation phase. In Eva Maria's case, while her consent was never explicitly described in the letters, it most likely must have been given for Rosina and Helmhart to have reached the negotiations phase.

Rosina and Marusch's letters suggest that the decision to move ahead with a particular proposal was based in large part on character recommendations, and consent was predicated on receiving favorable recommendations more so than on actually

¹⁷⁸ Christina von Praschma, Einzelbrief 1, October 29, 1586, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁷⁹ Christina von Praschma, Einzelbrief 1, October 29, 1586, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸⁰ Christina von Praschma, Einzelbrief 1, October 29, 1586, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸¹ Christina von Praschma, Einzelbrief 2, 4, May 2, 1588-.May 28, 1588, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*

knowing the potential groom. On paper, Karl certainly must have looked like a good prospect. He came from a wealthy and illustrious family, and his father was one of the most famous poets of the time, Christoph Schallenberg.¹⁸² According to Bastl, noblemen were encouraged to marry women of equal or higher rank, and with the Tschernembl and Jörger families being among the most notable in Upper Austria, they were well matched socially.¹⁸³ Karl later purchased Luftenberg, a large estate with extensive gardens and vineyards, from his brother, and his family owned at least two other large estates.¹⁸⁴ The only strike against him may have been his character, for based on the letters written to Karl by several women in his Aunt Helena's convent, he appeared to be a somewhat wild young man.¹⁸⁵ He had been to visit Helena at the convent several times, spending his time there running up bar bills and fraternizing with the nuns.¹⁸⁶ After his visit in 1617, he had exchanged letters with one of the nuns, Katharina Gaishofer, and her letters back to him were very light-hearted in tone. She joked about one of the other nuns most likely getting pregnant soon unless he would come talk some sense into her, and thanked him for his friendly letters, saying it was an honor that he would write such naughty things to her.¹⁸⁷ There was, around this time, a scandal in the convent involving Katharina, Karl, and

¹⁸² Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 271.

¹⁸³ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 159-161.

¹⁸⁴ Burgenkunde.at, http://burgenkunde.at/oberoesterreich/ooe_luftenberg/ooe_luftenberg.htm; And Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 20, October 2, 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸⁵ Katharina Gaishofer Einzelbrief 56, 57, January 1617-January 1619, in Helena Schallenberg, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Anna Fürst Einzelbrief, December 5, 1627, in Schallenberg, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, 10, August 1613-1617, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸⁷ Katharina Gaishofer Einzelbrief 56, January 26, 1617, in Helena Schallenberg, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

some letters that Helena, as abbess, tried desperately to quash. Through a complicated grapevine, it had become known that a nun at the convent (Katharina) had exchanged inappropriate letters with Karl's manservant, and that Karl and his manservant had been known to have moved freely around the convent and its rooms, thereby tarnishing the reputation of the convent.¹⁸⁸ Helena repeatedly begged Karl to find the incriminating letters and burn them, but despite its consequences to her, she never held this scandal against him.¹⁸⁹ The implications of a sex scandal in a convent will be discussed in more detail in Helena's chapter, but in terms of Eva Maria, it is unclear how much she or her family knew of this before her wedding, or how that might have been considered a reflection of his character. Certainly both Eva Maria and Rosina knew of his reputation as a ladies' man and teased him that the beautiful ladies in Linz would keep him from getting too bored during his time there.¹⁹⁰ Clearly as far as Eva Maria and her family was concerned, his reputation was good enough to accept his offer of marriage.

Those jokes about flirting with the ladies, however, were about the only light-hearted moments in Rosina and Eva Maria's letters. The rest of the letters, both before and after the marriage were business-like and task oriented, with Rosina directing her future son-in-law to assist her in getting supplies and making wedding arrangements. Almost no mention was made of Eva Maria other than the occasional update on her health, and while Rosina immediately began referring to Karl as "son", Eva Maria and Karl did not bond as quickly. Perhaps Rosina viewed Karl as an eligible match and eager

¹⁸⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 10, 1617, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁸⁹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 9, 10, 16, 1617-1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁹⁰ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 11, December 10, 1621, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

to ensure that the marriage took place, had pushed or manipulated Eva Maria into accepting. With no husband or father present, Rosina and Eva Maria would have been vulnerable and their financial and social position would certainly improve if Eva Maria married well. The fact that Rosina moved in with Eva Maria and Karl after their marriage points to the likelihood that the home they were living in in Enns was not her widow's seat or an estate inherited from her husband, meaning that Rosina was not independently wealthy. Whatever the reason for the coldness between the betrothed, Rosina handled all the correspondence with Karl. Only when Rosina was too sick to write did Eva Maria take over, writing only one out of twenty four letters and adding one post-script to her future husband.¹⁹¹ The post script was brief, dutiful, and almost child-like in tone, as she thanked Karl for the gifts that his aunts Helena and Tugendlieb had sent to her, which she accepted with her mother's permission and in his name.¹⁹² The letter Eva Maria wrote was even less personal, and written entirely on her mother's behalf, discussing mainly instructions about the rooms and food for the upcoming wedding celebration.¹⁹³

Pre-marital sex following a betrothal was fairly common and can be seen as an indication of the importance of betrothal and the almost pro-forma nature of the actual wedding ceremony. Indeed, Eva Maria's uncle Helmhard and his wife Anna Maria's baby was born within four months of their wedding.¹⁹⁴ In light of the momentous significance of the betrothal and the liberties that it allowed between future spouses, it is

¹⁹¹ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbriefe 1-24, 1621-1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁹² Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 14, February 21, 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁹³ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 23, May 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

¹⁹⁴ Anna Maria Khevenhüller, 6 Einzelbriefe, 1619-1628, July, *Briefe adeliger Frauen (16.-18 Jh), Beziehungen und Bezugssysteme*.

interesting to note that the relationship between Eva Maria and Karl remained somewhat standoffish. Bastl, in her analysis of the use of terms of address and endearments in letters amongst the Upper Austrian nobility, also remarked on the surprising coolness in Eva Maria's correspondence with Karl.¹⁹⁵ It is possible that other letters written by Eva Maria to Karl were not kept and that they were much warmer in tone, but based on the available letters, they hardly made an effort to know each other.

Naturally, some of the tone of the letters can be explained by the nature of marriage at the time, in which marriage was viewed not as a romantic partnership, but rather as a strategic, and hopefully harmonious, alliance.¹⁹⁶ According to Bastl, societal norms held that romantic love was not only unnecessary, it was even discouraged and that it was dishonorable for a man to love his wife in the same way that he loved his mistress.¹⁹⁷ As a result, it would be anachronistic to expect the young couple to have fallen in love with each other, but their lack of bond seems significant, particularly with hindsight, knowing that the marriage ended badly. One possible contributing factor was that Karl had actually wanted to marry one of the Sprizenstein family daughters. While it is not clear exactly which one, just a few months before the wedding, the nun Katharina wrote to Karl, urging him not to marry the lady from Sprizenstein, but that he was better off with a younger and more humble lady as his wife.¹⁹⁸ It is unclear if Katharina was referring to Eva Maria as the younger and more humble lady, or if she meant this

¹⁹⁵ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 410.

¹⁹⁶ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 357.

¹⁹⁷ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 358.

¹⁹⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 32, Beigelegter Brief 2, March 26, 1622, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

generally. In either case, a few months before the wedding was quite late in the game for him to still be considering a different bride. However, Katharina was well placed to know the details of the gossip at Sprizenstein as Helena had once been a lady-in-waiting there, and there was still very close contact between the two families.¹⁹⁹ Without any letters from Karl, it is impossible to speculate on Karl's motives in the marriage. Both bride and groom, however, appear to have entered into the marriage out of a sense of obligation rather than with any discernable enthusiasm. Despite being allowed to have a say in the process of choosing their spouse, their deference to the wishes of their families was less of a gender driven issue, but rather a dependency driven one. Neither Karl nor Eva Maria had the legal authority to get out of a marriage that their families had negotiated and sanctioned and to which no valid objections were raised.

Marital Conflict and Agency

Whereas both Karl and Eva Maria had been limited in their rights due to their status as the unmarried children of a household before their marriage, after they were married, their relative change in position demonstrates the extent to which a woman's rights depended on the support of her family. Karl's wedding and purchase of the Luftenberg estate elevated him to the status of noble householder, and with it he achieved all the legal rights and social privileges that went along with being the head of a noble estate. Eva Maria technically should have also attained her corresponding rights and privileges as one half of that equation, yet her experience did not follow the pattern which Juliana demonstrated in Chapter One. Instead, she was dependent on her husband and

¹⁹⁹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 19, 20, September-October, 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Helena Schallenberg, 18 Einzelbriefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

trustees for protection and support, which their refusal to give her left her living in poverty, dependent on charity to eat.²⁰⁰

Eva Maria's engagement process set the tone for the marriage that was to follow. After the wedding in 1622, Rosina moved to Luftenberg to live with Eva Maria and Karl, and rather than Eva Maria assuming her role as estate manager, Rosina did so instead. Rosina's last recorded letter to Karl was written in October of 1622, about four or five months after the wedding, and in it, she updated him on the status of the estate while he attended to political matters in Vienna.²⁰¹ She wrote to him about the management of the estate, described the plants and seeds they needed, as well as problems with the wheat harvest and her efforts to arrange a sawmill.²⁰² It is unclear why Rosina had taken over the role, although based on the letters she had written over the course of the engagement in which she directed Karl on how to buy property and what kinds of livestock to purchase, it is not surprising that she did so.²⁰³ They may have just established a good working relationship already and fallen into the same pattern after the wedding. Rosina's involvement may also been an opportunity for Rosina to teach Eva Maria the ropes of managing a large estate, but the tone of the letters do not reflect her sharing any of the responsibilities or credit. In the letters Rosina only described her work in the first person: how *she* was making arrangements, how tenants had spoken to *her*. The implication was that the work was not being done by Eva Maria and herself as a team, but rather just by herself. This is not to imply that there was anything nefarious

²⁰⁰ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 25, May, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰¹ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 24, October 14, 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰² Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 24, October 14, 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰³ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 17, 19, March-April, 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

behind Rosina's actions. Her letter did also describe Eva Maria's illness that left her bedridden the previous day, as well as a trip Eva Maria had taken to attend a baptism as per Karl's instructions in order to meet with some people.²⁰⁴ Perhaps Rosina was simply helping out in order to make her daughter's life easier, but Rosina's iron-grip on Eva Maria's affairs are significant for how they transcended the moment of marriage. Simply because Eva Maria had achieved the legal status as the joint head of a household, did not mean that the functional way in which people behaved towards her changed. Personal relationships may have been stronger than legal definitions.

