

Encountering Huberia

Positioning an Eighteenth-Century Professor in Time

▼ **ONLINE FIRST ARTICLE** in *Entangled Temporalities*

▼ **ABSTRACT** This article implicates the question of *what* a scholar is with the question of *when* a scholar is: that is, how a scholar is positioned in time. The act of such positioning—“timing”—involves a wide array of negotiations: it embraces everything from the way a scholarly investigator construes their temporal relationship to their object, to the way they countenance past and future investigators, to the rapidity with which they write. And of course, it demands the efforts of other people. Using the case of the eighteenth-century Göttingen professor Johann Matthias Gesner (1691–1761), this piece explores how one scholar “timed” himself in three very different arenas—his domestic and day-to-day scheduling, his reading, and his projection of his scholarship and reputation into the future. To get at how temporal positioning is a shared enterprise, the article works to excavate the role of his female family members in the process. By amplifying the traces left by Gesner’s granddaughter, the titular Huberia—along with her mother, grandmother, and great-aunt—in sources documenting the professor’s life, we are able to encounter, if only fragmentarily, some of those who helped Gesner constitute himself temporally.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Gesner, Johann Matthias; Göttingen; history of humanities; Huber, Johanne Christiane; persona; philology

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BREPOLS

... shifts in *timing* and temporal perspective have world-making potential. They bring new kinds of objects before the beholder *and new kinds of beholders before the object*.¹

Sometime before 1755, a learned traveler arrived in Göttingen.² The journey—the sort of scholarly sight-seeing trip not atypical of the early modern *Gelehrtenrepublik*—had been rough: a drunk coach-driver had thrown the visitor into a wet roadway, staining the all-important letter of recommendation. But no matter: Göttingen, home to a university just twenty years old and already the subject of considerable buzz, offered much that was of interest.³ Among the attractions were of course the professors, including the scholar of antiquity Johann Matthias Gesner (1691–1761; see Figure 1), one of the first faculty hired, head of the library and the regional school system, and a confidant of the powerful who had helped build the new, hard-charging university from the ground up.⁴ An obvious target for a visit.

When our traveler arrived at Gesner's, he met on the steps not the man himself, visible in the doorway of his study, but a girl, who—to his surprise—hailed him in Latin. It was an impromptu but critical moment, the theatricality of which the visitor later underscored with a flourish (i.e., in French): “il ne s'agit que de bien débûter et qu'alors tout l'auditoire et tous les spectateurs sont pour nous!”⁵ Time to cobble together a Latin rejoinder, ending with a modified bit from Virgil's *Eclogues*, plus some Horace, delivered to the young lady while grasping her hand and escorting her into Gesner's room: *For—I'll admit it—while Göttingen holds me, / I'll love my sweetly laughing Lalage, sweetly talking*.⁶ The improvised compliment was a success: the traveler credited it with winning him future half- and even full-hour audiences with Gesner.

Half an hour of the professor's time was no small reward. Gesner had full days, a fact that will become clear in the following examination of how he dealt with a problem fundamental to his very constitution as a scholar: namely how to position himself *in time*, or what I will call simply “timing.”⁷ The approach is inspired by—and meant to gather—related questions about how, for example, investigators construe their temporal relationship to their objects, how they manipulate the duration of their observations, and how quickly they generate results.⁸ That “timing” concerns of this sort prove material to the

1 Hsiung, Lenel, Meister, “Introduction,” this issue. Emphasis mine.

2 Anon., “Göttingen,” 70–71.

3 On the university's founding, see, e.g., Rössler, *Gründung*.

4 On Gesner, see the contemporary accounts of Michaelis, “Memoria”; Ernesti, “Narratio”; Niclas, “Epistola.” Later treatments include Sauppe, Eckstein, Schindel, Vielberg.

5 Anon., “Göttingen,” 71.

6 Ibid.

7 For a later case study, see Flow, “Once and for All?”

8 On relation to objects, see Fabian, *Time*; Fasolt, *Limits*; Butler, “Youth.” On observation-windows, see Landecker, “Microcinematography”; Radin, *Life on Ice*. On pace, see Mountz et al., “Slow Scholarship.”

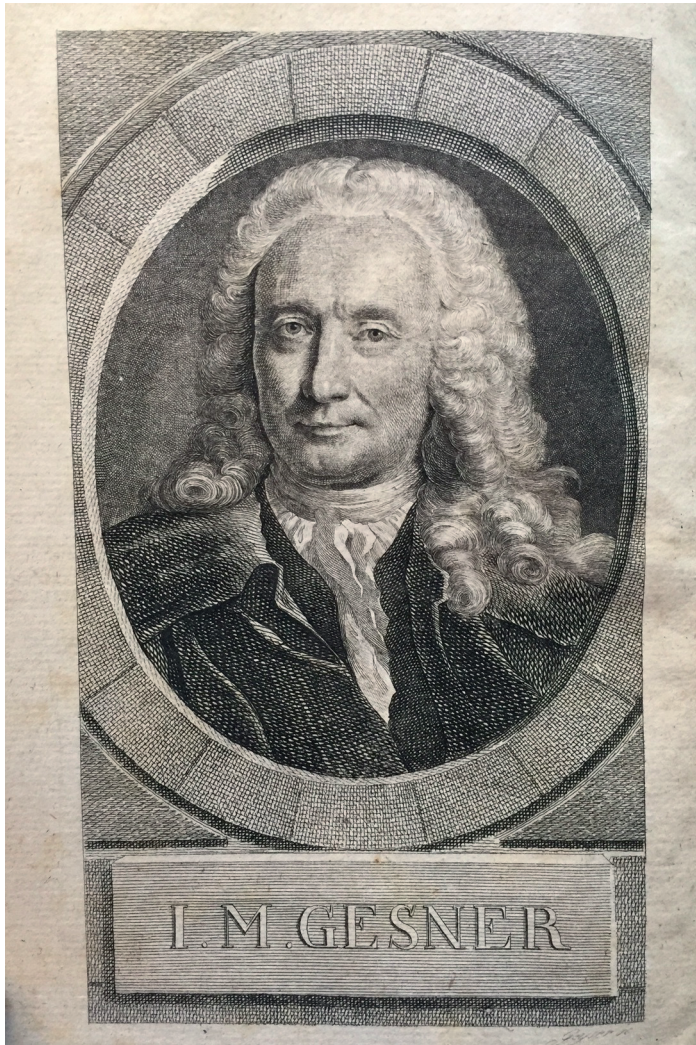


Figure 1: Johann Matthias Gesner. PLH1, author's copy.

make-up of the scholar is evident in their unmistakable, though often implicit, presence in work on scholarly “selves” and model “personae.”⁹ Research in this line has shown the implication of the “self” with quotidian questions of rising punctually or working all night, with politico-bureaucratic ones about publication frequency, and with more cosmic concerns about the immortality of scholarly production.¹⁰ In Gesner’s case, we find explicit commentary about his time

⁹ See the work of Herman Paul, including “What is a Scholarly Persona?,” “Sources,” and “Introduction”; and Gadi Algazi, e.g., “Scholars in Households” and “*Exemplum* and *Wundertier*.”

