1990

The Not-so-objective-correlative. 'Germany' in the Work of Four Antipodean Women Writers

Carol Franklin

Follow this and additional works at: http://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi

Recommended Citation

Research Online is the open access institutional repository for the University of Wollongong. For further information contact the UOW Library: research-pubs@uow.edu.au
The Not-so-objective-correlative. 'Germany' in the Work of Four Antipodean Women Writers

Abstract
In 1938 under the long shadow of fascist Germany and the obvious signs of another great war impending Virginia Woolf published Three Guineas. In it she made the connection between the private life (women kept uneducated, financially powerless and in fear of the 'family') and war. In the voice of the woman responding to the man who has asked 'How can we prevent war?' she refers to women's fear, men's anger at their attempt at self-determination, and declares: 'fear and anger prevent real freedom in the private house; ... fear and anger may prevent real freedom in the public world: they may have a positive share in causing war' (p. 148).
The Not-so-objective-correlative. ‘Germany’ in the Work of Four Antipodean Women Writers

In 1938 under the long shadow of fascist Germany and the obvious signs of another great war impending Virginia Woolf published *Three Guineas*. In it she made the connection between the private life (women kept uneducated, financially powerless and in fear of the ‘family’) and war. In the voice of the woman responding to the man who has asked ‘How can we prevent war?’ she refers to women’s fear, men’s anger at their attempt at self-determination, and declares: ‘fear and anger prevent real freedom in the private house; ... fear and anger may prevent real freedom in the public world: they may have a positive share in causing war’ (p. 148).

Woolf later depicts a figure ‘of a man; some say, others deny, that he is Man himself, the quintessence of virility’, a figure of military dictatorship, with a landscape of civilian carnage behind him, which she offers, not to ‘excite once more the strong emotion of hate’ but to suggest ‘that the public and private worlds are inseparably connected; that the tyrannies and servilities of the one are the tyrannies and servilities of the other’ (p. 162). *Three Guineas* was received very badly by the men in Woolf’s circle, and its thesis generally ridiculed or ignored. But other women writers have made the same connections she makes, if not in her overt form of an elegantly argued essay.

Between two and three decades earlier, four Antipodean women, ‘Elizabeth’ von Arnim, Katherine Mansfield, Henry Handel Richardson and Hilda Freeman, writing of the period before World War I focussed on Germany and highlighted the sexual oppression of women. All four share similar aversion to aspects of German personal, social and cultural life. Each woman’s ironic eye is on the ‘tyrannies and servilities’ of the ‘private house’ whether she is focussing on these exclusively or not. Germany emerges in the work of all four as a correlative, of varying levels of objectivity, for the relegation of women to servile status. Militarism, national or racial intolerance and cruelty are foregrounded to varying degrees in the works in question. The link between sexism and militarism or racism varies from implicit to explicit.
Of these four women from Australia and New Zealand, two were very popular in their day, while the reputations of the other two remain high. Each had lived in Germany under circumstances of great personal significance; each characterised a whole nation adversely, with different future repercussions. The style of each varies from 'readerly' to 'writerly'.

The first to write on Germany was Mary Annette Beauchamp, born in Sydney (or, according to her recent biographer Karen Usborne, at Kiribilly Point near Paremata outside Wellington) in 1866. Her family, originally English, had lived in Australia for fifteen years. Mary, later to be known as "Elizabeth" of the German Garden, went back to England with her family at the age of three. She became Countess von Arnim on her marriage at twenty-five to a German Junker with estates in Pomerania. Immensely popular in her lifetime, and unfairly neglected since, 'Elizabeth' wrote twenty-one novels and an autobiography. Several novels which deal with similar issues to those in her first book, Elizabeth and Her German Garden (1898), were published in the years preceding the First World War. Usborne calls 'Elizabeth' 'a formidable and original feminist thinker' (Introduction, p. 1). In style and popularity, she occupies a similar place this century to Rhoda Broughton in the last.