Due to a lack of letters from the period of 1622 to 1626, the events of this period are unknown, however by 1626, Eva Maria had taken over the management of the estate from her mother. Rosina was ill and suffered from gout, so that she could not walk and had to be carried from room to room.²⁰⁵ Eva Maria was by then a confident estate manager and filled Karl in on the many details of the estate, from updates on the harvest, to accounts of occupying Bavarian troops threatening the town near Luftenberg.²⁰⁶ The events of the 1626 Peasant Rebellion had made food scarce and the Bavarian troops sent by Maximilian to quell the rebellion were plundering, raping, and killing, which left Eva Maria terrified.²⁰⁷ Even after the conflict ended, the troops remained, and she wrote to Karl about how the troops had been confiscating wheat from farms and estates, and worried about how they would survive the food shortages that they now faced.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Rosina Tschernembl, Einzelbrief 24, October 14, 1622, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰⁵ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, October 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰⁶ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, October 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 10, October 20, 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁰⁸ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, October 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Karl's absence during this dangerous period was due in large part to the leadership role he took on behalf of the nobles. Karl had been active in the 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion and was briefly imprisoned for his participation during the time of his engagement. During the 1626 Peasant Rebellion, while he did not participate in the fighting, he did get involved in negotiations and lobbied Maximilian in Bavaria to remove Herbersdorf as governor.²⁰⁹ His involvement may even have gone further, as after the 1626 Peasant's Rebellion ended, a local miller tried to blackmail Eva Maria about it. Unless she paid him 300 *Thaler*, he would tell the authorities about the extent of her husband's involvement in the rebellion.²¹⁰ There is no indication if this money was paid, but both Karl and his brother Georg were arrested in early 1627 and put on trial for their actions. In a rare show of support, the other nobles in the region promised Eva Maria they would support her if anything should happen to her husband and brother-in-law.²¹¹ Karl and Georg were released after a few months, but their release may have had less to do with their actual involvement in the rebellion as with the position they took. In August 1626, Karl had reported to a gathering of nobles in Wels that Maximilian's Bavarian troops were behaving appallingly: raping women, killing children, cutting open pregnant women, setting people on fire- unimaginable horrors which led Karl to state if there was not a rebellion underway already, their behavior would certainly spark one.²¹² In the aftermath of the rebellion, the Kaiser was eager to put as much of the blame (and costs)

²⁰⁹ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 297.

²¹⁰ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 12, 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²¹¹ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 12, 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²¹² Stieve, *Der Oberösterreichische Bauernafustand*, vol. 2, 174 (referring to p. 228, citations 2, 5; p. 229, citation 2).

for the uprising on to Maximilian and the Bavarians.²¹³ Perhaps as a result, his inquisitors looked favorably on those nobles who helped them make their case, and Karl and Georg were both let free in early 1627. However, as a consequence to Karl's participation in the 1619-1620 Nobles' Rebellion, and his ongoing commitment to remaining Protestant, the estate at Luftenberg was due to be confiscated in 1627 and the Kaiser set a "convert or exile" date for the nobles around the same time. Karl traveled to Munich and Vienna to speak on behalf of the nobles up through 1628, lobbying both the Kaiser and Maximilian for concessions to the nobles.²¹⁴ Karl was able to get a series of extensions, but in February 1628, the Kaiser set a final deadline of April 4th, 1628 for the nobles to convert or leave. Karl warned the other nobles that they were unlikely to get any more concessions or extensions, but that they should prepare to leave.²¹⁵

Eva Maria's letters from 1628 reflect the preparations she was making at Luftenberg in advance of its confiscation. Her letters were filled with details of her trying to take accurate inventories and hand the estate over in good condition, as well as preparing food and supplies to bring to Vienna, firing the staff, and settling various debts in the area.²¹⁶ She sent copies of invoices to Karl so he could see for himself what purchases she had been making, and assured him repeatedly that she was carefully writing everything down.²¹⁷ She asked Karl why he was all of a sudden so interested in all

²¹³ Stieve, *Der Oberösterreichische Bauernafustand*, vol. 1, 310.

²¹⁴ Stieve, *Der Oberösterreichische Bauernafustand*, vol. 1, 242; vol. 2, 138 (referring to p173, citation 3); and Eva Maria Einzelbriefe 1-28, 1627-1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²¹⁵ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 335-336.

²¹⁶ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 2, 3, 5, 6, February-March, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²¹⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 2, 3, 5, 6, February-March, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

the details, which does also add credence to the idea that she managed the estate full-time, regardless of his presence.²¹⁸ Her repeated assurances also hint at a lack of confidence on his part in the work she was doing. Unlike Juliana who managed the estate without any discernible supervision and served as a guide and mentor to her sons, Eva Maria did not have that same latitude or support in her business dealings. Despite the legal and social expectations that she should oversee the estate, Karl's doubts of her skills and close supervision indicate that this role was not automatically conferred upon the wife of an estate holder.

Further evidence of the role of estate manager being transferrable was the presence of Eva Maria's brother-in-law, Wolf Christof, who suffered from what we would now describe as mental illness. The oldest of the three brothers, Wolf Christoph had married Barbara Grieß in 1616, an heiress who brought the Rosenau estate with her into the marriage.²¹⁹ Wolf and Barbara's lifestyle must have been pretty ostentatious since even the nuns at his aunt Helena's convent heard stories about the wonderful parties they had at Rosenau and the beautiful people that attended them.²²⁰ But their good fortune was short lived as by 1618, Wolf was trying to sell the estate to settle his excessive debts, and in January of 1619, Barbara and their newborn son died.²²¹ In a surprisingly heartless reaction to Barbara's death, Helena wrote to Karl about Wolf's misfortunes, calling them foolishness, accused Wolf of having been blinded by love and blamed Barbara for the

²¹⁸ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, March 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²¹⁹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, January 29, 1616, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²⁰ Katharina Gaishofer Einzelbrief 56, January 26, 1617, in Helena Schallenberg, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²¹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 14, 15, 16, 17, September 1618-January 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

debts.²²² Wolf sold Rosenau and joined the military, and periodic letters from Helena through the early 1620's made references to his declining health.²²³ By the time he was living with Eva Maria at Luftenberg his symptoms included seizures which were so severe he almost bit his tongue off, as well as periods of dementia in which he would become childlike and forgetful, or angry and violent to the point where Eva Maria feared he was possessed.²²⁴ His illness was severe enough that it was recognized as a form of mental deficiency by the standards of the time, as he was granted an exemption from the Kaiser's requirement to convert to Catholicism, and remained Protestant until his death in 1647.²²⁵

Eva Maria struggled with being put in the uncomfortable position of being expected to defer to him on business matters. In February of 1628, she wrote to Georg that she could not turn over management of the estate to Wolf since he was just no good at it and his attempts to participate had not gone well.²²⁶ Just one month later, she wrote to her husband that she was no longer responsible for the management of the estate, as Wolf had taken it over.²²⁷ Another month after that, she was back in charge as Wolf was so ill that he had completely lost his wits and they determined he was possessed.²²⁸ According to the laws and stated norms of the time, Eva Maria should have been in charge of the

²²² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17, January 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²³ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 24, 43, August 1620-August 1622, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²⁴ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 6, 20, 25, 27, March-May 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²⁵ Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 2, 357.

²²⁶ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 15, February 10, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, March 4, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²²⁸ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 25, May 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Luftenberg estate in Karl's absence, yet in practice, she was being pushed aside by a brother-in-law who had no legal right to do so and who the state did not even view as competent enough to choose his own religion. Her outraged letters to Karl and Georg made it clear that this was being done with Karl's full knowledge, yet Karl did not intervene, which left Eva Maria with no recourse.

To make matters worse, during the same period as the events of the 1626 Peasant Rebellion and Wolf Christof and Rosina's declining health, Eva Maria and Karl lost their second child in 1627. Eva Maria had already given birth to a son in 1624 which died as an infant and her daughter Rosina, born in 1627, also died in the same year she was born.²²⁹ There are no letters from her from 1624 and the only letters from 1627 are the ones written right after the birth of the child when she was still celebrating her birth. She happily reported to Georg when she was able to walk across the room unassisted for the first time since the delivery and she looked forward to seeing him at the "*kindl mal*" or child's dinner.²³⁰ Bastl describes the tradition of the *Kindlmahl* (as it is spelled in modern German) as part of the post-birth celebrations, wherein a new mother would be surrounded by friends and family, primarily women, food and gifts would be brought to her in bed, and she would be celebrated as the center of the household for approximately one month.²³¹ Karl did not attend the celebration, and it is unclear if he was home when their daughter passed away either.