¹⁰ See Algazi, “At the Study,” 34; Ker, “Nocturnal Writers” (cf. also “Diurnal Selves”); Mountz et al., “Slow Scholarship,”; Flow, “Once and for All?”

management—right down to his napping habits—in contemporary biographical reminiscences belonging comfortably to what has been called the “literature of the scientific persona.”¹¹ Suspended somewhere between a description of the man himself and a smoothed portrayal of the model he was believed to provide, these “exemplary” accounts need to be supplemented by other sources to generate anything like a full view of the “timing” issues we are after. But they are certainly not to be neglected: for one thing, they motivate the inquiry by leaving no doubt that admirers saw significance in such apparently humdrum matters as when Gesner woke up each day; beyond that, they attest that timing could be a source of tension for their protagonist.

In order to show the range of this tension, and to highlight some of the varied aspects of a scholarly life that can be understood under the problem of “timing,” I will take up here three very different domains of Gesner’s activity: his domestic and day-to-day scheduling, his thoughts on the proper pace for reading, and his attempts to provide for a posthumous future. True to the theme of the present Special Issue, Gesner—*qua* investigator or “beholder” of antiquity—will emerge in all of these areas as *himself* a product of “entangled temporalities.”¹² His temporal positioning, both in the household and on page, becomes for us not a frictionless or foregone fact, but the product of “negotiations” engaging everything from notebooks, to indices, to scholarly blackmail, to other people—among them those for whom few printed testimonies, much less curated *Nachlässe* remain. Indeed, following scholars like Birgit Panke-Kochinke and Silke Wagener, who have brought attention to the many individuals in and around the Göttingen university of Gesner’s era who marked neither the cathedra nor the *Matrikel*, I will be at pains to show how Gesner’s temporal positioning involved the female members of his family.¹³ This does not result in full coverage even of the Gesner household, which we know to have included also, for example, *ancillae*—maids.¹⁴ But in line with work from Gadi Algazi that has highlighted the role of scholars’ wives and other domestic agents in the construction of their dispositions, it allows us at least to begin considering how Gesner’s “timing” demanded work from others considerably less well-attested than himself.¹⁵

These included the Latin-speaking girl, the Göttingen Lalage—twelve years old in 1755—who goes unnamed (though not unmentioned) in the traveler’s account above, as in two of the three principal commemorations of Gesner’s

11 The term is at Daston and Galison, *Objectivity*, 198. I take the lengthy biographies offered in Michaelis, “Memoria”; Ernesti, “Narratio”; and Niclas, “Epistola” as typical of such literature; see explicit acknowledgment of the “exemplary” function, e.g., at Niclas, “Epistola,” 5–6.

12 Hsiung, Lenel, Meister, “Introduction.”

13 Panke-Kochinke, *Professorenfamilien*; Wagener, *Pedelle, Mägde und Lakaaien*.

14 Niclas, “Epistola,” 19.

15 See, e.g., Algazi, “Scholars in Households,” esp. 13.

life.¹⁶ In fact, we know just who she was: Gesner's granddaughter, Johanne Christiane Huber (1743–1794), aka Hanchen, aka Hannula, aka Huberiola, aka Huberia. Despite a contemporary assessment that she would be a “wonder for future times,” we have no *vita*, no archival collections organized under her name.¹⁷ But the documentation on and from Gesner—the lengthy “exemplary” biographies in addition to copious archivalia and volumes of printed writings and correspondence—gives a glimpse of her activity, and that of other female relatives. It allows us see, in short, how family members helped address the difficulties Gesner faced in positioning himself in time. And it lets us write parts of their stories together with his own in a way that, while disproportionate to their appearance in the records, better reflects a three-dimensional reality in which a traveler looking to spend time with Gesner was liable to encounter Huberia first.

Domestic and Day-to-Day

By the mid-1740s, Gesner's residence was central to the Göttingen university complex—next to the Universitätskirche, across from the Collegium-building with its lecture-halls and the library over which he presided. The home—built as two residences, with two entrances—is visible in a contemporary depiction (Figure 2). A 1756 census shows fourteen people divided across the two house-numbers.¹⁸ Some guesswork is necessary to match identities with the census's tally-marks—sorted by age-bracket and gender—but if we take the first of the two house-numbers to refer to Gesner's own household, a sensible picture emerges.¹⁹ Gesner (soon to turn sixty-five) is the male over fifty years old; the two females of the same age-bracket are his wife Elisabeth Caritas (family-name Eberhard), who was nearing sixty, and her sister, a widowed woman referred to variously as *matertera* and *Frau Muhme* and *Tante*, and by the name (presumably) of her late husband, *Zimmermann* or *Zimmermannia*.²⁰ Huberia, born in 1743, whom the travel account places at the house in the 1750s, is the *Frauensperson* under fifteen. This leaves two unknown women, one in the fifteen to thirty and one in the thirty to fifty age bracket, perhaps the aforementioned *ancillae*.

16 Niclas, “Epistola,” 13, 42–44; Ernesti, “Narratio,” 325; see also Michaelis, “Memoria,” 272, where she is named.

17 Köhler et al., *Gottsched*, 123.

18 Stadtarchiv Göttingen, AA Zählungen, Volkszählungen und Revierlisten Nr. 6, 1756, entries for “Professor Gessner” (six inhabitants) und “Domus desselben” (eight). For points concerning Gesner's house(hold) and much else, I am indebted to Sigrid Dahmen of the Stadtarchiv.

19 The second (eight residents) may reflect the family of the Actuarius Johann Heinrich List, including his relation (and Gesner's student) Sebastian Christoph Schwabe (1735–1791); see UniAGö Kur 7699: 513.

20 So, e.g.: *matertera* SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.225:96; App.226:89; *Frau Muhme* App.225:14; *Zimmermann* (*Zimmermannia*) App.226:62; App.226:91.



Figure 2: The house Gesner occupied by the 1740s, visible (no. 4 in the foreground, right) in a depiction by Georg Daniel Heumann in his *Wahre Abbildung der...Stadt Göttingen* (1747). Author's photo, Stadtarchiv Göttingen.

The picture is not perfect, but it helps populate the space in which—along with the nearby library—Gesner spent much of his time. Like other professors of the period, he made his house the principal site for studying, writing, conferring, and a good part of his teaching.²¹ We have outlines of the schedule. Gesner needed eight nightly hours of sleep—a fact he sometimes lamented—taken from ten-to-six in the summer and eleven-to-seven in winter.²² He could do nothing right after lunch, since he had a fifteen-minute nap in his study then and was grouchy if approached; he was loathe to eat elsewhere than at home for precisely this reason.²³ Afternoon teaching generally started at two and facilitated the mid-day meal's digestion.²⁴ Later, after a small dinner sometimes preceded by a walk on the city wall, he retired to his study for reading and assiduous letter-writing: this, too, was a bad time for audiences.²⁵

There is nothing surprising about the hourly arrangement. Indeed, components of it appear in accounts of other Göttingen professors: a mid-day

21 Kern and Kern, *Schlözer*, 43; Panke-Kochinke, *Professorenfamilien*, 43–45; Wagener, *Pedelle, Mägde und Lakaien*, 62–63.

