**ASKEY ­— Queen**

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**Queen Luise of Prussia, a Digital Hagiography**

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Popular biographies of Queen Luise of Prussia (1776–1810, r. 1797–1810) written in the second half of the nineteenth century uniformly adhere to what Wulf Wülfing has called a ‘stations of the cross’ structure (Wülfing, 1984). Independent of whether the biography focuses on her domestic life, her personal character and temperament, or her influence at court, it relates and pays homage to canonical moments in Luise’s life story: her childhood encounter with Goethe’s mother, her presence at the coronation of the last Holy Roman Emperor, her meeting with her future husband, and several instances of informal, uncourtly conduct upon becoming princess. Biographies written for a variety of intended audiences (the German people, young Germans, young ladies, etc.) all adhere to the same narrative thread. While biographies on the same subject might be expected to follow a similar time line, popular treatments of Luise’s life and times tend to treat the same set of life anecdotes using the same language (Askey, 2013). While Luise’s function as a secular Prussian saint is one reason for the similarity of these biographies, another is their grounding in the same foundational texts. After Luise’s death in 1810, two biographies written by members of the Prussian court reached the public. King Friedrich Wilhelm III’s court pastor, Ruleman Friedrich Eylert, published *Charakter-Züge und historische Fragmente aus dem Leben des Königs von Preussen Friedrich Wilhelm III* (Characteristics and Historical Fragments form the Life of King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia), a multivolume court history that contained over one volume of information on Queen Luise. And Luise’s lady in waiting, Countess Sophie Marie von Voss, published *Neunundsechzig Jahre am preussischen Hofe; aus den Erinnerungen der Oberhofmeisterin Sophie Marie Gräfin von Voss* (Sixty-Nine Years at the Prussian Court: The Memories of the Senior Lady in Waiting Countess Sophie Marie von Voss)*.* This poster will introduce a digitization and textual analysis project that brings court and popular biographies into conversation with one another.

While the court biographies are available digitally, most of the popular biographies, especially those for children, are not. Libraries in the nineteenth century did not generally collect children’s literature, and so my personal collection of around a dozen Luise biographies for young readers will be digitized. Our team at the Sherman Centre for Digital Scholarship will OCR the biographies, experimenting with ABBYY, OmniPage, and Tesseract to achieve optimal results with the notoriously difficult German *Fraktur* typescript. Once the corpus of official court and popular biographies has been created, we will perform standard text mining on the body of texts for young people to confirm or refute personal close readings. Our text mining queries will focus on the frequency of selected key terms relating to Luise’s life story, as well as the frequency of certain gendered textual markers (such as the word *Gemüt*—temperament, or words associated with clothing or fashion). The information gleaned from text mining will contribute to a scholarly discussion not only on the queen but on exemplarity, female childhood, and the gender discourse of the public sphere in the long nineteenth century.

The final step involves running subsets of the popular biographies (for the general public, for young people) and the court biographies through a comparison engine such as Juxta to determine adherence or deviation from a supposed ur-text. In the context of my previous work on Queen Luise and her literary function as exemplar for young German women, my hopes for the comparison step of the process are quite high. I use Voyant and Juxta to focus on specific language tokens that provide insight into gender norms and expectations, references to Luise’s physicality, and the development of nationalist discourse (apparent where the queen’s use of French at the court is set against her domestic use of German).

The poster will illustrate the resource creation process (digitization and OCR of Fraktur texts, accessibility of that corpus for other scholars) as well as the first stages of textual analysis using the corpus.

**References**

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