²²⁹ Stammbaum Schallenberg, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²³⁰ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 11, 1627, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²³¹ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 475-476.

For Eva Maria, the death of her second child marked a turning point and she declared herself finished with having children. She wrote to Georg a few months later after witnessing a particularly awful childbirth in which the woman and child died after two days of labor, “I thank God that I am finished with bearing children and no longer have that danger to worry me. At least freedom is good for that.”²³² She also remarked to him that witnessing the woman’s suffering was so terrible that it drove away any thought of sex.²³³ Several things are remarkable about these comments. The first is the rather frank discussion between Eva Maria and her brother-in-law about sex. Of the almost 250 letters analyzed for this study, only two women wrote about sex: the nun Katharina in her letters to Karl and this one comment of Eva Maria’s. Based on the women in these letters, the discussion of sexual issues, at least in print, was rare among the Upper Austrian elite, even between friends or sisters. Perhaps they were more open in person, but Eva Maria’s comment was unique among the women I studied. It may have been that she felt particularly close to Georg. Bastl found that Eva Maria’s invitation of Georg to her *Kindlmahl*, for example, would have been considered scandalous or inappropriate if he had not been family, as it was not an event that men were generally invited to.²³⁴ Her frank discussions with him and inclusion of him in personal celebrations point to there having been a close friendship between the two, rather than just a dutiful relationship between in-laws. The other intriguing element to Eva Maria’s comment was her use of the phrase “At least freedom is good for that” when she spoke about not having any more

²³² Eva Maria letter Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 15, February 10, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²³³ Eva Maria letter Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 15, February 10, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²³⁴ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, und Ehre*, 476.

children. This could only make sense if she and Karl had separated and no longer intended to live together, and that freedom meant being no longer married.

To explore the implications of Eva Maria's "freedom" it is necessary to consider how possible it was for her marriage to have ended. The details of Eva Maria and Karl's separation are murky, but were certainly brought on by Karl's decision to convert to Catholicism while Eva Maria chose to remain Protestant. For Catholics, mixed marriages between Catholics and Protestants were considered heretical and a carnal crime, comparable to rape, adultery, and "spiritual fornication."²³⁵ From the Protestant perspective, a lack of faith was also considered grounds for divorce, and since conversion to Catholicism was a betrayal of the true faith, it counted as a lack of faith and therefore a divorceable offence.²³⁶ Eva Maria made it unequivocally clear to Karl in her letter that she would remain Protestant. With the looming emigration date a month away, she knew she had to leave Upper Austria, but needed Karl's permission and approval to find a new place to live. She wrote him several times for help in making those arrangements, and said that while Regensburg was too far away for her, "In case my lord allows it, I am willing to move to Pressburg as I fear they will not suffer our presence here much longer and I will not become Catholic."²³⁷ Herbersdorf had confronted Juliana for her decision to stay past the April 4th deadline, and Eva Maria clearly feared what he would do if she remained in Upper Austria past that date. That she did not automatically expect to move

²³⁵ Cecilia Cristellon, "Between Sacrament, Sin, and Crime: Mixed Marriages and the Roman Church in Early Modern Europe." *Gender & History* 29, no. 3 (November 2017): 607-608

²³⁶ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 43.

²³⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 4, March 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

in with her husband in Vienna where he had been living adds additional support to the idea of their impending separation.

The moment of Karl's decision to convert is somewhat unclear and can be tied to his motivations to do so. On February 12th, 1628, Karl received the final extension from the Kaiser on their exile date to April 4th.²³⁸ But Eva Maria's letter to Georg describing her freedom was dated February 10th, two days earlier, indicating that she and Karl had already decided to go their separate ways. Karl appeared to have been publicly negotiating on behalf of the Protestant nobles while making private arrangements to convert to Catholicism. This decision was most likely a practical or strategic choice in an effort to hold on to some of the family's estates, rather than a true conversion based on faith or belief. There is no direct evidence to support this other than the timing of it and the fact that it was being done by other wealthy Protestant families, such as the Starhemberg, Gera, and Polheim families.²³⁹ What is unclear is why he would not have announced this decision to the Kaiser in a bid to gain some favor. Perhaps he feared that doing so would undermine the larger Protestant noble cause and he did not wish to put his own personal gain ahead of that of the other nobles. The strong sense of identity which Upper Austrian nobles had, which ranked nobility highest, then family, then individual interests, may have contributed to this.

For Eva Maria, the social and economic consequences of a split from her husband were as severe as those Karl faced at the prospect of losing his lands and titles. While she had no land to lose, she was dependent on male guardians and trustees to defend her

²³⁸ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 335.

²³⁹ Sturmberger, *Herbersdorff*, 336.

interests, something they had little motivation to do. Her uncle Helmhard, who held her 10,000*fl* dowry in trust for her, had borrowed liberally against it in order to pay some of his own debts, writing her IOUs instead.²⁴⁰ She tried various tactics to get this money back with no success, and found herself embroiled in a bitter feud with Karl's aunt Tugendlieb, who was somehow involved with the repayment of her money as well. Eva Maria despised Tugendlieb, writing to Georg that she would rather deal with the devil than with her and her lying mouth, and accused Tugendlieb of going behind her back to instigate trouble with Karl.²⁴¹ She even accused Susana von Eck, Karl's 78 year-old grandmother, of spying and stealing, and made sure that Karl knew that Helmhard had opened one of Karl's sealed letters.²⁴² When anger did not work, she tried bargaining, and offered to forfeit all of the money owed to her, as she could less afford to lose the goodwill of her trustees than she could the money.²⁴³ The bitterness of this feud escalated to the point where she feared alienating all of her trustees and only Georg's diplomacy and tact helped smooth things over.²⁴⁴ The nastiness of the feud and Eva Maria's growing desperation highlighted the lack of legal recourse that she had.

While Eva Maria had legal rights to this money according to her marriage contract, she had little recourse when the trustees refused to abide by its terms. Historians have argued that early modern noblewomen were entirely subject to their husbands in

²⁴⁰ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, March 4, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴¹ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 13,14, January 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴² Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 19, March 7, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴³ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, 23, March 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴⁴ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 23, March 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

legal matters.²⁴⁵ Yet Eva Maria's situation demonstrates the extent to which trustees still played a legal role in a woman's life even after her marriage. Despite Karl's legal authority as her husband, he was not able to make progress in getting Helmhard to release the money either. At one point Karl was attempting to amend the terms of his marriage contract and Eva Maria wrote that he could try, but warned him it was futile as Helmhard would not sign anything.²⁴⁶ Her trustees were working in their own self-interests and not in Eva Maria's. Unlike Juliana, Eva Maria appeared to have no additional kinship networks to fall back on for support. Georg may have been her confidant and friend, and defended her actions to Helmhard and Tugendlieb, but he had no legal authority to assist her and must have also been torn by his duties and feelings towards his brother. Certainly the easier route would have been for Eva Maria to agree to convert in order to at least retain the legal protection of her marriage, but as Karl's failed attempts to recover her money indicate, even that protection was limited. This situation contradicts the historical descriptions of the husband as the final authority over his wife's financial affairs, and may be explained by the chaos of the political situation of the time. With each family facing the loss of their lands, fortunes, and titles, desperation may have brought families in conflict with each other as they tried to save themselves.

On a personal level, Eva Maria's letters to Georg expressed how these events had worn her down.²⁴⁷ "I find myself always listless and bored... and sometimes spend the whole day walking, but what I see depresses me more than it cheers me up and just

²⁴⁵ Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 44.

²⁴⁶ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, March 4, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴⁷ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 16, 20, February-March, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

reminds me of my misery... I will never be as I was."²⁴⁸ Between the confiscations and loss of her family home, the death of her children, the strain of Wolf Christof's health issues, the feud with her family, and the disintegration of her marriage, a final blow for Eva Maria came in 1628 with the death of her mother Rosina.²⁴⁹

Only within the full context of those events can Eva Maria's decision to remain Protestant be truly considered. It may have been a sincere expression of her faith, as her anguish at having her bible and religious books confiscated was palpable, and she begged Georg to get her another bible, "no matter what the cost".²⁵⁰ Her faith may have been the only thing left which gave her comfort or brought her any peace. It was also the only thing that was truly hers and which she could control. Legally, no one, not even the Kaiser, could force her to convert. All they could do was make her life more difficult by forcing her to leave her home or forfeit her money, but since that had already been done to her, she had nothing left to lose by staying Protestant.

On the other hand, as Karl's conversion indicated, some religious choices were made for secular reasons. Eva Maria's religious choice may have been strategic and influenced by a desire to leave the marriage. It is possible that after the loss of both her children, Karl's many absences, and the coldness of their relationship, Eva Maria could have seen Karl's conversion as an opportunity to get out of the marriage she was in. Having failed to successfully produce an heir, perhaps both Eva Maria and Karl viewed the marriage as a failure and seized upon the religious difference as a means of

²⁴⁸ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 20, 25 March-May, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁴⁹ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3, March 4, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁵⁰ Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 25, May 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

extricating themselves. Eva Maria's cryptic reference to "freedom" and Karl's efforts to re-write the marriage contract certainly point to an end to the marriage. Even if they did not pursue a divorce on confessional divisions, historians have found that in some instances, couples privately agreed to a separation, which did not leave them free to remarry but at least let them live apart.²⁵¹ Karl's sudden death less than two months after her move to Vienna made the issue a moot point, but Eva Maria's choices remain intriguing nonetheless. The possibility that Eva Maria could have strategically chosen to stay Protestant in order to end her marriage should at least be considered since women were just as likely or capable as men to make religious decisions for secular reasons.

