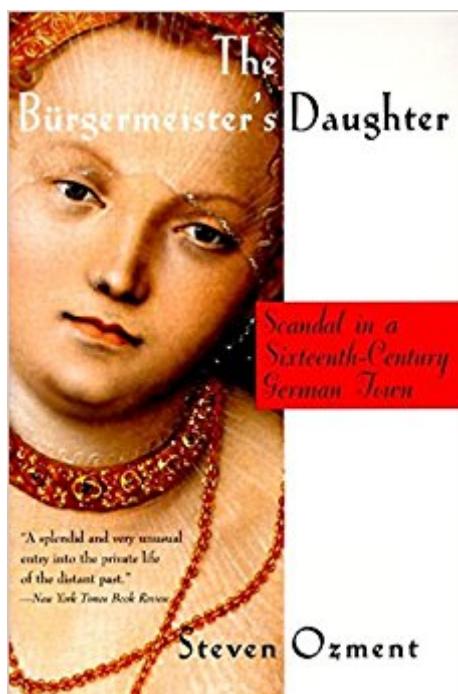


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# The Bürgermeister's Daughter: Scandal In A Sixteenth-Century German Town



## **Synopsis**

In an era when women were supposed to be disciplined and obedient, Anna proved to be neither. Defying 16th-century social mores, she was the frequent subject of gossip because of her immodest dress and flirtatious behavior. When her wealthy father discovered that she was having secret, simultaneous affairs with a young nobleman and a cavalryman, he turned her out of the house in rage, but when she sued him for financial support, he had her captured, returned home and chained to a table as punishment. Anna eventually escaped and continued her suit against her father, her siblings and her home town in a bitter legal battle that was to last 30 years and end only upon her death. Drawn from her surviving love letters and court records, *The Burgermeister's Daughter* is a fascinating examination of the politics of sexuality, gender and family in the 16th century, and a powerful testament to the courage and tenacity of a woman who defied the inequalities of this distant age.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

The tragic but uplifting story of Anna Buschler, whose rebellion against the constricting mores of her times is reconstructed in this vivid social portrait of Germany at the end of the Middle Ages. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ozment (Protestants: The Birth of a Revolution) brings a medieval drama to life in this meticulously researched and engrossing narrative of the 30-year lawsuit between Anna Buschler (1496/98-1552) and her family. Anna's father, Burgermeister (mayor) of the German town of Schwabisch Hall,

banished his daughter from the family home in 1525 after he read letters that confirmed her sexual involvement with two men. Anna responded by suing her father, and after his death her siblings, for disinheriting her. Ozment details the twists and turns of Anna's legal battle, which continued during her two marriages and resulted in her being shackled to a table for six months by her father and later jailed briefly by the town council. She escaped from both incarcerations. Although Anna was promiscuous, Ozment convincingly argues that the Burgermeister's treatment was overly severe, and Anna emerges in this account as an unusually resourceful and feisty woman. Illustrated. History Book Club selection. Copyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I love the book and the very intriguing story. It may be true that the daughter was unlady like and promiscuous in her behaviour especially during that period when the goodness of ones family name and character means more to those in power. Her dad, the burgermeister , in my opinion should bear the bulk of the blame. He was vicious towards the daughter and denying her of a life worthy of the daughter of a burgermeister. I am not aware of any circumstance in the book where the father even made an attempt to marry her off to a worthy man and family. Instead, Anna was subjected to run the father's household when his wife (Anna's mother) died. The burgermeister denying her daughter her rightful inheritance was wrong and evil. One has to admire the courage of the daughter to take her fight against her father and estate, and mark you, a very powerful man, through the courts and legal system. I love the story and it is beautifully written.