The literary fame of Katherine Mansfield rests on her short stories. Born Kathleen Mansfield Beauchamp in Wellington in 1888, she lived in various parts of Europe, including Germany, and published in England. Kathleen's father and Mary's father were cousins. When she was just twenty-one and in serious personal difficulties she stayed in Bavaria basing several sketches and stories in her first book In A German Pension of 1911 on this experience.

The Australian Henry Handel Richardson, born in Ballarat in 1870, lived in various parts of Germany from the ages of eighteen to thirty-three, mostly in Alsace in strongly pro-French Strasbourg. Her reputation is secure through her novels, two of which are set in Germany, but it is a group of her neglected short stories which bears comparison with Mansfield's In A German Pension. Richardson referred to them as her 'three "German" stories': 'Life and Death of Peterle Luthy', 'The Professor's Experiment', and 'Succedaneum', together present a microcosm of German society and culture from a critical feminist perspective. In the sketches Mansfield presents a different kind of critical microcosm, a gallery of German 'types' (the Professor, the Junker Baron, the 'advanced' lady, etc.).

The fourth Antipodean woman was Hilda Mary Hodge Freeman, born at Gordon outside Ballarat in 1885. Freeman's memoir, An Australian Girl in Germany (1916), recently republished by her daughter, was a best
seller during the First World War. This very readable and valuable historical and sociological resource is also interesting as a psychological study of national feeling in Germany of 1914 before the outbreak of war. The book is not well known but deserves to be. Freeman had an interest in recording the past. Her memoir was based on her diaries and on German newspaper accounts of that year when she was unexpectedly a victim of politics; later in life she gathered material on the Murrumbidgee region’s pioneers for a book which was ready to be published in the thirties. Hilda, born in later times, might have become a serious historical researcher.

These four women of different interests, literary styles and status make a significant sample. Their origins in the colonies may have contributed to their pronounced independence of spirit and distaste for organised tyranny and servility, personal or public, as old habits of oppression were being modified faster there. (New Zealand women had the vote, more or less by accident, in 1893.) These women had all travelled great distances alone. Such scandalous freedom was one of many cultural differences between them and German women.

Their independent ways extended to control over how they should be named. None ever used the name of a man to whom she was allied by marriage; all used either the name they were born with, or a combination of this and another of choice, all except ‘Elizabeth’ who used simply that one name, the most minimal of pseudonyms as hers was initially the greatest need for concealment and independence.

The extent to which anti-German sentiment and fanaticism in their own culture and post-war attitudes and humanitarian developments affected their attitudes to writing and their outlook on life is noteworthy. All four cherished personal freedom and were opposed all their lives to violence and bigotry. They shared a love of flowers, gardens, animals and the natural world. Freeman was a conservationist (as was Richardson) and a lover of bush plants and animals.

These four outsider women knew a pre-war Germany, although war must have affected Freeman’s and Richardson’s publications. Hilda Freeman’s initial writing impetus, however, was personal; a diary of the experience of governessing in a foreign country, one markedly different from her Antipodean homeland, yet one in which she found human warmth, kindness, and shared feelings in spite of the shock of wide and deep cultural differences which profoundly troubled her. She began her diaries well before war broke out, but the book itself, published in 1916, describes events in 1914 and 1915. It conveys a balance between criticism and affection until increasing pressure of anti-British feeling and threatening events both personal and political culminate in the patriotic propaganda of the later chapters.
Richardson’s stories, set in the decade before World War One but written after it, were not published until a few years before the second. In Freeman’s book (the only non-fiction work) war breaks out halfway through the narrative, but the German ethos is as much the subject as war even here.

Mansfield, von Arnim, Richardson and Freeman are strikingly at one in selecting to focus on similar highly specific issues. Mansfield had read von Arnim and Richardson had read both by the twenties and thirties at least. Influence may be at work, but so is a shared vision of Germany from a woman’s eyes. We do not know what Freeman read. It is possible that she had read ‘Elizabeth’, however, as her descriptions of flowers, and walks in the Baltic pine forests recall ‘Elizabeth’s’ garden scenes and Baltic excursions.