One final letter from Eva Maria to Georg after the death of her husband provides a glimpse into her life as a widow. She wrote to Georg to ask for his help, as someone was posted outside her house door, heckling and insulting her every time she walked in or out. She was outraged that in addition to making fun of her, he referred to with the familiar "*du*" rather than the more formal "*sie*" and at the fact that someone else did not tip his hat to her.²⁵² She did not explain why she was being heckled and disrespected, but her pleas to Georg reflect her isolation and her vulnerability. Helmhard died in 1631, which may have freed up Eva Maria's dowry, enabling her to remarry a few years later in 1633. Nothing is known about her new husband Stephan Schmid von Ullenburg, or where they lived, only that Eva Maria died in 1639.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 262.

²⁵² Eva Maria Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 28, June 16, 1628, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁵³ Stammbaum Tschernembl, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Eva Maria spent her life deferring to the wishes of others: her mother, her trustees, and her husband, and seemed to have very little control over or input into the events in her life. Unlike Juliana whom people turned to for help in resolving issues, Eva Maria was less self-reliant and spent much of her life turning to others for help. Critically, Eva Maria was also much more isolated than Juliana was and as a result lacked the connections and kinship networks that Juliana developed. This left her with no one to turn to when she needed help other than her brother-in-law. Whereas Juliana's life demonstrated the power that elite women were able to wield and the nuanced ways in which they wielded it, Eva Maria's life highlights the constraints that existed on that power. While legally assured a share of their husbands' estates and an equal role in terms of acting on behalf of the estate, in reality, elite women's status and power was very much dependent on the implicit agreement of men to share it. When they refused to do so, a woman by herself had no recourse to defend herself. The definition of women's rights as relational to the household, either as a daughter, wife, or widow, meant that her legal rights were always only valid as long as they were upheld by the men to which she was beholden.

Yet Eva Maria's story is not just one of helpless victimhood in the face of difficult circumstances. Like Juliana, Eva Maria chose to make the momentous decision to stay Protestant despite the enormous sacrifices that decision required. Unlike Juliana, Eva Maria did it alone. Juliana had the safety net of two sons who converted and retained their power and property, as well as two sons who remained Protestant, to ensure her well-being and support her in that choice. In Eva Maria's case, however, she made that decision completely alone and had to face the consequences of it on her own as well. As

difficult as those consequences must have been, her choice to remain Protestant was also the only opportunity in her life that she had to stand up for herself. In a life almost devoid of agency, it was a startlingly independent and rebellious choice against a life which otherwise stifled her.

Chapter III.

Courtly Life and Convent Life:

Helena von Schallenberg

For both Juliana and Eva Maria, their lives and opportunities were in large part defined by their status as married or widowed women. Helena von Schallenberg's letters provide a glimpse into the unique challenges faced by single women in the Upper Austrian nobility of the time and into how these challenges were perceived and met. Written almost exclusively to her brother and then to her brother's sons, Helena's letters were generally requests for help, primarily with financial matters. As her male relatives, they would have been the ones able to help her with such problems, so perhaps the recipients skewed the tone of her letters. It is possible that letters written to her female relations or friends were different in tone, but with only a few letters written to her sister-in-law as a comparison, it is difficult to know how much of what she wrote was an expression of her true feelings or how much was strategically designed to elicit a response.

Of the three women, Helena had the largest number of letters from which to examine her life, including eighteen letters she wrote to her brother in the years between 1582 and 1597, fifty seven letters she wrote to her nephews between the years of 1613 and 1629, and thirteen letters written either by her to her brother or about her between her

brothers between 1574 and 1597.²⁵⁴ Helena's letters spanned the course of 47 years, and in them she described her experiences first as a lady-in-waiting at court, and then as nun and Abbess at a convent. Her frustrations with the limitations on her life as well as the creative work-arounds she found for them provide a glimpse into the means by which single women could exercise some agency even if it was in somewhat subversive ways.

The Schallenbergers were a devoutly Protestant family, yet at the age of 35, Helena converted to Catholicism and joined a Franciscan convent against her father's wishes.²⁵⁵ While her pre-convent letters included frequent expressions of religious conviction and fervor, once she joined the convent, those became more infrequent. By the late 1620s, her letters urging her nephews Karl and Georg (Eva Maria's husband and brother-in-law from the previous chapter) to convert focused solely on the political and economic benefits of their conversion, and not on the spiritual. It is unclear if this change in tone reflected a change in her beliefs or if she was simply being strategic in what she expressed in order to achieve her goal of leaving court and not returning to her father's house.

In either case, Helena carefully wielded her choice to convert in order to extricate herself from a position at court that she found increasingly onerous and from a family by whom she felt neglected. Unable to successfully regain control over money which had been left to her, she turned to the convent for help collecting a portion of it and loaned out the remainder to her nephews, thereby shifting the burden of collection onto them and

²⁵⁴ Helena von Schallenberg, 18 Briefe 1582-1597, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Helena von Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 57; 57 Briefe 1613-1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; and Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*.

²⁵⁵ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christoph Von Schallenberg's," 428; and Hieronymus Schallenberg, Letter 113, June 19, 1594, in Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche werke*, 243, 357.

providing herself with a new source of interest income. Under the protection of the convent, she would rise to a position of power and authority as Abbess, something she would never have had outside the convent. While her tenure as Abbess would be tainted by scandal and was cut short by her health issues, it remained a powerful symbol of Helena's ability to change the trajectory of her life.

Biographical Overview

Born in 1560 in Piberstein in Upper Austria to Wolfgang von Schallenberg and Eleonora von Sprinzenstein, Helena was the eldest of thirty children. Her mother Eleonora bore eight children, but only Helena and the three brothers who followed her, Christof, Hieronymus, and Hans, survived into adulthood.²⁵⁶ Christof Schallenberg (who was the father to Karl, Wolf, and Georg from the previous chapter) was Helena's younger brother by one year, and had an illustrious career as a minister at the Kaiser's court, as well as a famous poet. Eleonora died in 1565 either in childbirth or from complications surrounding it, but not before designating one of her lady companions, Susanna Katharina von Eck, to be her replacement as Wolfgang's wife.²⁵⁷ Susanna was reportedly very beautiful, but not wealthy, and was also illiterate, a quality that Eleonora commented on but said would only inconvenience Wolfgang.²⁵⁸ As several letters from Susanna are saved in the Schallenberg archives, she may have used a scribe to help her with her

²⁵⁶ Schallenberg stammbaum, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; And Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenbergs," 430.

²⁵⁷ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenbergs," 427.

²⁵⁸ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenbergs," 426-427.

correspondence over the course of her life.²⁵⁹ She and Wolfgang married in 1568 and had 22 children together, seventeen of which died as infants.²⁶⁰ There are some variations in the source materials about this, attributing up to 25 children to Susanna, but by 1600, only 6 out of the 30 children were still alive, including Helena, Tugendlieb, two other sisters and two brothers. Five brothers had been killed in the Turkish wars in the late 1590's and Wolfgang complained to the Kaiser that no other family had sacrificed as much for the Fatherland as his had.²⁶¹ Even by the standards of the time, the death of at least 24 children was extremely high.

As children, Helena was particularly close with her two brothers who were closest to her in age, Christof and Hieronymus. In a letter by Christof to Helena, written while he was at school when he was 13 and she was 14, he expressed his homesickness and strong affection for her.²⁶² In the letters between the three siblings, it is clear that this affection was reciprocated as they often referred to each other, urging one to write to another, or updating them on what they had or had not heard. The strong bond between the siblings was crucial to Helena over the course of her life and formed the core of her kinship network on which she relied. These connections were also significant as her letters indicate that even into adulthood she had very few other close friends with whom she connected. She never wrote of fun events or of good friends, just the tedium of day to day and of the rare pleasure which hearing from her brothers brought her.

²⁵⁹ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenberg," 431.

²⁶⁰ Schallenberg stammbaum, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; And Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 351.

²⁶¹ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenberg," 426.

²⁶² Christof Schallenberg, Letter 2, 1574, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 137.

Helena must have received an education, for she could read and write and did not have to use a scribe until she lost her eyesight later in life. Many of her letters to Christof over their lifetime included discussions of money, along with calculations of interest owed and interest she could have earned had her money been invested or managed differently, so clearly she understood more than basic math and investments. That she learned this despite her stepmother's inability to do so indicates the likelihood of a tutor or governess at home. Olwen Hufton's discussion on the education of noble girls emphasizes the role of the mother in teaching her daughters the social skills and refinements necessary to succeed in society and she included basic literacy on the list along with music, needlework, and appropriate social comportment.²⁶³ Despite her own lack of education, Susanna took an interest in at least some parts of her daughters' education, as seen in a letter from Wolfgang to Christof wherein Wolfgang instructed Christof to arrange for music lessons for Tugendlieb at her mother's request.²⁶⁴ Naturally the ability to play music is quite different from the ability to read, and the one does not necessarily require or imply the other. It does point, however, to Susanna having input into her daughters' education. And while Eleonora's deathbed remark on the subject was the only time Susanna's illiteracy was commented upon, the fact that the Schallenberg daughters were educated indicates that the "inconvenience" of illiteracy was not something Wolfgang and Susanna wanted to pass along to their daughters.

The first half of Helena's adult life was spent as a lady at various courts, starting at the Sprinzenstein castle where she served as lady-in-waiting to her aunt Barbara

²⁶³ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 68.

²⁶⁴ Wolf von Schallenberg, Letter 156, January 29, 1597, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 293.