22 Niclas, "Epistola," 111–12; Ernesti, "Narratio," 325. Lament re. *somnolentia* at TEG1, 120.

23 Niclas, "Epistola," 112. Ernesti, "Narratio," 325.

24 Niclas, "Epistola," 115.

25 Niclas, "Epistola," 115 (walk); Ernesti, "Narratio," 325; Michaelis, "Memoria," 254.

pause for lunch (and even a nap); the afternoon teaching; the time for correspondence; the work into the night and the sentiment that sleep, however necessary, might be a hindrance (for August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809), to work “in Göttingen fashion”—*auf Göttingisch*—was to gird for early mornings and late nights).²⁶ It is the concern about sleep’s impositions that introduces the pressures on such a schedule: pressures further underscored by the reference in all three “exemplary” accounts to Gesner’s consternation about distractions—i.e., company—at certain times of day.²⁷ Bluntly put, there was more expected of a professor than there were hours in his schedule: or, more pointedly, there was a tension between the imperative to spend maximal time over one’s books and the constant interruptions faced by Gesner all day long from “people of every kind”—including unknown visitors like the one with whom we began.²⁸ It was a function of Gesner’s *humanitas*—not to mention his administrative cum representative role at the university—to be “available and prepared and open to everybody always, except after lunch.”²⁹ On the other hand—and here the rub—he “desired to consume all his time, of which he was very sparing, in scholarship, to the extent that was possible in the midst of his other duties.”³⁰

In one colleague’s estimation it was precisely the “wonderful and most diligent management of [Gesner’s] day” that squared the circle, “allow[ing] no particle of time to flow away without action” and thus effectively increasing his time budget.³¹ This brings us to the root of many of his reported proclivities. There was the ability to read and listen at the same time, and to write while teaching.³² The dislike for games (a waste of time).³³ The constant carrying-about of a small book or notebook to be read in “the minutes between two lectures, after meals, while waiting for someone.”³⁴ Add to that the preference that official greetings happen in the library rather than at home—and if in the home, that they be unannounced (so clothes didn’t need to be changed in advance).³⁵ When visitors did arrive, the unwritten rules of conversation could be exploited in the interest of temporal thrift.³⁶ One Gesner student recalled a rhythm to his audiences with the professor: a specific question or task would be addressed before Gesner treated him to a bit of literary-scholarly discussion.

26 Panke-Kochinke, *Professorenfamilien*, 45–48 (disposition of the day); Kern and Kern, *Schlözer*, 72–73 (*auf Göttingisch*).

27 Niclas, “Epistola,” 106–7; Ernesti, “Narratio,” 325–26; Michaelis, “Memoria,” 254. On scholars’ vexed relationship to company see Algazi, “At the Study.”

28 Niclas, “Epistola,” 107; Ernesti, “Narratio,” 326.

29 Niclas, “Epistola,” 107.

30 *Ibid.*, 106.

31 Ernesti, “Narratio,” 326; cf. Niclas, “Epistola,” 106.

32 Niclas, “Epistola,” 12–13.

33 *Ibid.*, 109.

34 PLL1:85–86; cf. Niclas, “Epistola,” 70–71, 106.

35 Niclas, “Epistola,” 107.

36 See Mulsow, “Tischgesellschaft” for professorial conversation generally.

Gesner would mark an end by inquiring whether the student needed anything else: *Num quid vis aliud?*³⁷ It was a polite—"most humane"—way of patrolling the interaction's temporal boundaries.

From his schedule to the timing of his conversations, Gesner had help. Many researchers have shown how female members of the professorial household were expected to coordinate budgetary and household labor so the scholar could devote himself to learning, writing, and teaching.³⁸ The elegiac presentations of Gesner's wife Elisabeth Caritas by her husband and his venerated students are entirely in this line: the Gesner student Johann Nicolaus Niclas took her to be the kind of spouse "who worries about nothing more than that it's going well for [the scholar] and [his] studies."³⁹ In such descriptions, she is a picture of modesty, piety, and *frugalitas* who mended her own children's clothes, kept a careful household budget, expertly handled her servants, and did not involve herself in Gesner's academic and university pursuits. Her supposed attitude towards Gesner's book purchases—she did not resent them—is a kind of short-hand for these qualities: Caritas kept the budget sound so that there was room for academic acquisitions, which were not her domain.⁴⁰ In the single letter we have from her hand, written to her son Karl Philipp Gesner (1719–1780), Caritas engaged on both the subject of the family's finances and Karl's desire to find a wife for his servant to handle his "kitchen and cellar."⁴¹ For his part, we find Karl, in an earlier letter, keen for his mother—the frugal budget-maker—to see a list of his expenses as proof he had wasted nothing on luxury.⁴² This constellation of interests brings into view the network of domestic labor that kept Gesner's schedule intact. But nowhere so vividly as when we are told that Caritas stationed female guards or watches—*muliebres custodias*—outside her husband's study to impede access during his post-prandial naps.⁴³

The *custodiae* are just one way, in fact, that the female members of the household helped regulate Gesner's conversation—or lack thereof. Our opening account shows his granddaughter Huberia in a gate-keeping function, initiating Latin repartée to help determine who could count on half-hour audiences. Huberia's "greeter" role is confirmed by Niclas, who reports that for visitors to Gesner's house, it was typical to hear a Latin exchange between grandfather and granddaughter: *Adest aliquis, qui te vult, mi avule! Hem! Quis est? Non novi hominem.* ("Someone's here for you, grandfather!" "Hem! Who

37 Niclas, "Epistola," 152.

38 For the Göttingen case, specifically, see Panke-Kochinke, *Professorenfamilien*, esp. 94–139; Wagener, *Pedelle, Mägde und Lakaien*, 98–103; Kern and Kern, *Schlözer*, 43; for, e.g., contemporary Leipzig, see Schmotz, *Die Leipziger Professorenfamilien*, 60–91.

39 On Caritas, see Gesner's memorial at BAG 2, 153–68; Niclas, "Epistola," 11–15, 19, 33, 121–22 (quotation at 122), 171; Ernesti, "Narratio," 301–2.

40 Niclas, "Epistola," 98–99; Ernesti, "Narratio," 301; BAG 2, 163.

41 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:99 (response to App.225:94).

42 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.225:34.

43 Niclas, "Epistola," 112.

is it?" "I don't know the man.")⁴⁴ It was Caritas, Niclas recalled, who once summoned him into Gesner's house as he walked by, installing him at the lunch-table so her husband could impart news of a job offer in Ilfeld.⁴⁵ Still more striking: we hear of an instance in which Gesner, on a school inspection trip, found himself outside the tightly controlled ecosystem of his own household. But he was accompanied by Caritas, who was supposedly able to instruct all comers not to speak to Gesner of an individual about whom he was very anxious. "If she did this out of the house," Niclas wrote, "you can imagine how she handled things at home."⁴⁶

There is evidence, too, that Gesner helped educate two generations of his female descendants to the point where they could help with literary work, making them part of the long history of domestic scholarly *Gehilfinnen*—female assistants "invisible" or considerably less visible than the scholars they aided.⁴⁷ Central to this training activity was Gesner's habit of communicating with his offspring only in Latin: an approach initially taken with his son Karl.⁴⁸ Not only did Gesner do the same with his daughter, Christiane Elisabeth (1721–1800), who likewise benefited from the presence of students at his table, but family tradition had it that she was allowed to listen to his lectures (probably at the Leipzig Thomasschule) from behind a door to the auditorium, and would later converse with her father about the content.⁴⁹ Christiane would maintain the ability to write and speak Latin in addition to German and French, and would later exchange letters, now lost, with her father in Latin.⁵⁰ The training proved useful: during the frequent absences of her husband, the physician and professor Johann Jacob Huber (1707–1778), Christiane was able to help him with matters—presumably things like his correspondence—connected with his career.⁵¹

The educational efforts were repeated with Christiane's daughter, Johanne, who spent time at her grandparents' home in Göttingen, though her parents lived in Kassel.⁵² Gesner took Johanne's education upon himself, once again speaking with her almost exclusively in Latin.⁵³ By six she was remarked for her education and her skill in speaking.⁵⁴ At nine, she impressed with her ability to discuss the Colossus of Rhodes.⁵⁵ When she was in Kassel with her parents, she

44 Ibid., 42.

45 Niclas to J.J. Schmidt, 7 January 1760, Stadtarchiv Lüneburg 3700.

46 Niclas, "Epistola," 122.

47 The relevant literature is extensive: see, e.g., Schiebinger, *Mind*, esp. 98–101, 245–47, 260–64; Hoffmann, *Weibliche Arbeitswelten*, esp. 111–60; Schmoltz, *Die Leipziger Professorenfamilien*, 72–85; Köhler, "Gelehrte Frauen," esp. 51, 68–69 (and corresponding prosopographic entries).

