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Almut Spalding. *Elise Reimarus (1735-1805): The Muse of Hamburg, A Woman of the Enlightenment.* rzburg: KÖÆ' ÂÂ¶nigshausen and Neumann, 2005. 614 pp. EUR 68.00 (paper), ISBN 978-3-8260-2813-7.

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Published on H-German (October, 2006)

Recovery of an Eighteenth-Century Woman Writer

Elise Reimarus, whose life spanned the latter two-thirds of the eighteenth century, was known in her day as the intellectual, unmarried member of the well-known patrician Reimarus family in Hamburg and as a writer of children's literature. Almut Spalding's thorough research into what turned out to be rich archival sources has unearthed a wealth of material and texts by and about Reimarus and resulted in a splendid literary biography. Spalding also publishes some 200 pages of Reimarus's texts, mostly from manuscripts, ranging from poetry to Reimarus's quite personal last will and testament.

Reimarus grew up and spent most of her life in the enlightened circles of the educated elite in eighteenth-century Hamburg. She received an excellent education and became an important voice in the diverse landscape of education in the city. As she remained unmarried, she helped raise and educate her brother's two eldest children, then devoted her life to education and to the writing of educational and children's literature, and the writing of poetry. For over a century, Reimarus's writings for children appeared in four languages across Europe, but she limited the circulation of her poetry and more personal reflections to a small audience of friends. Her "tea table" was a literary salon–a forum of intellectual exchange for enlightened friends, guests and visitors of Hamburg.

Almut Spalding gives us a detailed portrait of Reimarus, her many family ties, her networking, her school days, her search for identity, her social gatherings and her educational and political efforts. Her work offers at the same time a rich picture of Hamburg polite society and culture from the 1730s through the end of the century. Especially valuable are the insights into educational opportunities and lifestyle in the early and mid-eighteenth century, since our notions about the Enlightenment are often distorted by developments after the French Revolution. Spalding's research adds this important dimension to studies by Anne-Charlott Trepp about Hamburg bourgeois families around 1800 and Rebekka Habermas's research on two south German families.[1] Both authors have investigated later-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century family networks. In her de-

tailed portrayal of the Reimarus and the Sieveking family networks, Spalding can show the remarkably well-functioning families and households, whose members took care of each other, including the servants. What appears to set this potrayal of Hamburg culture apart is the progressive view of education, especially also for women, and the interest in literature. Spalding's focus is on Reimarus's literary work–her poetry and educational writings. Spalding has appended the text of Reimarus's unpublished writings (most of them from the Staatsarchiv Hamburg), genealogical tables of the Reimarus family, a bibliography of Reimarus's published works, a general bibliography and a detailed index.

The attractive book cover shows the silhouette in a pen drawing "Elise Reimarus at the Tea Table" (ca. 1784) reading a poem. An outstanding collection of illustrations is appended. Spalding acknowledges the generous assistance of Hinrich Sieveking of Munich and the Sieveking family, who count Reimarus among their ancestors, and who provided access to private family papers and widely dispersed collections. The sixty portraits, contemporary pictures and drawings are a fitting and eye-catching conclusion to this comprehensive, informative volume. Spalding has achieved what she set out to do in an exemplary way: "to reclaim Elise Reimarus' writings, to reconstruct her biography, and to consider her contribution to the German Enlightenment" (p. 311).

Notes

[1]. Anne-Charlott Trepp, *Sanfte MÃ¤nnlichkeit und selbstÃ¤ndige Weiblichkeit: Frauen und MÃ¤nner im Hamburger BÃ¼rgertum zwischen 1770 und 1840* (GÃ¶ttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996).

[2]. Rebekka Habermas, *Frauen und MÃ¤nner des BÃ¼rgertums: Eine Familiengeschichte (1750-1850)* (GÃ¶ttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002).

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Citation: Barbara Becker-Cantarino. Review of Spalding, Almut, *Elise Reimarus (1735-1805): The Muse of Hamburg, A Woman of the Enlightenment.* H-German, H-Net Reviews. October, 2006.

URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12390

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