Botsch Zwingenberg von Sprinzenstein. Barbara was married to Hans Albrecht Sprinzenstein, who was Helena's uncle on her mother's side of the family. It is not clear when exactly Helena moved to Sprinzenstein to begin her time as a lady there. She was still living at home at the age of fourteen and by the age of twenty one, she was already established at court, so she must have left home sometime in her mid to late teens.²⁶⁵ Her tenure at Sprinzenstein lasted until 1592 when she moved to Archduke Maximilian's court in Munich, where she stayed for three years.

For Helena, such a varied court life could have offered a variety of opportunities to make connections or find a husband, but Helena never wrote about any offers of marriage or even possible matches. Only in one letter did she write to Christof about a man at court who was bothering her and asked him to please intervene on her behalf so that he would know his attentions were unwelcome and that she was not unprotected.²⁶⁶ She worried that her reputation would suffer if his attentions continued and just wished that the man would leave. Some of the text is illegible in the letter, but her fear and desperation were clear and she thanked Christof for his help, saying that she did not know what she would do if she did not have his help and advice.²⁶⁷ Other than this one man, however, Helena never wrote to Christof of any suitors, although she did write to him to encourage him to accept a beautiful, rich widow with 30,000*fl*.²⁶⁸ In comparison, Helena's limited dowry of 1,000*fl* seems particularly paltry and may not have made her the most

²⁶⁵ Christof Schallenberg, Letter 2, 1574, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 137; And Helena Schallenberg Einzelbrief 1, January 31, 1582, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁶⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 98, August 10, 1593, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 226-228.

²⁶⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 98, August 10, 1593, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 226-228.

²⁶⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, May 2, 1586, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

eligible match at court, but it was enough to allow her other four sisters to marry.²⁶⁹

Considering that her role in the marriage process was to consent rather than to actually select the husband (as discussed in Eva Maria's case), and she wrote to her brother for advice on all topics, the absence of any letters asking for his advice on possible marriage offers makes it likely that none were made.

In 1595, after at least thirteen years at court, Helena upset her devoutly Protestant family when she chose to convert to Catholicism and joined the convent in Landshut just northeast of Munich.²⁷⁰ Around the same time as she moved to the convent, Christof was fighting in the Turkish wars, and he died in 1597 as a result of an illness he contracted while with the military in Hungary.²⁷¹ Helena remained at the convent for thirty-five years, and during her tenure as a nun, she rose to the position of Abbess before the loss of her eyesight made her retire from the position. She died at the convent at the age of seventy in 1630.

Agency in Courtly Life

Political life in the early modern Hapsburg Empire was strictly divided along gender lines and the laws regarding shared authority between spouses did not transcend their own personal estates. Historian Heide Wunder differentiates the rights that a noblewoman could assume on behalf of her husband between inherited authority and

²⁶⁹ Helena Schallenberg letter 128, June 1595, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 254-256; And Stammbaum Schallenberg, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁷⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 6, November 13, 1584, in Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 141-142; and Hinterndorfer "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenbergs," 428.

²⁷¹ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenbergs," 426.

delegated authority.²⁷² Inherited authority, such as the rule and administration of an estate, was able to be shared between spouses. Juliana and Eva Maria demonstrated the extents to which that could be exercised. Delegated authority, on the other hand, such as a ministerial position at the Kaiser's court could not be shared between spouses, but was to be carried out entirely by the man to whom the position had been awarded. These positions were what the nobleman's education and *Kavalierstour* were intended to prepare him for, and young men spent time in service to other nobleman or in the military in with the aim of securing such a position. But just because ministerial positions at court were off limits to women, it did not mean that politics was an entirely male dominated arena. Women such as Helena played a role in early modern political life through the use of kinship networks.

For young ladies, the ostensible purpose of being sent to live at a different noble household and serve as a lady-in-waiting was to educate them in courtly life, make connections, and marry well.²⁷³ This did not mean, however, that she was meant to meet an eligible match and fall in love. As Eva Maria demonstrated, it was not up to the woman to select her husband, but rather the initiative needed to come from the prospective groom's family and would be approved by the prospective bride's family. Eva Maria was engaged and married from the relatively total isolation of her mother's house in Enns. Furthermore, as the opening story of the introduction demonstrated, Frau Alheim's personal connections which she made at court only caused her trouble by allowing her to fall in love with a man she had no chance of marrying. Olwen Hufton

²⁷² Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln," 54.

²⁷³ Hufton. *The Prospect before Her*, 68.

identified a shift in English and French noble houses during this period away from sending their daughters to other noble houses, and towards keeping them protected at home.²⁷⁴ Yet such a shift did not appear to have taken place in Upper Austria, indicating that the benefits derived from sending daughters to aristocratic courts outweighed the potential hazards such as Frau Alheim's doomed romance. As a result, since marriage was not the focus, then these benefits must have centered on the opportunities for education and connections which women could make at court.

These connections were not tangible positions or acknowledgements at court, and so they are difficult to trace or identify in the literature. Instead they were similar to the kinship networks that Juliana cultivated, which allowed women to make deals or arrangements behind the scenes. Judith Sabina Starhemberg provided a glimpse of one in a letter to her mother-in-law Juliana in 1629, when she recounted her recent meeting with the *Kaiserin*, the Empress Eleonora. Judith Sabina described how the past Saturday, she again saw the Empress and kissed her skirt "for our petition", then accompanied her to vespers. The petition was part of the Starhemberg attempts to prevent or reduce the amount of property that would be confiscated from them. Juliana was just getting ready to move out of Riedegg and negotiations were still ongoing both with Herbersdorf and at the Kaiser's court to prevent this from happening. Women of all levels of society had the right to bring petitions to their rulers in order to protest particular issues, and Judith Sabina's story demonstrates how she worked on behalf of the family at the same time as her husband negotiated in his circles.²⁷⁵ The expectation was not that the Empress could

²⁷⁴ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 68-69.

²⁷⁵ Heide Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln," 53.

make the decision to rescind the confiscations, but rather that she would then petition the Kaiser to reconsider his position. It also demonstrates the ways in which such transactions were carried out, where the petitions were delivered verbally as part of the Empress' daily activities, not a formal meeting in which a written petition was presented. For Judith Sabina, her letter made it clear that this was not the first time she had done this, as she prefaced the story with "again." She must have been making progress as the Empress had started to recognize her, and asked one of the attendants if the lady with the big belly was Starhemberg's wife.²⁷⁶ Judith Sabina ruefully admitted that "whoever wishes to have social aspirations here in Vienna must suffer, be silent, polite, and patient."²⁷⁷

For Helena, all of her letters from her time at court were written to her brother, and her advice to him largely focused on improving his relationships with other people at court. She warned Christof, for example, of a potential misunderstanding that might be causing some friction between himself and Hans Albrecht, and counseled him in how to navigate a solution.²⁷⁸ There were no letters to her parents, so it is not known if she was working on the family's behalf towards a particular goal at court or if her role there was just to generally build alliances on behalf of the Schallenberg family. She must have been successful in making alliances, as she would continue to use some of these connections later when she was in the convent. Helena must also have been good at her job as a lady-in-waiting or very well liked to have moved from the court at Sprinzenstein to the royal

²⁷⁶ Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, January 14, 1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁷⁷ Judith Sabina Starhemberg, Einzelbrief 5, January 14, 1629. *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁷⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 2, June 22, 1584; 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

court at Munich and to have been kept on for so long. The courts at which Helena found herself were part of the very highest echelons of Upper Austrian society, and poor service did result in dismissal, as her brother Hieronymus' example demonstrated, after he was thrown out of the court at Innsbruck for drinking and causing problems.²⁷⁹

Helena was unhappy at court however, and did not find it as easy as Judith Sabina to suffer in silence. This may have been due in part to Helena not having a personal cause to fight for that made it worthwhile. Unlike Judith Sabina, who was at court in 1629 fighting to help save her family's estates and lands, Helena was at court in the 1580's and 1590's when the relationship between the nobility and the Kaiser had not yet become a crisis. In any case, Helena expressed no enthusiasm for the role and from the very first letter in the archives from this period, she was unhappy in her position. In 1586, just a few years after starting, she wrote to Christof saying that at most she could stand it one more year, but not any longer.²⁸⁰ In 1593, she was still there, and begged Christof to help her come home, saying that her aunt had it out for her, her uncle was a liar, and their father did not see any reason to let her gallivant around when she was so well taken care of in her current situation.²⁸¹ Hieronymus also found himself in a situation where he complained of being unprotected and unjustly treated at his court. Helena reported to Christof that Hieronymus was being slighted, for example by not being allowed to play the lute.²⁸² While not getting to play the lute was a relatively trivial complaint, the idea

²⁷⁹ Hinterndorfer, "Das Beispiel Christof Von Schallenberg," 428.

²⁸⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, May 2, 1586; 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁸¹ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 21, September 21, 1584 in Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 160-161; and Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 12, October 26, 1593, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁸² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, January 31, 1582, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

that Hieronymus' lord would micromanage his attending gentlemen to the point of choosing their musical instruments is startling. Hieronymus' situation and lack of ability to advocate for himself provides some context for Helena's situation. She and Hieronymus were completely dependent on their father and the elder of the house in which they served for protection. Such vulnerability was then perhaps not just influenced by gender, but also by where they stood in the family hierarchy, and where that family ranked in society. As the eldest son, Christof wielded power and influence that his next younger brother could not. And if Hieronymus, as a nobleman, could not assert his own wishes, then what chance did Helena have as woman with fewer legal rights than her brother?