Steven Ozment has managed to take an intriguing subject - the sordid (and true) affairs of a 16th century Burgermeister's daughter - and make it as dull and unreadable as possible. I concur with other reviewers who stated that Ozment's writing and research are both deeply flawed. His account of the willful and oft-unfairly treated Anna Bueschler could be a fascinating commentary on 16th century German history, social mores, family and romantic relationships, politics and the role of women in society. Instead, Ozment neglects all of these possibilities and focuses on the most mundane aspects of Bueschler's case, and does so poorly at that. Events are discussed out of order, sources are thrown about haphazardly, and the wonderful surviving letters that relate to Anna Bueschler are not used to their best advantage. The author repeats the same themes over and over throughout the book, while never really making any progress in his analysis of Anna's situation. The book reads like a bad high school textbook. It is a shame that such a fascinating and strong-willed historical figure has been treated so unjustly by Ozment (as she often was in life by her peers!).

Perhaps another more-organized historian will take up the case of Anna Bueschler and do right by her.

Great book for anyone wanting to know more about this region of Germany.

very good

One of the things I found interesting about this book were some of the blurbs plugging it. Particularly Elle magazine trumpeting what a great stand in feminism Anna was taking which told me after I finished the book that nobody at that fashion rag actually read the book. While the entire premise of the book revolves around Anna's lawsuit against her family, the truly interesting bits are lifestyles of men and women in Germany in the 1600's and the laws and social mores that supported them. In a nut shell, Anna's father was a miser and a bit of a crook, misappropriated his deceased wife's properties and didn't bother to make a decent match for his daughter. Anna in turn took a few pages from her father's book. Stole from him and a family she worked for when it suited her and carried on with two simultaneous sexual relationships without discretion. When she was found out her father put her out with just the clothes on her back. The Burgermeister's real vindictiveness, however, occurs when he is called out by the town council (in which he serves) and the local judicial courts on his foul play and this costs him his esteemed position. This is where it really gets interesting to me. While the 1600's are heralded as the renaissance period and all the focus typically goes to Italy for all the fantastic art. But in Germany there was a spiritual and intellectual reform going on that makes Italy look like neanderthals. Thanks to the printing press, the wide distribution of Bibles and the spread in literacy ideas and debates where on the rise and in Germany this had a great effect on the church (Luther broke away from the Catholics and various strains of protestantism began.) and Germany's legal system, while still very much in line with the rest of Europe in that women where property and could not give representation on their own behalf, were in fact constantly finding loop holes and making almost every concession possible to go around this. A great deal of this was in part to simple logic based on Germany's social standards. Unlike the rest of Europe both men and women of every class was expected to work. Since every citizen was expected to develop a skill and trade than it only made sense that the law should support the claims of an individual no matter what their gender was and since Germany also strived to avoid anyone becoming a ward of the state. Anna just happened to live in the exact right country to defend herself. Anna, despite coming from a wealthy family had been farmed out at the age of 15 to the local noble family to learn how to

be a housekeeper. When her mother died her father recalled her at the age of 20 to come home and be his housekeeper. This she did until she was 25. Therefore when her father turned her out and went out of his way to see that no friend or family member helped her he was, by law intentionally impeding her from a living. A serious no-no in German law. What followed was a nasty fight that lasted until the end of both the Burgermeister and Anna's lives. While the Burgermeister was clearly a vain shyster who lost his temper and then tried to find ways to outwit the legal system that bordered on the criminal (kidnapping, enslavement, hiding funds.), I unfortunately found myself losing all sympathy for Anna. Mr. Ozment does a very good job of articulately presenting all sides of the argument (i.e. father, Anna, siblings and particularly the witnesses, legal representatives and the town council.) Because the legal system could be so readily used by Anna she was constantly renegeing on deals struck in her favor. She was too much like her father in stubbornness and her inability to accept satisfaction of any kind left a woman who literally goes insane over time in seeking full on revenge and retribution. While I enjoyed this story immensely, it was more for the history of Germany at this time and how socially, intellectually, spiritually and judicially advanced it was from other countries it was at this time. For sure, a woman had a much better place in society in Germany than in Italy or France at this time. And it was nice that a woman like Anna could get representation on her own. But as for Anna herself, hardly a feminist icon, her insanity and vindictiveness only showed how she was truly her father's daughter. I really felt sorry for all their legal representatives as they were definitely put upon by this awful family.

I purchased this book for my son for college and had to return it unused as the teacher changed the text at the last minute.

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