48 TEG1:40; cf. TEG1:80.

49 Gresky, "Brief," 76–77.

50 Grimm, *Selbstbiographie*, 182.

51 Niclas, "Epistola," 42.

52 On her father, see Strieder, *Grundlage*, 224–36.

53 Niclas, "Epistola," 42; Michaelis, "Memoria," 272; Ernesti, "Narratio," 325.

54 Köhler et al., *Gottsched*, 123.

55 Niclas, "Epistola," 43.

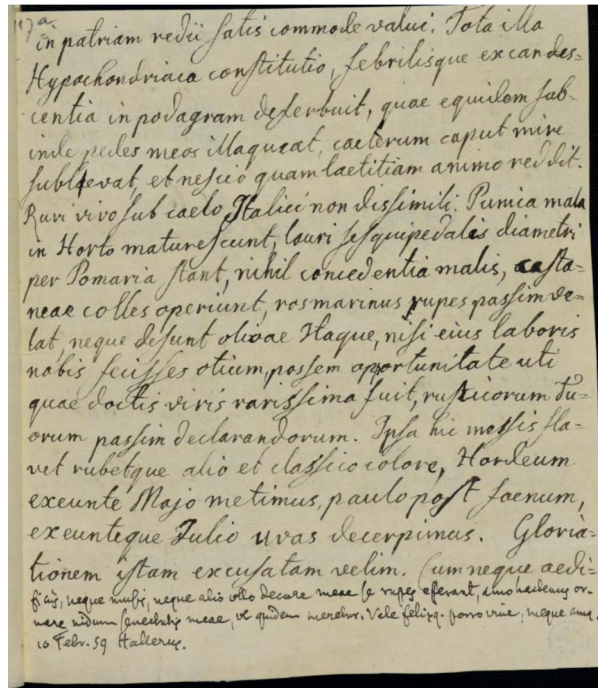


Figure 3: Second page of a transcribed letter from Albrecht von Haller to Johann Matthias Gesner, 10 February 1759, meant for forwarding to Gesner's son Karl. Huberia did the transcription; Gesner himself filled in the final lines. SLUB Dresden / Digitale Sammlungen / Mscr.Dresd.App.226:117a.

was expected to write her grandfather a minimum of one Latin letter a week: like those of her mother, these are lost.⁵⁶ By 1759, at fifteen, Huberia was the cause of much “delight” for her grandfather due to her “mind, fluid and flexible in every field of learning.”⁵⁷

Such “delight” was itself uncomfortably situated in the day-to-day temporal budget. Niclas pointedly makes it a secondary pursuit: Gesner had managed to “transfuse a great part of his learning” into this granddaughter—and to do it “with no great effort, but rather in passing (*obiter*).”⁵⁸ Yes, she could be found at “her hour” in Gesner’s study, imitating his handwriting or learning her letters, but here he could interact with her *while* doing other reading and writing.⁵⁹ Gesner himself insisted to his son he spent only fifteen minutes a day with Huberia after meals, and that she nevertheless “was picking up more than I had dared to hope in her Latin studies.” In less than a year of fifteen-minute

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:89.

⁵⁸ Niclas, “Epistola,” 42.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

intervals she had read all of the *Aeneid*, a good part of Livy, all of Terence, and selections from Plautus, along with Erasmus' *Colloquia*, among other things.⁶⁰ These lessons were reportedly a kind of "dessert" at the Gesnerian table, where Huberia had also begun to learn Greek.⁶¹ The discrepancy between the considerable amount of reading and the reportedly meager time allotted suggests massaging: evidently long family tutorial sessions did not sit comfortably with the duties of a professor. But they proved more than a *divertissement*. Thanks to her learning, Johanne was able to take some part in Gesner's dispensation of his daily literary tasks—for example copying correspondence for forwarding.⁶² This is the case with a copy of a Latin letter (Figure 3) from the naturalist Albrecht von Haller where we can see the hands of both granddaughter and grandfather at work in the transcription. Like the notebooks Gesner read in his spare moments, pedagogical efforts spent with his granddaughter "in passing" could pay cumulative dividends.

Pacing and "Present"

Let us turn from the temporal budget of the household to a scholarly "timing" issue of another sort: namely, the pace at which one read. Of the three "timing" domains discussed here, it is this one that Gesner himself theorized the most programmatically in his own publications. Simply put, he had strong opinions about how tweaking the pace of an interaction with a text conditioned different forms of awareness—of "presence" as a cognitive condition. To structure his most extensive discussion of the subject, Gesner relied on two poles, which he called *cursory* and *statary* reading.⁶³ The issue is not one of mutually exclusive practices, but a spectrum plotting the speed, rhythm, and focus of a textual encounter.⁶⁴ Gesner was keen to correct for what he diagnosed as a contemporary over-inclination in the *statary* direction, which was "slower" (speed), punctuated by "many and rather long pauses" (rhythm), and focused on parts over wholes: the talk is of "too many and minute parts," of "a dissection and dissipation of parts," of "particles" and textual allotments that were "too small."⁶⁵

60 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:89.

61 Niclas, "Epistola," 43.

62 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:90 explains Huberia has copied Figure 3; App.225:96 includes thanks to her "pro apographo."

63 See the preface to his 1735 Livy edition, reprinted in *Opuscula* 7:289-307.

64 Further sources useful for understanding Gesner's *statary*/*cursory* distinction, which I am by no means the first to discuss (see, e.g., Klausnitzer, "Gemeinsam," 93-97) include, e.g., Ernesti, "Narratio," 309-10, 312-14; PLI1:74-77; PLI2:407-8.

65 For speed, see: *Opuscula* 7:(cc.1-2)290, (c.11)294 (*tardius/tardior/tarditate*); (c.6)292, (c.20)298 (*annos*); Ernesti, "Narratio," 309 (*diu*); for rhythm, see: Ernesti, "Narratio," 310 (quoted), 313 (*cunctationes nimias*); Gesner, *Opuscula* 7:(c.8)293 (*quarto tertiove die*); for parts/wholes: Ernesti, "Narratio," 309 (*nimis multas et minutas partes*); Gesner, *Opuscula* 7: (c12)294 (*dissectio et dissipatio*), (cc.6, 8)293 (*particula(e)*); PLI2:407 (*nimis parva pensa*).