Further compounding Helena's difficulties at court were financial ones. Virtually every one of her letters to Christof included some plea for help with money. At one point she asked him to borrow a necklace, and her discomfort and embarrassment was palpable as she told him that she only had the one necklace she wore every day, which would never do in such stately and fine company as the Munich royal court.²⁸³ She begged Christof to help her get the money that was owed to her, saying that the Sprinzensteins never once gave her what was due to her, but she was too proud to beg them for it and not authorized to use credit. The use of credit by nobles was a common practice at the time and Beatrix Bastl discussed its importance, particularly when children were sent to be part of the court at another noble house or when sons were sent on their *Kavalierstour*.²⁸⁴ Such experiences cost a great deal of money and rather than send their children with

²⁸³ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 12, October 26 1593, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁸⁴ Bastl, *Tugend, Liebe, Ehre*, 271-272.

money, parents would authorize a line of credit with a nearby noble family. Helena had asked Christof to convince her father to authorize a line of credit for her with the Starhemberg family so that she could buy some of the clothing she needed.²⁸⁵ It is unclear exactly how this worked for Helena, but it appears that she was asking for a line of credit against her dowry as that was the money her father held in trust for her.

In the high society of the Munich court, Helena's lack of money for her clothing was a constant source of pain for her. It was particularly frustrating as her uncle Hans Albrecht von Sprinzenstein, at whose house she was in service, had control over two inheritances which had been left to her, but refused to give her the money as he had need for it himself.²⁸⁶ Her repeated pleas to Christof must have caused him to send her some of his own money out of sympathy. In one letter, she told Christof not to just give her more of his own money- he had already done more than enough for her, but rather to help her collect what was owed to her.²⁸⁷ In her final letter to Christof, four years later, she was still asking for his help collecting this money from Herr Sprinzenstein, even suggesting that the matter be taken to the courts.²⁸⁸ Hermann Rebel examined the impact that these kinds of debt relationships had on the lower classes, in which family elders administered trust funds for their dependents, and were able to default on those debts with relative

²⁸⁵ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 12, October 26 1593, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁸⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, May 2, 1586, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁸⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 98, August 10, 1593, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 226-228.

²⁸⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 157, February 6 1597, in Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 293-295. (This letter is also cited as Einzelbrief 18 in 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen* and the date on that version is listed as April 15, 1497. The Hinterndorfer version records the actual date, but is missing the final paragraph which the *Briefe adeliger Frauen* version has.)

impunity.²⁸⁹ While most of Rebel's analysis focused on the experience of peasants in Upper Austria during this period, he did argue that this experience was shared across all levels of society where the inheritance or status of an individual representing the family took precedence over the needs and concerns of the remaining members of the family. For Helena, her financial struggles were subsumed by the needs of the Sprinzenstein family, which she served, and of her own family. Not only did Hans Albrecht prioritize his uses of her money over her own needs for it, her father also refused give her what she felt was her due and what she needed to properly represent the family at a royal court. The impact of those actions can be heard in the frustration and anger of Helena's letters. To her they served to minimize the sacrifices and contributions she was making for the family, and alienated her from them. They vividly demonstrate her expectation of mutual obligations within the family and her anger at that expectation not being met.

While Helena and Hieronymus shared a significant amount of resentment over how they were treated by their father and stepmother, the focus of their ire varied depending on who was writing the letter, with each one blaming the parent of the opposite sex. Helena's anger was focused on her father and she fumed that he ignored her because he had so many children.²⁹⁰ In one letter to Christof, she complained about not being given her share of their mother's inheritance because their father said he had so many debts and had to think of the other children too.²⁹¹ She even went on to calculate how much interest a year she and Hieronymus were losing by not having this money and

²⁸⁹ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 214-215.

²⁹⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3 (mislabeled 31), November 8, 1584, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁹¹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, May 2, 1586, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

how unfair it was that neither of them were given what they deserved.²⁹² “Our lovely father is making sure that I have to spend a lot of money that I otherwise could be saving.”²⁹³ Hieronymus’ bitterness was directed more towards his step-mother Suzanna, and he ranted about “that woman”, who once she got her hands on something, there was no chance of anyone ever getting it back.²⁹⁴ When Helena was trying to have her dowry paid to the convent so that she could join, Wolfgang refused to pay, and Hieronymus again managed to blame Suzanna for that, accusing her of stirring up bad feelings between their father and his children. “It is all our stepmother’s fault, God forgive her, and one day all of it will be known.”²⁹⁵ Helena and Hieronymus both asked that some of their letters be destroyed lest the wrong person read them, and Helena made complicated arrangements so that she could get letters from Christof in secret.²⁹⁶ Those actions speak of mistrust of their family members, but also of the greater fear of consequences should their feelings become known. The kinship networks that bound them to their family, despite all the drawbacks, were still important enough that they could not risk losing them entirely by letting their feelings become public. In the political world of Upper Austrian courtly life, where family loyalties were fundamental to identity, public disloyalty to their family could have been catastrophic.

²⁹² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 5, May 2, 1586, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁹³ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 9, January 15, 1593, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁹⁴ Hieronymus Schallenberg, Letter 138, October 10, 1595, in Hinterdorfer, *Sämtliche werke*, 265.

²⁹⁵ Hieronymus Schallenberg, Letter 113, June 19, 1594, in Hinterdorfer, *Sämtliche werke*, 243.

²⁹⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 10, 12, 1617-1618, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*; And Helena Schallenberg, Letter 157, February 6 1597, in Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 293-295; And Hieronymus Schallenberg, Letter 138, October 10, 1595, in Hinterdorfer, *Sämtliche werke*, 267.

Kinship Networks and Convent Life

For Helena, the consequence of these difficult dynamics was that in a society where a woman's legal protections came from either her father or her husband, Helena felt she had neither, and was stuck in the difficult position of being unmarried and feeling overlooked by her father. The solution she came up with was a creative one: she converted to Catholicism and became a nun, thereby transferring legal authority over her from her father to the Catholic Church. The relative power of the Church was so much stronger than that of the Schallenberg family that she was able to run the risk cutting off all ties to her family as a result of this move. Although her connection to her father was lost, Helena strategically created new kinship networks through creative money lending agreements with her nephews, which ensured some long-term connection to the family.

Although Helena did not convert until 1594, she had been considering it for some time. She first expressed an interest in joining a convent early on, in 1584 after Archduchess Magdalena arranged for one of Helena's aunts to join her convent in Hall in Tirol.²⁹⁷ Her aunt (also named Magdalena) was unhappily married to an Italian nobleman named Scipio di Piccolomini who was having a well-known affair.²⁹⁸ While historians claim that the keeping of a mistress by a husband was generally well accepted at the time, it would only be taken seriously and lead to permanent separation if he did something egregious like bringing his mistress into the household.²⁹⁹ The exact nature and extent of Scipio's trespasses are not clear, but he apparently went so far as to threaten to kill

²⁹⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3 (mislabeled 31), November 8, 1584, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁹⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 1, January 31, 1582, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

²⁹⁹ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 262.

Magdalena, at which point one of her brothers finally intervened and Magdalena was sent to a convent and the mistress was sent to prison.³⁰⁰ Helena had taken a personal interest in her aunt Magdalena's case and often wrote to Christof for news of her, since she herself was not allowed to correspond directly with her aunt. The idea of joining her aunt in the convent in Hall intrigued Helena. Archduchess Magdalena offered to allow her to join, but Helena was still unsure if she could do so in terms of her faith.³⁰¹ At that point in 1584, Helena was still Protestant and feared that she would not be capable of changing her beliefs, despite her yearning to live with her aunt.

Ten years later, in 1594, Helena had made the decision to convert and wrote to Christof for his support after having done so. The *Hofmeister*, or Master of the Household, at Munich was let go and several nobles had to leave at the same time. Helena took this opportunity to finally leave court life behind and wrote to Christof in Vienna to ask if she could stay with him and his family until she found a new situation.³⁰² She was able to join the convent at Landshut near Munich in April 1595. Landshut was a small Franciscan convent, also known as "Holy Cross," which was set up in a converted house with a small, attached church and no graveyard of its own.³⁰³ Based on Helena's descriptions, life there was comfortable and informal. Historians have found that convents at the time were not yet as clearly cloistered off as they would later become, and

³⁰⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3 (mislabelled 31), November 8, 1584, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰¹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 3 (mislabelled 31), November 8, 1584, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 13, June 11, 1594, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰³ Anton Landersdorfer, "Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut: Von den Anfängen bis zur Säkularisation 1802/03" (Diplomarbeit, Universität München, 1979), 175-176.

in some cases were less about religious life and more about communal living.³⁰⁴ Helena may have selected this particular convent due in part to its less structured set up, as when the convent was reformed in the 1620s, she was irate at the changes which left the women fully cloistered off.³⁰⁵

Helena wrote to Christof to expressed her gratitude to him for his support of her through this transitional period and made it clear that without him, she did not feel like she could have converted, “Thank the dear Lord in heaven that you are now at a place where I can have the faith and church in which I hope to die.”³⁰⁶ During the transitional period between leaving the court at Munich, her conversion, and finding a place at Landshut, her letter made it clear that she could not return home to Piberstein. Her father strongly disapproved of her choice, and for many years she was the only Catholic in the family. The next Schallenberg to convert would be thirty-four years later when Karl, Eva Maria’s husband, converted in 1628. Helena’s choice to convert against the express wishes of her father was a risky one and depended on the influence of the Church to see it through. Historians have argued that only the Catholic Church wielded enough power and influence for women to overthrow paternal influence in order for them to choose not to marry.³⁰⁷ For Helena to sever her ties and connections to her family, she needed both the refuge and protection of the Church to do so.

³⁰⁴ Cavallo and Warner, *Widowhood*, 21.

³⁰⁵ Landersdorfer, “Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut,” 176; And Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 25, 40, September 1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 13, June 11, 1594, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰⁷ Hufton, *The Prospect before Her*, 105; And Cavallo and Warner, *Widowhood*, 21.

