

Anonym, verschollen, trivial: Methodological Hindrances in Researching German Women's Literature.

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Jeannine Blackwell

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In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:

Jeannine Blackwell Anonym, verschollen, trivial: Methodological Hindrances in Researching German Women's Literature Frauenliteratur, like the terms Frauenroman and Frauentichtung, is a two-way mirror. It is a distressing reminder of the impotent and flowery sentimentality of Wilhelminian German literature: garden dwarfs, the Gartenlaube, tüchtige Hausfrauen, Hedwig Courths Mahler, and Vicki Baum. It is harmless literature, to be classified next to the children's stories, the code books, and home improvements. Yet with this term Frauenliteratur, as with so many, there is a cutting edge. Is Frauenliteratur really what Treitschke

and Goedeke tell us it is? Is it not also the letters Caroline and Dorothea wrote, Bettina's *Armenbuch*, Gabriele Reuter's social protest? Were not these also by, for, and about women in Germany? To discover what *Frauenliteratur* was and is, scholars today must look through that dark, distorting mirror of literary history. Anticipating and identifying the cracks in that history, feminist critics must reshape the critical tools to deal with the anonymous, the unrecognized, the uncanonized, the "trivial"; to reconstruct or rediscover the *verschollen*; and to locate and describe the dear ladies who read the books back then. The other side of the cracked mirror of literary history is *Frauenliteratur* today. It is the product of contemporary critical female authors for a predominantly female audience; it is also the reestablished or discovered tradition of women authors such as Sidonie Zuckmayer (1714-1740), Theresia Huber (1764-1829), and Gertrud Kolmar (1894-1943?). Often a literature of the "other Germany" -- critical, republican, socialist, Utopian, or feminist -- it is not harmless, impotent droolings. This excavation work brings out the straightforward, graphic, even aggressive side of German women's literary culture. This research has grown out of the second women's movement in both Europe and the United States. Its new female mentality, new consciousness of history and the private sphere demand a fresh reading of the old texts. In this reading, feminists cannot rely trustingly on that cracked mirror of German literary history. We must reread everything and question the verity of every fact already given. 39 The great reference works of the nineteenth century are some of the most important tools we have to reconstruct that literature. Knowing the history of these works will give feminist scholars today an idea of how *Frauenliteratur* was defined, which pieces were included, and which were omitted. A brief examination of the process of literary analysis in Germany will underscore the pitfalls of such reference works. These massive undertakings must be checked for factual error, but more importantly, they must be seen in conjunction with and contrast to the movements of social and political change within the German area. The establishment of modern German universities, under the leadership of the brothers Grimm and Humboldt, brought in a model of scholarly research which became paradigmatic for Germanistik as well as for the natural sciences. The *historisch-literaturwissenschaftliche* method of philological research, historical dating, biographical data, study of origins and development started by the collections of Herder and the brothers Grimm put literature first into its historical context, and then into national and linguistic groupings; its authorial origins were sought out if possible. Criticism was no longer merely aesthetic, moral, and philosophical, but rather historical. With this group of scholars and with the establishment of new universities at Berlin, Göttingen, and elsewhere, the separation of the writing scholar and the artistic scholar was completed. While it had been customary up to the eighteenth century for the two fields to be combined -- one thinks here of Opitz, later Lessing, Herder, and Wieland, who wrote both scholarly treatises and creative works -- this era brings about the division and professionalization of poet and scholar. The division of labor between the *Gelehrten* and the *Dichter* that prevailed after the late 18th century was a boon to women authors. Since they had been and continued to be excluded from university study (with a few loudly proclaimed exceptions) and had little opportunity to learn the classics or consistent orthography, they had been essentially shut out from literary production. The new division of literary labor, combined with the spiritual justification of women's literary forms in Pietist confessional literature, changed that...

Juanine Fleckwell

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The other side of the cracked mirror of literary history is Frauenliteratur today. It is the product of contemporary critical female authors for a predominantly female audience; it is also the reestablished or discovered tradition of women authors such as Sidonie Zimmernann (1744-1760), Therese Huber (1764-1829), and Gertrud Kolmar (1894-1943?). Of an a literature of the "other Germany" -- critical, republican, socialist, utopian, or feminist -- it is not harmless, impotent droolings. This excavation work brings on the unyielding, graphic, even aggressive side of German women's literary culture. This research has grown out of the second women's movement in both Europe and the United States. Its new female mentality, new consciousness of history and the private sphere demand a fresh reading of the old texts. In this reading, feminists cannot only trustingly on that cracked mirror of German literary history. We must reread everything and question the verity of every fact already given.





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