The statary bogeyman—belabored, interrupted, slow, narrow—was the teacher inclined to spend years explicating, for example, a single book of Cicero's letters, atomizing it into particles and lingering on each one, at the expense of the students. But a mature scholar or critic could also suffer negatively from statary habits, as when they became too hung up on artificial divisions in edited texts, or failed to read a text with the pace and continuity necessary to generate an integral sense of a writer's style and character.⁶⁶ In general, Gesner warned, a *statary* overemphasis made it hard to render present to the mind all-at-once, as it were, how a text proceeded. If a book of Caesar were presented only in minute fragments and over an extended period, even the best memory would hardly suffice to grasp it as a whole—a “connected sequence.”⁶⁷ He described colorfully the perverse effects of halting and uneven reading on comprehension. It was like the mythical Medea cutting apart her brother, but worse, because the chopping was finer: half an eyeball here, half an eyeball there, so one couldn't identify the owner.⁶⁸ How could a youth subject to statary stopping-and-starting be expected to “hold the particles [of their reading]...present to their mind...[or] bind them together through cogitation” so as to fashion from them a coherent corpus?⁶⁹

As a corrective, Gesner advocated adjustment in a *cursory* direction. *Cursory* reading was “quick” (speed) in a quantifiable way—for example, a whole act of a Terentian comedy in an hour as against a mere six or twelve verses.⁷⁰ And it had a particular rhythm: one proceeded “uniformly” (*uno tenore*), “continuously” or “in a single succession” (*una continuatione*), or as it were “in a single breath” (*uno quasi spiritu*).⁷¹ Instead of lingering over details and difficulties, the cursory reader noted them and moved on, confident they would resolve with context or could be dealt with later.⁷² The goal was to secure a kind of smooth, holistic frame, a perspective supposedly more mimetic to the author's own conception and presentation, and one that was able to encourage the “ability to perceive the whole,” to grasp “all parts and their conjunction and explication”—to comprehend in texts precisely what Gesner called their “connected sequence.”⁷³

Gesner's understanding of the cursory was a product of his past. He had been a surreptitious youthful consumer of novels (the sorts of books people “do not put down”—here the cursory element—until they were read in full).⁷⁴

66 Ernesti, “Narratio,” 313; see SRR:(cc.XIX-XXI)XXIII-XXV.

67 Gesner, *Opuscula* 7:(c6)293.

68 Ibid., (c7)293.

69 Ibid., (c8)293–94.

70 PLI1:76.

71 E.g., *uno tenore*: SRR:(c.XIX)XXIII; Ernesti, “Narratio,” 310; PLI2:407; Gesner, *Opuscula* 7:(c.26)301; *una continuatio*: Ernesti, “Narratio,” 310; *uno quasi spiritu*: SRR:(c.XIX)XXIII, *Opuscula* 7:(c.13)295.

72 PLI1:75.

73 So Ernesti, “Narratio,” 309–10 (*totius perspicendi facultas*); 310 (*partes omnes ...*); Gesner, *Opuscula* 7:(c.6)293 (*rerum ipsarum continuatam seriem*).

74 Niclas, “Epistola,” 105; Gesner, *Opuscula* 7:(c.13)295, cf. (c.23)299.

As a student he had witnessed an excruciating negative case in the person of an over-statory professor who spent three hours on a single word of Aristotle and lost all his auditors.⁷⁵ And he had lived in a Jena theology professor's household, where the term *cursoria lectio* would have denoted a way of reading the Bible in the vernacular or in Latin, without recourse to Greek or Hebrew or commentary, as a mode of orientation and the establishment of context, and as preparatory to a future, closer treatment.⁷⁶ But aside from these influences, we may identify something verging on an aesthetic inclination, which links Gesner's stated preferences for readerly "timing" with elements of his conveyed "self." One colleague, who had known Gesner for decades, noted that the latter's scholarly and cognitive style eschewed *contentio*, or struggle.⁷⁷ When writing, emending, and interpreting, solutions came quickly. If they did not, Gesner would take one or two tries at a difficult spot and simply move on. To *search* too laboriously, he joked, gave the scholarly results the face of somebody straining.⁷⁸ In fact, one is tempted to say that Gesner looked to style his work in the register of the cursory reader.

That attaining this register demanded negotiation is indicated, for example, in Gesner's marked (and slightly counter-intuitive) respect for tools like indexing. He went so far as to cast the index as the very *breath*—the *anima*—of a book.⁷⁹ And in his early capacity as a librarian, in Weimar, he went through all of the books in the collection so he could index everything they covered. It was a mark of the "highest indignity," he wrote, to "not know what we have."⁸⁰ I would suggest that this was cursory reading on the level of the collection, with precisely the goal of not having to search. The result was a kind of *oracle* (Gesner's word) that relieved those seeking. Interestingly, he reportedly sometimes slipped, referring to *himself*—the wielder of the index—as the oracle.⁸¹ So, strangely, instead of taking an index as itself a dismemberment of a text—a "dissection and dissipation" of its parts—he saw it as a kind of guide to a completed act of cursory reading—one that had marked out everything and could in turn help make other scholarly tasks feel more *cursoria*. It was a way of dealing with the fact that scholars did not have the time to subject every work they consulted to cursory, let alone statory treatment.

To put it another way, we might say Gesner embraced the index in an effort to fashion a particular kind of present. It was not the suspended, disconnected present of the statory reader, but one that was synoptic and in sequence, characterized by its locatability vis-à-vis what came before and after. Significantly,

75 PLI1:75–76.

76 See, e.g., Gerhard, *Methodus*, 143–59 (*cursoria* and *accurata lectio*); Tribbechov, *De lectione*, esp. 5–6; Rambachius, *Institutiones* 207–8.

77 Ernesti, "Narratio," 303 (cf. 326).

78 Ernesti, "Narratio," 303.

79 Niclas, "Epistola," 99.

80 TEG2:272.

81 Ernesti, "Narratio," 289.

when Gesner looked to explain to his Göttingen auditors how God could comprehend past, present, and future all at once and effortlessly, he used the example of reading.⁸² A child had to struggle forward word by word: but he, Gesner, could comprehend a whole sentence at a glance. By extension, God in effect was instantly aware of the whole text of creation—the complete context of before and after. To be a great cursory reader was thus in some sense to tend towards God: it made the instant held present in the mind and available to cognition *book-* or even *library-sized*. Pacing on page had deep resonances for how the self was “timed.”

So far so good, but what of Huberia? Do we encounter her helping to manage time at the shoulder of Gesner the reader as we do outside the study of Gesner the napper or Gesner the host? Here the evidence is limited, but in fact we are told that his granddaughter, at nine, generated an index for Gesner’s Horace edition.⁸³ We know, too, that she helped catalogue the subjects of dissertations held in Gesner’s personal library: one student was so impressed that he saved for decades some of the catalogue slips made out in her hand.⁸⁴ So Huberia, too, indexed and catalogued, giving books and libraries breath for cursory presents. We find her, in short, shaping not just Gesner’s domestic and day-to-day context, but also his readerly “present.”

For Posterity

Gesner believed his responsibility as a knowledge-maker to extend into the future—indeed beyond his death. The ways he constituted himself in this protracted and even posthumous space are many. Most prominent was his published scholarship itself—the sort of product meant when the twenty-eight-year-old Gesner, at the time a schoolteacher, was told by a correspondent that he “was born not just for the school-aged youth, but also for scholars, also for *posterity*.”⁸⁵ The insinuation was that good work commanded *per se* a kind of durability, but of course a great deal of engineering was required to reach future audiences. A single example here: Gesner was in the Latin-dictionary-writing business. His approach was to undertake revisions of lexica that had already been around for some time, and he did not believe his own efforts to represent the last word: he had worked “to the best of his present ability,” he wrote in the preface to his most substantial effort, the *Novus linguae et eruditionis Romanae thesaurus* (1749), and hoped that someone would come along to correct what he and others had left undone.⁸⁶

⁸² PLI2:290–2.

⁸³ Niclas, “Epistola,” 43.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 43–44.