How the convent and Church used their power to protect Helena can be seen in the struggle with her father to transfer her dowry to the convent. The convent had a stake in collecting her dowry as legally, Helena's conversion was considered the same as marriage, and therefore the money became theirs. That Helena viewed it as a marriage as well can be seen in how she referred to choosing the "highest, holiest bridegroom" when she spoke of joining the convent.³⁰⁸ The convent at Landshut in particular did not have any additional sources of income and depended on the dowries of wealthy novitiates for its funding.³⁰⁹ As a result, it was particularly motivated to help Helena collect her money. After Helena's first year at Landshut as a novitiate, she wrote to Christof in March 1596 asking for his help in convincing her father to pay out her dowry to the convent, as without it, she would not be able to stay.³¹⁰ Her Abbess finally sent a letter to the Governor of Upper Austria regarding the situation with Helena's father, asserting the Church's legal right to her dowry.³¹¹ Helena's father must have acquiesced, as the convent accepted Helena and her future letters to Christof only discussed collecting the money she inherited from her mother which Herr Sprinzenstein had control over.³¹² The other inheritance money that had been left to her was still owed to Helena, not her husband (i.e., the Church), so they still lacked the legal authority to collect those funds. The fact that the Abbess had to resort to legal means to coerce Helena's father into compliance shows how unwilling he was to pay out the money and could even have been an attempt

³⁰⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 14, March 3, 1596, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁰⁹ Landersdorfer, "Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut," 177.

³¹⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 14, March 3, 1596, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³¹¹ Helena Schallenberg, Letter 128, June 1595, In Hinterndorfer, *Sämtliche Werke*, 254.

³¹² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17, March, 1597, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

to sabotage Helena's efforts to join the convent. On an individual level, the events demonstrate the authority that fathers held over their daughters. On an institutional level, they point to the political and legal influence of the Catholic Church, which even in Protestant Upper Austria, exceeded that of the noble families in some areas. The Church's inaction on Helena's behalf regarding the Sprinzenstein monies shows one of the limits of the Church's power, as it could not reach into a family dispute unless it had some legal or financial stake of its own.

Helena's dowry and acceptance as a nun in the convent only guaranteed her room and board, but the nuns had to pay for their own clothing and other expenses from their own money.³¹³ Without such extra money, she would be forced to work at the convent, an option she found unacceptable, particularly during winter, not just because of the hardship, but also because it meant she would be mocked by the other noble ladies in the convent.³¹⁴ It was important to Helena that even in her new situation that she be cared for according to her station in life, so she had to find a way to finance this decision. She found a creative way to do so after Christof's death by lending the inheritance money controlled by Herr Sprinzenstein to Christof's sons Karl and Georg.³¹⁵ This was a pretty strategic move on Helena's part, for Herr Sprinzenstein would find it much harder to overlook the claims of Christof's heir than those of some obscure niece in a convent. It also required that her nephews pay her annual interest on the money, which Herr Sprinzenstein was not doing, thereby providing her with additional income.

³¹³ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17, March, 1597, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³¹⁴ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17, March, 1597, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³¹⁵ Helena Schallenberg, 57 Briefe, 1613-1629, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

There was one more benefit to be gained from loaning her nephews money, which was the securing of a new kinship bond. The annual collection of the interest payments from her nephews guaranteed that she retained contact with her nephews who could then advocate for her if she ever needed them to. Hermann Rebel found similar examples of peasants in Upper Austria using the extension of credit to those in authority as a way of guaranteeing the protection of that authority.³¹⁶ Helena's solution indicates that this solution was not just a tool used by peasants, but a more common one used by people as a way of increasing their relative power. Having her nephews as allies on the outside was valuable enough that Helena traded the possibility of access to all the money, for the guarantee of a small annual amount along with the promise of relationships.

Despite these financial struggles, Helena sounded much happier once she joined the convent. She triumphantly celebrated her choice of "the highest, heavenly bridegroom" and generously offered to Christof that he could now reap the benefits of her close relationship to God, saying that she would pray just as much for him as she did for herself.³¹⁷ She celebrated that she was finally at a place where she could serve in her faith and where she was happy in her heart.³¹⁸ So much of her letter focused on the issue of choice and her joy at being able to finally make it for herself. Whitney Leeson's examination of an Abbess' struggle in fifteenth century Avignon to secure her position as a nun and Abbess after the sudden reappearance of her presumed dead husband included

³¹⁶ Rebel, *Peasant Classes*, 215.

³¹⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 14, March 3, 1596, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³¹⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 14, March 3, 1596, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

a similar evocation and celebration of the importance of choice.³¹⁹ Given Helena's powerlessness over her own affairs and her many years of service at various courts which she did not enjoy, the impact of choosing how she would spend the remainder of her life, and the security of knowing that no one could take it away from her must have been a relief for her. She continued to be thrilled to hear from Christof, but his letters were no longer her only joy and she gushed to him that she was so happy in her faith she would not trade it even to be a princess.³²⁰ Tragically, that joyous note was in her last letter to Christof before he died and no correspondence of Helena's exists in the archive until more than 15 years later as she wrote to her now grown nephews. The tone of those letters was more somber, with Helena complaining of health problems and loneliness, fussing over her nephews, and offering advice on everything from where they should travel to whom they should marry.³²¹

The extent of Helena's involvement in her nephews' affairs demonstrates one way in which she maintained her relationships even from her relative isolation in the convent. It was clear that she transferred some of the affection she felt for Christof onto his sons, and her relationships with Karl and Georg grew over time. When Karl was still studying, Helena fussed over Karl about buying a hat so he would not catch a cold or which houses he should stop and stay overnight at on his trip up to see her.³²² But as he got older, her focus shifted to the bigger issues of marriage, religion, and money. She repeatedly urged

³¹⁹ Whitney Leeson, "Rising above Injustice: An Abbess Secures Her Identity in Fifteenth-Century Avignon," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 5 (2010): 209-216.

³²⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 18, 1597, 18 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²¹ Helena Schallenberg, 1613-1629, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²² Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 2, 4, 8, 1613-1616, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Karl to convert to Catholicism, settle down and find a good wife, and to be more responsible with money.³²³

Helena also made sure to help her nephews whenever she could. When Wolf Christof had to sell Rosenau to settle his debts, she offered to use her connections to help him find a good buyer.³²⁴ During the 1619-1620 Nobles' rebellion, Helena was appalled that her nephews were taking part despite the risk of losing the family properties and titles. She urged them repeatedly to make nice with Herbersdorf and to get to know him, and assured them that she would use her connections with the Bavarian court to see if she could gain any allowances for them there.³²⁵ Her letters reflect a continued contact with the people she knew at court, including a Countess from Graz, one of the ladies at Sprinzenstein, and even Maria Salome, governor Herbersdorf's wife.³²⁶ Maria Salome visited Helena on several occasions, delivering gifts and money for Helena from her nephews, which points to a more casual friendship between the ladies rather than a purely formal acquaintanceship. Much like Juliana, Helena displayed a knack for knowing people and her skill at maintaining those connections meant that her time in the convent did not equate to being cut off from the world.

Indeed, Helena's time at the convent was marked by a surprising amount of latitude and freedom in behavior, and a preference for disregarding rules in order to follow her own wishes. Early on in her career as a nun, all letters were being read by the Abbess, who approved the content. Helena found her way around this by making

³²³ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 8, 11, 1616-1617, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²⁴ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 16, January 27, 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²⁵ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 24-26, 1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 8, 20, 34, 45, 1616-1622, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

arrangements to send letters in secret, by having them addressed to a friend who lived nearby, who would then smuggle the letters in to Helena, and presumably smuggled out the replies.³²⁷ Later, when she was Abbess herself, she made arrangements for her nephews to visit the convent, making sure their visits did not conflict with any visits by the patriarch and other Church leadership who disapproved of such visits.³²⁸ She even encouraged friendships and correspondence between her nephews and some of her nuns and allowed Karl Christof to roam freely through the convent, which led to a scandal that threatened the reputation of the convent.³²⁹ One of the nuns, Katharina Gaishofer, had apparently written some scandalous letters “which were unsuitable for a nun” to Karl’s manservant, Hans.³³⁰ Rather than find this troubling or inappropriate in any way, Helena was more concerned with sweeping the scandal under the rug and destroying any evidence. She wrote repeated letters to Karl insisting he ask around to find out how far the scandal was known, find any of these letters and destroy them, and do damage control by writing to the church leadership that this whole thing was completely false.³³¹ Karl complied and the scandal was successfully averted.

Helena and Karl’s response to the scandal highlights some of the attitudes towards the roles and expectations of nuns in early modern Upper Austria. While some nuns committed to a full vow of celibacy and a lifetime commitment to the Church, as Helena

³²⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 17, January 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 7, 16, 25, 26, 1616-1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³²⁹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 10, 12, 1617-1618, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³³⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 10, 1617, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³³¹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 10, 12, 16, 1617-1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

did, others did not take the celibacy vows, and could choose to leave again and marry.³³² Indeed, one particular novitiate at Helena's convent was suggested to Karl as possible good prospect as wife for him as she was particularly beautiful and had a dowry of 15,000*fl*, if only he would convert.³³³ Sexuality within convents was also not uncommon, and historians have examined various aspects of it, from the prevalence of relationships between priests and nuns in convents, to clerics receiving treatment for syphilis in an early modern Spanish hospital.³³⁴ Historian Mary Laven argues that a lack of a "genuine sense of vocation" among nuns and clerics meant that they might have had less reason to commit to a lifetime of celibacy.³³⁵ For women who chose the convent, not out of devotion to religion but rather as a means of protecting themselves, their attitudes towards celibacy were not as clear-cut as the Church perhaps wanted them to be. The fact that the letters became a scandal does indicate some societal expectation of adherence to celibacy by nuns. On a personal level, Helena's response to this scandal demonstrated a singular lack of concern about the actions that caused it. She continued to encourage her nephews to visit and for the other nuns to write to them and her apologies for not having paid Karl's bar bill on one of his visits were more profuse than any contrition she showed for letting her nephew and his servants mingle freely with the nuns.³³⁶

³³² Wunder, "Herrschaft und öffentliches Handeln," 39.

