

Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme



**Persson, Fabian. Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court:
Power, Risk, and Opportunity**

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Volume 44, numéro 2, printemps 2021

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1082724ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i2.37553>

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Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Vernqvist, J. (2021). Compte rendu de [Persson, Fabian. Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 44(2), 266–268.
<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i2.37553>

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The monograph also provides stories of women in modern day America who have been victims of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and sexual slavery. These are interspersed through the first and last chapters of the text in places where the same themes reoccur from the medieval to the present day. In this way, Paoella makes his study's relevance clear: human trafficking is an ongoing issue that requires attention to both its history and its present-day occurrences.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i2.37552>

Persson, Fabian.

Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity.

Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021. Pp. 340. ISBN 978-9-4637-2520-0 (hardcover) €109.

In *Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity*, Fabian Persson creates a map of the foreign and national women appointed at, or members of, the Swedish court during the early modern period. This extensive study is divided into three main parts, covering many queens, princesses, chamber maids, maids of honour, and more—all connected to the Swedish elite over a period of three hundred years, roughly from the 1500s to the 1800s. While previous studies on the Swedish court have primarily focused on individual women, Persson seeks to explore a much broader view, revealing what possibilities and restrictions royal and courtly women faced in terms of agency and power.

The first part of the study, entitled “Outsiders,” gives the impression that it will cover rare findings: about ordinary people, the peasants and farmers, and the poor. However, depending on how one interprets the author's intention, the title promises more than it delivers. Certainly, Persson does manage to tell a small piece of this rare, previously untold history, but the focus is still—naturally, due to the material preserved—on the court's efforts to provide help for the less privileged. This task was taken more seriously by female regents than male, an issue discussed with particular interest in relation to Queen

Dowager Maria Eleonora's charity efforts in the 1630s. The archival documents reveal that she showed compassion towards beggars, soldiers, poor peasants, and widows.

The second part, "Insiders," initially discusses the transmission of women at court among European countries. Mainly, the international attendees at court were brought to Sweden together with princesses marrying into the Swedish Royal family. The custom lasted until 1654, when the Holstein native Hedvig Eleonora (1636–1715) came to wed Charles X and became the last to be accompanied by foreign women from her home court. These women were often young, stayed a few years in their mistress' service gaining a courtly education, and were then married themselves—preferably to a nobleman within the courtly network. Such movements were in line with the broader context of courts in Europe at the time, as many families married into others to secure stability or to gain power in broader regions. Courtly women thus played a central part in the networks among the nations of power.

However, not all courtly women were simply pieces on a chess board. On the question of the degree to which women served their families or themselves, Persson convincingly provides arguments and archival material such as women's letter writing in favour of individual women's agency. Certainly, as the author states, the goals of an individual woman and the ones of her parents were often intertwined, but they were "not identical" (122). Many families strived for their daughters (and sons) to get positions at court. It was a matter of economy, status, and, in the best of outcomes, power. In the Swedish context, Persson discusses several examples of women who either succeeded or fell out of favour with their mistress, or both. The one woman who had the most unusual success was Karin Månsdotter (1550–1612), who started as a lowborn mistress to Erik XIV and was promoted, with great scandal, to queen.

The third and last part of the study, "Royals," is dedicated to the lives of members of the royal family. Persson examines the conditions, challenges, and opportunities that foreign women met when married into the Swedish court by asking questions such as: How much was a queen "worth"? And how did the royalties choose their spouses? Were there any tricks to becoming successful as a member of the Swedish royal family? Concerning the latter, the most important factor seems to have been the ability to conform to the new culture, language, and social customs. The young queens who succeeded in conversation, dancing, and conforming with the preferred political and religious views were often

met with admiration, while the more shy or uneducated in courtly ways, or those who, like Queen Lovisa Ulrika (1720–1782), “dared to challenge political realities,” could find it harder to fit in (242).

The structure of the rich study is logical and reader friendly. However, at times the author moves too quickly through his many examples and examined time periods. The queens and princesses and their courtly entourage sweep by at high speed, which at times makes it difficult to follow the analysis. Consequently, the discussions in some sections stay at a general level instead of going deep into the exciting material. However, an impressively extensive archival research lies behind this study, and it truly takes off in the sections discussing individual women, be it from the perspective of queens such as Christina (1626–89) or Ulrika Eleonora (1688–1741), or from their trusted chamber maids. Certainly, the latter is far less researched, not least in a Swedish context. Thus, to conclude, the study displays a vast knowledge of the intricate early modern courtly life and showcases much material that previously has been overlooked. *Women at the Early Modern Swedish Court: Power, Risk, and Opportunity* paints a fascinating picture of early modern Swedish court through the lens of women’s agency, voices, and challenges.

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<https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v44i2.37553>

Pugh, Tison.

On the Queerness of Early English Drama: Sex in the Subjunctive.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021. Pp. 256. ISBN 978-1-4875-0874-6 (Hardcover) \$65.

The historiography of queer sexuality and desire in early modern drama has been enriched by the publication of this well-researched and original book. Pugh’s monograph is concerned with exploring the least systematically examined pre-modern plays from the perspective of queer criticism, and in this sense his book fills a big lacuna in queer early modern scholarship. The book covers the period between the fourteenth century and the second half of the sixteenth, and interprets in detail both male and female homosexual desire