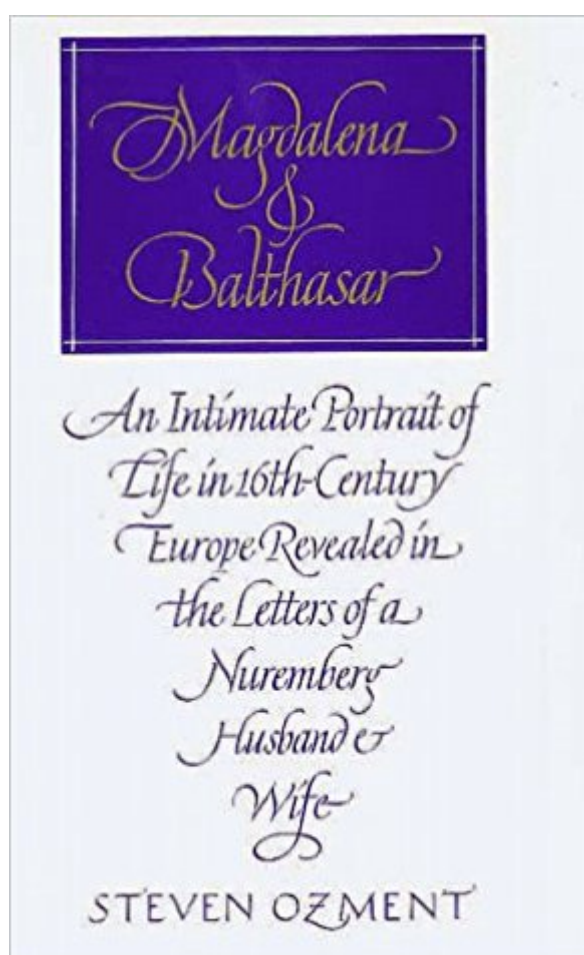


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Magdalena And Balthasar : An Intimate Portrait Of Life In 16th Century Europe Revealed In The Letters Of A Nuremberg Husband And Wife



Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Text: English, German (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This personal account opens an intriguing window into the past through the exchange of letters between an ordinary married couple in 16th century Germany. The letters offer detailed descriptions of everyday life and practical concerns: food, clothing, running their merchant business, maintaining a household, parenting, religious beliefs and the medical practices of the day. (Yikes! Anyone for bleeding, worms, bad humors?) Their affectionate regard for each other displays a successful marriage and partnership both charming and enlightening as it existed in such a different world over 400 years ago. Love the history of real people as opposed to the usual run of political figures, royalty or figureheads that more often come down to us.

Despite reviewer DP Mellon's prejudicial, intolerant and bias rant on Dr. Ozment's book, I found it to be a useful glimpse into the daily life of a 16th century couple. I am writing a historical novel set during these times, and such personalized, intimate and first hand translated source material is critical to the accuracy of my novel. Ozment's book gives us a look at how people really lived, what they said, what they thought, and what they wore, and therefore for this reason the book is indeed historically significant. You can interpret data and statistical patterns up the yahoo, but when you

want to find out what people really did in a certain time, read their letters. This book is a "slice of life," not intended to represent the interests, trends or political ideals of the larger generation to which it belongs, but to focus on a particular 16th century couple at a particular time in life. Just as any painter knows, you must limit your subject in a "portrait" to the most important person or persons you are trying to represent, and capture their true nature by selecting those details to focus on that are most representative of the subject. I believe that Dr. Ozment has done a fine job of doing just that. I will agree with Mellon that I would have liked to have seen more actual excerpts of the letters, only because I found them fascinating. As an aside, I don't believe that the couple portrayed here are any less ordinary to their times than the middle-class of today is to theirs, as Mellon claims in his review. This couple is middle-class, politically connected, and want for little, so that means they are not ordinary? To whom? They also lost their only child, fought with their relatives, hated their jobs, worried about money, and got sick on a regular basis while trying to sift quack cures from the real thing. Sounds pretty ordinary to me. They were members of a growing merchant class at this time, and they lived how they lived. Trying to make them stand for something other than what they are, as Mellon seems to want Ozment to do, would be an exercise in futility. That Dr. Ozment chose this particular couple to write a book about seems less to do with their "conformity to modern white middle class notions of what the marriage relationship should be" than to the fact that they wrote letters to one another that survived intact into the 20th century, which could therefore be translated and commented upon. And I enjoyed the material, though I am neither white, nor experimenting with marriage (I think after 9 years it ceases to be an experiment), nor childless and in pursuit of the almighty dollar (though Mellon seems to assume these are the only types of people who would buy into Ozment's premise of the role of the family in 16th century Germany). In conclusion, if you want to know how a 16th century merchant couple in Germany lived, this is a good place to start.

I read this book long ago and have never forgotten it. It is a wonderful glimpse of the life of a couple who loved one another but lived in a time that is considered almost alien to how we live now. These letters show that people long ago felt the same things we feel and struggled with the same things we struggle with and sought answers in much the same way we do. I loved it and have been looking for a copy for a long time. I am glad to have finally found it again. Reading all the letters would be wonderful. I hope they are all translated some day.

This is an amazing look into a 16th century marriage. There is humor, loss, and lots of love. Great

for World Civilization course book report!

Very good.

I enjoyed the letters and most of the commentary. The letters are wonderful and as a communications tool between separated spouses, they are both positive and chatty. As a general reader, I am ignorant of 90% of the details of a 16th century life and could have used more sociological detail. If you are reading this for a class, your professor surely will enlighten you. Of Balthasar's bathing and "taking the waters" to heal his arthritis and digestive complaints: I do know that the baths have been used since before the Romans to promote healing and well-being. They continue to be patronized by Germans and non-Germans alike. Additionally, Hildegard of Bingen, a very popular author of the middle ages, who was considered a scientist of her time, promoted bathing for healing. She wrote a herbal medicine textbook as well as her famous mystical books. I also found it humorous that the editor found Magdalene's request for food treats and fancy textiles in every letter excessive. There were no supermarkets with non-seasonal fruits or treats around in the 16th century. And we don't have plague haunting us either. Excellent book.

great and good experience. Very well. This is wonderful.....very sharp and feels good in my hand. I just used it for the first time yesterday and it will be my favorite product. It arrived quickly and in great condition. It is a very handsome product. my family , OK, there is do not have any problem.

Editor Ozment presents letters between a Nuremberg merchant and his wife. These letters are very interesting in that they tell about everyday life in the 16th century. Professor Ozment's commentary on the letters is helpful; however, the book would have been better served if a greater number of the letters had been included. Although some 87 letters between Magdalena and Balthazar are extant, the editor includes fewer than 20 in their entirety. Also, the entire volume is fewer than 200 pages so the book could have been longer. These minor objections aside, Magdalena and Balthazar is a fascinating read!

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