³³³ Katharina Gaishofer, in Helena Schallenberg Einzelbrief 57, January 27, 1619, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³³⁴ Mary Laven, "Sex and Celibacy in Early Modern Venice," *Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001): 865-888; And Cristian Berco, "Syphilis, Sex, and Marriage in Early Modern Spain," *Journal of Early Modern History* 15 (2011): 223-253.

³³⁵ Laven, "Sex and Celibacy," 882, 884.

³³⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 2, December 15, 1613, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Helena's response to the scandal also demonstrates the extent to which she viewed the position of Abbess as one which enabled her to run the convent for her own pleasure and benefit, ensuring that her nephews could visit and she could send them gifts of books, pictures, and fruit trees from the convent.³³⁷ She also expressed some pleasure at not answering to anyone other than the occasional visiting cleric or patriarch, and wrote happily to Karl about when the patriarch and guardian would leave, as well as how much she enjoyed being able to use the musical instrument he left behind to play music with her fellow nuns.³³⁸ In a lifetime of service, her time as Abbess was a rare opportunity for Helena to put her wishes first. On the other hand, the role came with many duties, and she was the first to say that she did not feel up those responsibilities, that she was tired of the "daily martyrdom" of the work and wanted to give up the position.³³⁹ As early as 1616, Helena considered passing the position along to a fellow sister, but as the position generally tended to be a lifetime appointment, she did not do so until her failing eyesight made her work impossible in late 1620.³⁴⁰

Around the same time as Helena had to retire from being Abbess, the convent began to undergo a series of reforms initiated by *Generalkommissar* Antonius von Galbiato from Rome, who had just completed his reforms of the nearby Franciscan monastery in Landshut.³⁴¹ For the monks, these reforms included some financial reforms

³³⁷ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 29, 33, 40, 1616-1622, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³³⁸ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 6, April 1616, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³³⁹ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 6, 11, 26, 1616-1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁴⁰ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 8, 27, 1616-1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁴¹ Landersdorfer, "Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut," 176.

that limited what kinds of money they could collect and use for their monastery.³⁴² For the nuns, the reforms focused instead on prayer reforms, as well as a construction project that changed the convent from its existing residential style to a tightly enclosed space where contact with the outside world was limited to small interaction through bars.³⁴³ Helena's letters to Karl during this process seethed with resentment and anger towards the "conceited foreigners" and "devilish antichrists" who were going to cloister them away in such darkness that would not be able to see the heaven they were supposed to be praying to.³⁴⁴ The increased surveillance and control also came with tighter restrictions again on letters, so Helena once again arranged for a friend to smuggle her letters through.³⁴⁵ Between her health problems and the reforms, the tone of Helena's letters began to get much darker and more somber.

Significantly, around 1620, the tone of her faith changed and she sounded more pragmatic and less devout. Most letters contained some kind of entreaty for Karl, Wolf, and Georg to convert, not for the sake of their souls, but rather so that they could stay in Upper Austria and maintain their properties.³⁴⁶ It is difficult to know how much of these letters were a reflection of her actual state of mind and beliefs as she grew older or if they were influenced by outside factors. Several things may have accounted for this change in tone. Large sections of these letters are transcribed rather than quoted verbatim, so the transcriber may have chosen to leave out some of the professions of faith. In addition,

³⁴² Landersdorfer, "Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut," 155.

³⁴³ Landersdorfer, "Die Stifte und Klöster der Stadt Landshut," 176.

³⁴⁴ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbriefe 25, 40, September 1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁴⁵ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 24, August 17, 1620, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

³⁴⁶ Helena Schallenberg, Einzelbrief 38, October 6, 1627, 57 Briefe, *Briefe adeliger Frauen*.

Helena was dictating her letters to Katharina and it is unclear how much of her own voice Katharina was using in the letters. Finally, Helena may have simply been strategic in her approach, believing that her nephews might find the material argument more compelling than the spiritual one. Whatever the reason though, Helena's letters towards the end of her life were fairly somber and consumed with worry for herself and her nephews, but with little of the joy that she had previously found in her faith. They do stand in direct opposition to her earlier letters to Christof, which meant that either her faith had undergone a profound shift, or that either at the beginning or end of her life as a nun, she intentionally framed religion as a means to an end.

Chapter IV.

Conclusion

For noblewomen in early modern Upper Austria, the legal and social frameworks that governed their lives were complex. Rights were determined by a variety of factors including gender, marital status, and social rank but also influenced by societal expectations, contractual agreements, family obligations, and the rank of their family relative to others. The resulting outcomes were as varied as the women who experienced them. Juliana was able to make the most of her role as a married woman, exercising broad authority directly over her estate, as well as indirectly through her influence on her sons. The most successful of the three women in terms of being able to have a say in the events in her life, Juliana used her kinship network to assist and support the people in it. Eva Maria, on the other hand, shared the exact same legal status as Juliana, yet she was usurped in her role and stripped her of her authority to make decisions, leaving her dependent on a brother-in-law for protection and assistance. Lacking any kind of institutional support or kinship network, she had no recourse when her husband and trustees acted against her interests. Helena, as an unmarried woman, operated from the most vulnerable legal position of the three women, as she was completely subject to her father's authority. When she felt that her wishes were not being respected, and in the absence of a marriage to take her out from under her father's guardianship, she sought out the assistance and protection of the Catholic Church as well as leveraged financial obligations in order to change her situation.

Common to all three women was the expectation that the obligations between themselves and their family and society were mutual. Juliana's commitment to upholding her family's estates was reciprocated through the support and protection of her sons when she was widowed and sent into exile. Eva Maria and Helena, on the other hand, endured the opposite experience where their obligations to their family were not reciprocated with protection or support. As a result, both women found the burden of staying in their family greater than its benefits. Significantly, both women used religion to make their break from the family, with Eva Maria choosing to retain her religion in spite of her husband's conversion and Helena choosing to convert despite her father's disapproval. In doing so, each woman was able to use the implications of that choice to shift the balance of power in their relationships.

For Helena and Eva Maria, the use of religion as a means of establishing their own authority was possible for two reasons. First, on all levels of society, religious belief was framed as a personal choice that every individual had the ability to make. That the Kaiser sought to influence that decision through the coercion of "convert or exile" underlines how much was at stake. From peasants to nobles, people had to balance their personal beliefs with social and economic security in their choice of religions. But the very divisiveness and finality of that choice is what gave it the authority to upend social and legal norms and provided Eva Maria and Helena with an alternative option.

Secondly, in the case of Helena, the Catholic Church as an institution was the only one with enough legal, social, and political authority to allow her to escape the legal bond to her father without marriage. And significantly for Helena, the choice to convert and join the convent was entirely Helena's choice, not her father's as a marriage would

have been. Her letters to Christof reflect how much she relished that opportunity. The support of the Abbess, with the weight of the Church and the governor behind her, was able to force Helena's father to comply where years of requests by her brothers and herself had failed.

Yet Helena could not have reached the protection of the Church without the support of her brother through the transitional period between leaving court and joining the convent. The significance of kinship networks in giving elite women the opportunity to express their agency was fundamental. These kinship networks formed mutually dependent relationships, which allowed elite women a means of weaving a protective netting around themselves. It cannot be overlooked that the ability to manage the relationships involved in an extensive kinship network such as Juliana's was as much a skill as managing an estate. Eva Maria's lack of kinship network to fall back on made her particularly vulnerable to being overlooked, even in contractual agreements where the law was in her favor.

The subjective power of contractual obligations, where power trumped the written agreements, was a vulnerability for all women in contractual disputes. Herr Sprinzenstein and Helmhard Jörger felt no obligation to return the funds that they held in trust for Helena and Eva Maria, and the men borrowed freely against those funds without fear of repercussions. While the outcome of Eva Maria's dispute with Helmhard is unknown, Helena at least was able to resolve hers by switching the balance of power and leveraging the conventions surrounding the issuance of credit to her benefit. By loaning the money to her nephews, she shifted the burden of collection onto them, thereby leveling the playing field in terms of social rank with Herr Sprinzenstein. She also secured an annual

income from the interest payments on this money as well as some contact between herself and her nephews. In doing so, she was able to retain contact with a family which otherwise might have written her off completely.

The creative use of credit by noblewomen as a means of manipulating balance of power dynamics would make an intriguing avenue for continued study. The letters included in this study provide a glimpse into how this practice could have been used. Additional sources, such as their wills and inventories would be critical to more fully understanding the practice. Given the importance of credit in Upper Austrian society and the frequent references to its issuance, it is likely that a better understanding of its use would add to the understanding of gender and power dynamics among the Upper Austrian nobility in the early modern era.

The letters included in this study offer various other avenues for study. Paternal attitudes towards their children and their roles in childrearing, coping mechanisms for grief, as well as the dynamics of sibling relationships are among the many topics that these letters offer insight into and which could be explored further. Above all else, the letters bring to life the women who wrote them and the diversity of voices and experiences among elite women in early modern Upper Austria.

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