⁸⁵ TEG1:21–22. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁶ Gesner, “Praefatio,” sig. d[1]v (c. 10).

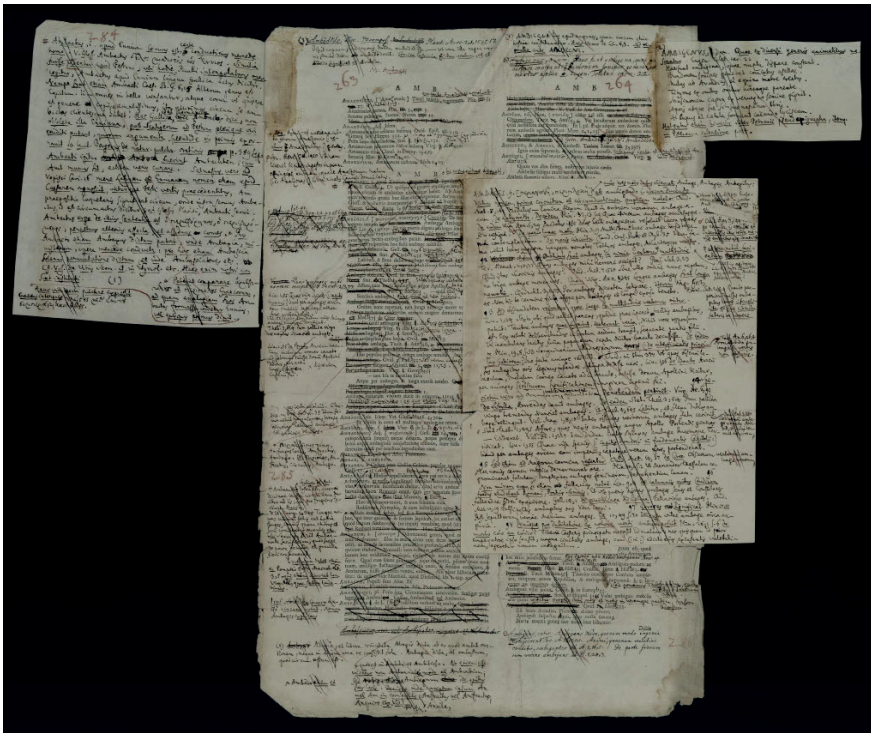


Figure 4: A page from Gesner's manuscript for his *Novus Thesaurus*. SUB Göttingen 2 Cod. Ms. Philol. 230.

The sentiment echoed those of contemporaries who took on similar works of lexicographic revision.⁸⁷ But Gesner distinguished himself by the lengths to which he went to cater to the anticipated future. In short, he looked to rig his lexicon specifically to support later updating and revision by others. Citation-numbers that he had been unable to look up himself were marked with ellipses “so that [their incompleteness] might be more visible and so as to excite the diligence of others.”⁸⁸ He also outfitted his own lexicon with a system of line-numbers, meant to make it easier to key future alterations to a precise point in the work.⁸⁹ As a final gesture of proleptic provisioning, Gesner had, he assured his readers, stored in the Göttingen university library the very exemplar he had turned over to the printers for typesetting. It remains there to this day (see Figure 4). This was on the one hand to preserve a monument to Gesner's labors. But it was also, he said, to provide a kind of roadmap to successors who could access his process and tell at a glance where he had focused his efforts

87 So, e.g., Birr, *Thesaurus*, sig. ****v: “Impudentis esse ...”

88 Gesner, “Praefatio,” sig. d[1]r-v (c. 9).

89 Ibid., sig. d[2]v (cc. 13–14).

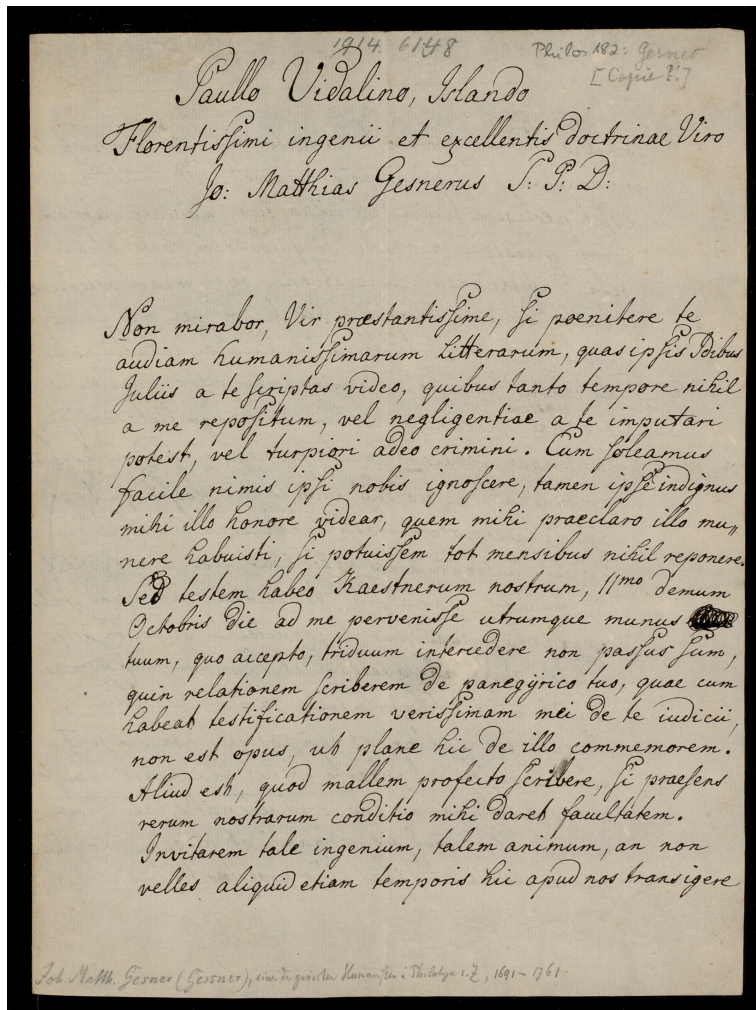


Figure 5: Copied for posterity. A letter of Gesner not in his own hand (perhaps copied by Huberia: see "Copie H" in the top-right). SUB Göttingen 2 Cod. Ms. Philos. 182.

and where not.⁹⁰ In short, he gave future philologists not only an updatable tool, but also a durable record of how it was made, and by extension how it could be re-made. We have here an invitation to long, slow collaboration, projected into the future.

Other modes of future-oriented positioning were expressly geared towards reputational management. They include the letters Gesner wrote to others and had copied and saved, in the specific hope that they would one day serve posterity for instruction or for entertainment, or as part of an archive of his

⁹⁰ Ibid., sig. er (c. 16).

period.⁹¹ More pointedly still: instruments like the folder of *pudenda*—“shameful material”—marked with the initials of its target, that Gesner had collected and put under seal for deploy if some malign action compelled it.⁹² Long after his teacher’s death, Niclas had this embargoed blackmail compilation still in his possession; clearly Gesner made an effort to lay in ammunition against future—perhaps even postmortem—attacks. In these reputational areas particularly, we find once again activity of the female members of the professorial household. For Huberia’s part, we know she was called upon at times to copy her grandfather’s own letters, so they could be saved for posterity (see Figure 5).⁹³ We know, too, that, after his death in 1761 she remained for months in his Göttingen house with Tante Zimmermann. The Seven Years’ War was ongoing and the house was lodging soldiers: a situation that caused Huberia’s mother in Kassel no small anxiety.⁹⁴ It is not unlikely that, given her earlier work indexing Gesner’s library and her ability to update her mother about the progress of the posthumous cataloguing of his books, Huberia had a role in the organization of his academic effects.⁹⁵

As for Zimmermann: this woman seems, like her great-niece, to have had some remarkable qualities. Nearly twenty years after Gesner’s death, a biographer of Albrecht von Haller wrote to Gesner’s grandson (Huberia’s brother) for details about a notorious rift in Göttingen involving Haller and Gesner’s son-in-law. The grandson responded that he hoped for information precisely from Zimmermann (identified as “a great aunt of mine”), who was still alive, and who, he said, “was constantly in Gesner’s house and knew every possible small anecdote about Haller,” not to mention that her memory was so good that no details escaped her.⁹⁶ A professor in Kassel, he noted, had taken to calling Zimmermann his “living Gelehrten-Lexikon.” It was, in other words, precisely a woman of the household to whom one turned to fill out the stories of scholars with whom Gesner’s own intersected. At stake was, by extension, his own posthumous reputation: the shape taken by his self in the future.

