

Horsley, Joey, and Luise Pusch, eds. *Berühmte Frauenpaare*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004. 317 pp. ISBN: 3-518-39904-7 paperback, €10.

Reviewed for Women in German by Beate Brunow

The commitment and affection between two women has been described as “the love that has no name” by Lillian Faderman (*Surpassing the Love of Men*, 154). In the nineteenth century, older notions of romantic friendship between women became suspicious, and unmarried women often were marginalized as asexual, medically perverse or psychologically unfit. With this collection of essays on famous couples, Luise Pusch continues her commitment to making the lives and work of women more accessible. The feminist biographical sketches uncover the love and experiences of women whose close emotional and intimate relationships provided a stimulating alternative or supplement to marriage. The concern for highlighting the relationships between women coincides with an attempt to rewrite the traditional “heterosexual” (304) artist-muse relationship, as well as to bring to light the plights and pleasures of homosexual or homoerotic liaisons in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The two editors, also a famous couple, frame the contributions with an introduction, in which Horsley sets the historical background for the seven chronologically organized accounts, and an epilogue, in which Pusch leaves the reader with a call for more research on queer history and more openly lived homosexual relationships. The variety of liaisons in terms of time, space, and diversity stands out in this volume; the relationships span not only more than a century and across Europe and North America but also present various forms of love, support, secrecy, and rejection.

All accounts trouble the double-sided institution of marriage that provides security for women while simultaneously limiting their independence and opportunities. Traditional marriage as a hurdle for women with non-traditional ambitions is circumvented in favor of amorous relationships between women. Andrea Schweer’s account of Rosa Bonheur’s relationships with Nathalie Micas and, following Micas’ death, with the much younger U.S. painter Anna Klumpke, provides testimony to a self-sufficient community of women that also included Micas’ mother. Bonheur’s success as a painter in the latter part of the nineteenth century allowed for an unusual life-style in which the lovers not only transgressed binary gender codes of the time but also established a transgenerational network of women dedicated to each other’s well-being and creative work. In contrast to this stands the second essay, concerned with the life and love of Marie Fillunger and Eugenie Schuman. Their relationship is marked by jealousy amongst women in Eugenie’s family and by a political and cultural climate that increasingly pathologized women’s (homo)sexual desires and forced many couples into a life of secrecy. Eva Rieger stresses the accomplishments of research on gay and lesbian life in recent decades that has facilitated new historical perspectives on the fluid boundaries of sexuality and has helped to revise notions of women’s asexuality. Hiltrud Schroeder describes the relationship between Anita Augspurg and Lida Gustava Heymann as a union in life, love, and work that inspired their dedication to and accomplishments in Germany’s feminist movement and political activism from the turn of the century to the end of their lives in exile in 1943. A similarly intense liaison developed between the actress Ada Dwyer Russell and writer Amy Lowell. Ada was, according to Horsley and Pusch, not only inspiration to many of Amy Lowell’s poems but also the midwife to her poetic creations. This contribution stands out in that it lets Amy’s poetry tell much of the story of her love for Ada.

Katherine Mansfield’s and Ida Baker’s relationship departs from the stories of love and support and shows the harsh reality of mutual dependency and stark differences in power and affection. The physically ill Mansfield depended on Ida, who was driven by her affection for the famous writer and whose emotional attachment was sustained by scant attention from Katherine. Dictated

by the needs and demands of Mansfield, their interaction appears rather one-sided, yet Sulamith Sparre sees their exchange as mutually beneficial, which surely adds another aspect to the diversity of relationships portrayed in this volume. Milena Jesenská (today widely known for her relationship with Kafka) and Margarete Buber-Neumann find their love in the most unlikely place, the concentration camp in Ravensbrück. Both women are married and have children and find in each other the strength it takes to live through the unimaginable. Milena and Margarete bond over their creative imagination; they risk their lives to spend time with each other, during which they share observations and writings about their daily experiences, as well as the comfort of love and trust. The inspiring account of survival through an affectionate bond and creativity is, however, cut short by Milena's death; Margarete survives to continue and finish their imagined project after the camp's liberation. Sibylle Duda makes this essay particularly notable by presenting Milena not as Kafka's friend or love interest but as the intimate partner of Margarete. The final contribution concerns itself with the story of Rachel Carson and Dorothy Freeman in the post-war McCarthy era in which a fear of communism coincided with the enforcement of a hetero-normative binary gender code. Swantje Koch-Kanz and Luise Pusch describe the precautions taken by Rachel and the married Dorothy to differentiate between the public and private parts of their correspondence that kept their affectionate bond hidden from the public eye.

This collection of essays provides insights into the struggles and gratification experienced in relationships between women by moving beyond notions of (asexual) friendship and stressing their homosexual or homoerotic liaisons as sources of companionship, inspiration, and strength. It strikes the reader as authentic and refreshing how much the authors strive to bring forth the voices of these women and allow them to tell the reader about their love and life. The inviting biographical sketches with their enriching secondary sources engage the reader, contribute to current research in gender and queer studies and add historical, cultural, and personal nuances that will be of interest to students and scholars alike.

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