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Kerstin Roth (TU Dresden)

Rhetoric, stylistic and argumentative strategies of German language female authors in the 17th century

In the history of the German language, the 17th century is known for its so called *Sprachgesellschaften* and their aim to evolve and practice a well-formulated and written German language. This can be seen as an unofficial start for the standardization of the language, followed by the production of dictionaries and other literature that had the aim of showing how one could and should write in “good” German.

One question, however, is if and how women participated in this evolution? Who were they and why did they use the German language as they did?

This presentation focusses on different female authors from the 17th century who explain in their texts why they wrote in German, whom they addressed and which impact on the evolution of the German language this could have had.

Rhetoric, stylistic and argumentative strategies will build the center of this presentation. This is why the focus will lie on so called *Paratexts*, yet poems or letters in which the vernacular German is discussed will also be treated. *Paratexts* are texts that introduce a work to the addressees. In these texts (introductions, poems, etc.) the authors explain their aims. We like to show that the choice of German is a choice in the direction of an interested, but not (always) academically educated audience. The use of the vernacular German can also be seen as an approach to evoke intimacy between the authors and their public. The choice of the language is a choice between close and distant (vernacular vs. f. ex. Latin) or between a non-academic and an academic world.

Examples for this approach are texts from the scientists Maria Cunitz and Maria Sibylla Merian along with the poets Sophia Elisabeth Brunner and Johanne Charlotte Unzer. This study is based on results of cooperative research with researchers from the field of early modern literature. We intend to show that interdisciplinary work is needed to fully understand the language and literature of the 17th century.

References

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Claudia Opitz & Ulrike Weckel (1998) (Hgg.): *Ordnung, Politik und Geselligkeit der Geschlechter im 18. Jahrhundert.* Göttingen.

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