Huberia

For Gesner’s wife Caritas, we have his own summation of her life, delivered in the university tradition of biographical treatments, written in Latin and honoring not just deceased professors, but also their wives.⁹⁷ For his daughter

91 Rev. TEG, 227.

92 Niclas, “Epistola,” 145 (cf. 142–44 for Gesner’s compilation of damaging material on the Dutch scholar Pieter Burman).

93 Ibid., 130.

94 See SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:121–125.

95 Update at SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:121.

96 Johann Jakob Huber jun. to Johann Georg Zimmerman, 1 November 1779, GWLB MS XLII 1933, A, II, 46: 1r–v.

97 BAG 2, 153–68.



Figure 6a



Figure 6b

Figures 6a–6b: Miniature of Christiane Elisabeth (Gesner) Huber, mother of Huberia. This is the only likeness available to us of the three generations of female Gesner relatives treated here. Grimm-Sammlung der Stadt Kassel, Handzeichnung 1144.

Christiane and his granddaughter Johanne, to say nothing of Tante Zimmermann, we have no such monument, nor do we have the sort of literary and epistolary issue that has helped to animate, for example, the story of the so-called *Universitätsmamsellen*, the daughters of Göttingen professors of a generation or so later.⁹⁸ In Christiane's case, we can look to a series of (French) letters from her hand to her brother, and even a likeness (Figure 6).⁹⁹ From Huberia, we have only a single letter, a Latin epistle (Figure 7) written in 1754 at the age of eleven to her uncle—Gesner's son Karl—whom she had yet to meet.¹⁰⁰ She had only learned to love her uncle, she wrote, from the likenesses of him that hung under the mirror of her grandmother and at the window of her grandfather, but she was glad he had returned to Germany—and thus finally dried the tears her grandmother shed at his absence. And she looked forward to speaking with him in person and not simply by letter.

In forwarding his granddaughter's letter to his son, Gesner asked Karl to forgive her "nonsense": she was a "charming girl, but on account of a certain willfulness (*ob αὐθάδειαν quandam*) which tends to threaten the best minds, ha[d] need of a careful and prudent education."¹⁰¹ One is skeptical of the criticism: it was after all Gesner himself who elected to send the letter along with his own. But it is possible Johanne's lessons caused some sort of household friction. We are told that her grandmother, Gesner's wife Caritas, did not believe Latin learning to suit a woman, a fact that helped dampen some of the pedagogical efforts taken with her daughter Christiane.¹⁰² Is there a note of reassurance in the face of such headwinds in the message to Huberia from her uncle, written into the margin of a letter to his parents soon after a Göttingen visit (see Figure 8)?:

I'm very happy to see, dear Niece, that you love me. You oblige me by writing me—and especially writing me as nicely as you have. My presence had only hindered your [literary] exercises. I congratulate you for having taken them back up after my departure, certain as I am that you couldn't possibly apply yourself too much to them. They will be necessary for you—or will amuse you at least—all your life. Adieu, dear Niece.¹⁰³

All your life. What happened to Johanne in the three decades between her departure, in the summer of 1762, from Göttingen and the house of her recently perished grandfather, and her death in Kassel in 1794? The only trace so far is a set of printed cards addressed to family and bearing her signature: from New

98 See, e.g., Klessmann, *Universitätsmamsellen*.

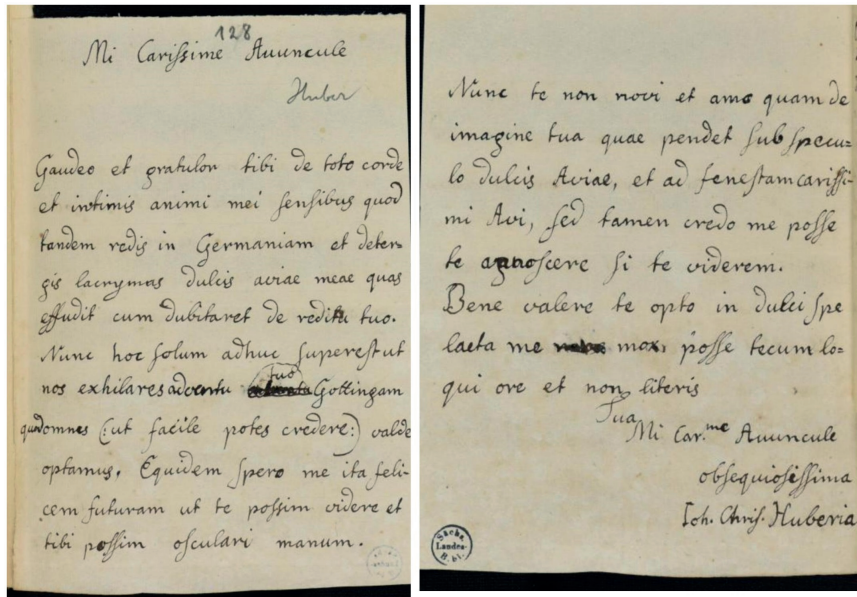
99 For the letters, see SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:120–27.

100 A printed *Gelegenheitsgedicht* "sung" by Huberia at the age of five on the occasion of a wedding in Kassel is not suggestive of her own composition: another Huber child, e.g., "dedicated" Latin verse to Gesner while less than a year old; see Huber, *Hochzeitsfest*; Gresky, "Brief," 87.

101 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.226:86.

102 Niclas, "Epistola," 42.

103 SLUB Mscr.Dresd.App.225:14.



Mi Carissime Avuncule,
Gaudeo et gratulor tibi de toto corde et intimis animi mei sensibus quod tandem redis in Germaniam et detergis lacrymas dulcis aviae meae quas effudit cum dubitaret de reditu tuo. Nunc hoc solum adhuc superest ut nos exilares adventu tuo Gottingam quod omnes (ut facile potes credere) valde optamus. Equidem spero me ita felicem futuram ut te possim videre et tibi possim osculari manum.

Nunc te non [CF: *alter*? or perhaps Huberia confuses the following *quam* with *nisi*] novi et amo quam de

Tua

Mi Car.^{me} Avuncule

obsequiosissima

Joh. Chris. Huberia

My Dear Uncle,

I rejoice and I congratulate you wholeheartedly and with my innermost feelings that you are finally returning to Germany and wiping away my dear grandmother's tears, which she poured out when she was in doubt concerning your return. Now all that remains is for you to cheer us with your arrival in Göttingen—which all of us, you can imagine, eagerly desire. For my part, I hope that I will be fortunate enough to see you and kiss your hand. Now I only know and love you from your picture, which hangs under the mirror of my dear grandmother and at the window of my dearest grandfather, but still I think I could recognize you if I were to see you.

I wish you well in the sweet hope that I will soon exchange happy words with you in person rather than by letter.

Yours,

My Dearest Uncle,

most obediently,

Joh. Chris. Huberia

Figure 7: Huberia's only surviving writing: a 1754 Latin letter to her uncle Karl Philipp Gesner. SLUB Dresden / Digitale Sammlungen / Mscr.Dresd.App.226:128.

Year's 1774 and 1792.¹⁰⁴ The archival identification has them coming from a "J[ohann] Chr[istian]." It is not much of an end for a prodigious beginning. But one can speculate about further echoes. Is it possible, for instance, that the Göttingen professor August Schlözer, in raising his learned daughter Dorothea Schlözer, took some inspiration from the pedagogical experiments of Gesner

¹⁰⁴ HStAM 340 Grimm MS 11. Available online: <https://arcinsys.hessen.de/arcinsys/detailAction?detailid=v318972>

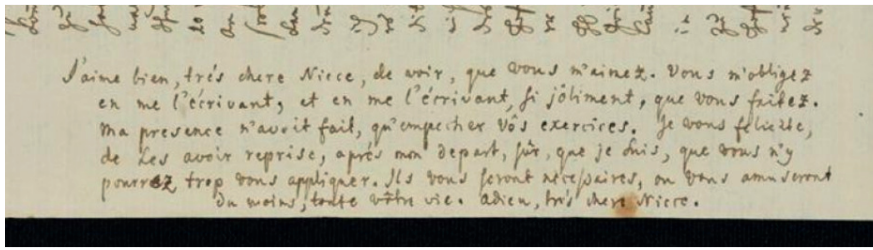


Figure 8: Message from Karl Philipp Gesner to his niece, written in the margin of a letter to his parents. SLUB Dresden / Digitale Sammlungen / Mscr.Dresd.App.225:14.

with Huberia? I know of no direct indication to this effect, but Schlözer did spend time in Göttingen in the 1750s, some years before he entered the faculty.¹⁰⁵

Then, too: Gesner's daughter had several daughters—one of them was Huberia, another was Dorothea, known by marriage as Dorothea Wild, whose own daughter of the same name would, in 1825, marry none other than Wilhelm Grimm (see Figure 9). Contributions to the Grimms' work by their female associates and family members—including Huberia's sister and two of her nieces—have been recognized and expounded.¹⁰⁶ Our encounter with the youthful Huberia, however fragmentary, extends the history of this kind of family collaboration backwards. Indeed, Grimm's son Herman (1828–1901), himself a Berlin professor, would look still further, pausing over Huberia's mother Christiane (Gesner) Huber in considering hereditary sources of the "talents" on display in the Grimm *Märchen*, though not asserting any connection.¹⁰⁷ Writing her carefully into his own lineage—engaging in his own bit of temporal positioning—he noted her relation both to Gesner and to himself on the back of an image now preserved in the collections of the city of Kassel (see Figure 6b).

A final trace: family stories recorded by a Wild descendant in the mid-nineteenth century feature some impressive details about the learnedness of Gesner's daughter. Once, she reportedly did her grandson's Latin homework for him, drawing the suspicions of his teacher, who knew the Ciceronian periods were not his pupil's.¹⁰⁸ In another instance she was said to know five languages.¹⁰⁹ But in both cases, she is called "Johanna"—which was not her name, but rather that of her daughter *Huberia*. One is inclined to wonder if in these accounts, written from the distance of a half-century and more, the

105 Kern and Kern, *Schlözer*. Michaelis, "Memoria," 272 styles Gesner's work with Huberia as an opportunity for *experimentum*.

106 See, e.g., Rölleke, "Sonntags"; Lelke, *Brüder Grimm*, esp. 190–250.

107 Grimm, "Die Brüder Grimm," 239–40.

108 Wild, *Stammtafel*, 8.

109 *Ibid.*, 7.

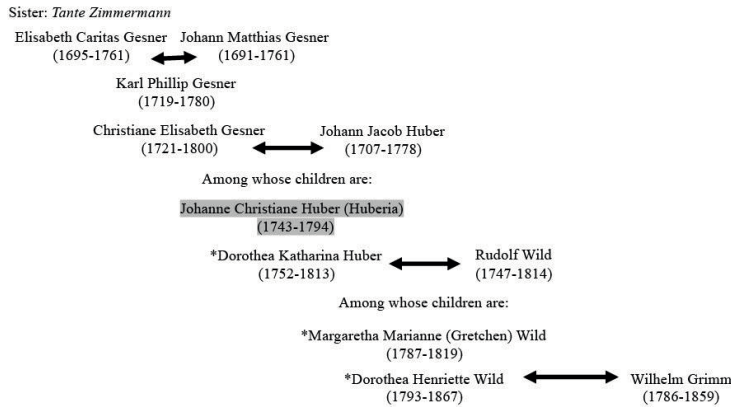


Figure 9: Abbreviated Gesner/Huber/Wild/Grimm family tree (cf. Gresky, "Brief," 89). Asterisks mark contributors to the Grimms' *Märchensammlung*.

memory of two learned women—one Gesner's daughter, one his granddaughter—had not started to blend together. If so, we have encountered Huberia once again: misidentified, though not unmentioned, and remarkable for her learning.

Conclusion

What a scholar is depends on *when* a scholar is, where *when* refers not simply to matters like birth and death date, but to the whole complex of practices and operations required to position the "self" *in time*. This article has sought to introduce some of the varied negotiations that can be understood under the heading of temporal positioning, using the well-documented case of Gesner to present examples of "timing" in action: in the home, on the page, and for posterity. It has sketched the involvement of Gesner's female family members in each of these areas in order to show how the temporal positioning of a scholar implicates a whole cast of characters. Both scholarly "personae" and the "selves" in whose assembly they feature are complex and difficult to image: recent research, led by Herman Paul, has looked to profile them on the basis of

the constellations of “virtues” and “skills” they embody.¹¹⁰ It remains challenging to say how such characteristics ramify from the pages of publications and the halls of the university and academy into the more intimate spaces of “everyday life.”¹¹¹ Perhaps the most impressive characterizations in this line have come from Gadi Algazi, who has looked to early modern cases where scholarly “work” and “domesticity” were considerably less differentiated than in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, while foregrounding not anatomies of the selves of particular scholars, but rather dispositional problematics (how did scholars, traditionally celibate, carve out for themselves “space”—literal and mental—in domestic units?) and less straightforwardly “bookish” elements of depictions of the learned (scholars’ dogs, their “ways with food”).¹¹² Following Algazi, I have taken up here a problematic—how a scholar was “timed” in a variety of arenas. The approach is not at odds with the plotting of scholarly virtues and skills, but it is meant to generate a different cross-section of some of the “commitments” constitutive of a scholarly self, much like a photograph and an X-ray make visible different features of an observed object. It has helped here to tell parts of the story of the network of actors and instruments that helped hold Gesner’s self together.

About the Author

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¹¹⁰ See especially the work of Paul as cited in n. 9.

¹¹¹ See Paul, “What is a Scholarly Persona?,” 356.

¹¹² See Algazi, “Scholars in Households” (domesticity); “At the Study” (dogs); “Food for Thought” (food).

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Stadtarchiv Lüneburg

SUB Göttingen = Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen

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