The aims of ‘Elizabeth’ in Elizabeth and Her German Garden were ostensibly to celebrate: her happiness in the life she had rescued for herself away from the grim regime of the noisy Berlin house, infested with relatives and protocol; her partial escape from servants and formality; her reading; but above all of course, as the title says, her garden.

That her actual aim included more than these is clear from her rhetoric and the issues that permeate the text. For relief was also needed from a distasteful intimate life, her horror at her fate married to a Junker who demanded constant childbearing and with whom she had to fight for the simplest of personal freedoms.

Her manner is whimsical, her style sweetness and light, but the vein of satire is rich and alluvial. It shows right from paragraph one making the book a parallel text of celebration and a satire that masks a grim reality. It is representative as well as personal. These two strands combine immediately in the naming of her husband known only as ‘The Man of Wrath’. Thus from her own experience of physical abuse and from the German ethos, the patriarch, her husband is spokesman for Germany in her first books.

‘Elizabeth’ von Arnim’s marriage to her German Count (as later to her English one, Francis Russell) led immediately to a grim personal struggle for freedom, both spiritual and actual bodily freedom. She acquired German citizenship on her marriage, and with it full German chattel status. Later the First World War was to have immense repercussions on her family (as on Richardson’s). War alienated ‘Elizabeth’ and Richardson from a nation whose artistic culture in music and literature had meant so very much.

Germany remained an integral part of ‘Elizabeth’s’ writing for the rest of her life. It manifests itself in several books between the wars and the effect of the second war is also seen in her last book. Mr Skeffington, published in 1940, not long before she died, implicitly attacks racism
(her Jewish hero has been imprisoned by the Nazis). Sexism, racism, militarism run through the fabric of the Germany depicted by ‘Elizabeth’.

Karen Usborne says of her: ‘Elizabeth’s life and work were dedicated first and foremost to exploding the complacency she encountered everywhere, most particularly that of England in regard to Prussian military ambition which she was in a unique position to understand.’ Prussian militarism was not the sole target of her life’s work, however; she aimed to explode many kinds of complacencies. Sexism manifests itself strongly in several of her books with the husband or a German male used to epitomise the autocratic male in general. Her first book, *Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (1898), begins with this paragraph:

*May 7th. - I love my garden. I am writing in it now in the late afternoon loveliness, much interrupted by the mosquitoes and the temptation to look at all the glories of the new green leaves washed half an hour ago in a cold shower. Two owls are perched near me, and are carrying on a long conversation that I enjoy as much as any warbling of nightingales. The gentleman owl says ~, and she answers from her tree a little way off, ~, beautifully completing her lord’s remark as becomes a properly constructed German she-owl. (p. 3)*

Thus begins, with irony, a book as much about the plight of a woman under an extreme patriarchal regime as about the garden which brought her partial solace. Her books abound in satirical observations that expose German sexism. ‘Elizabeth’ learns that ‘nobody’ and ‘women’ are synonymous terms (p. 111). Women are classed by law with drunks and idiots (p. 115) and properly, too, says the Man of Wrath (p. 117). ‘I like to hear you talk together about the position of women,’ he went on, ‘and wonder when you will realise that they hold exactly the position they are fitted for.’

In every page she is at odds with the society she finds herself in. ‘Elizabeth’ describes matters like the sex-based difference in wages and food for farm labourers (‘The women get less, not because they work less, but because they are women and must not be encouraged’ (p. 64)) in a tone so flippant that one could overlook its import. When ‘Elizabeth’ expends sympathy for these farm-worker women, uncherished by husbands, bowed under childbearing and labour, her husband replies that childbearing is a natural control to disable women of competition with men, and brute force from the man if necessary beyond that (p. 67): ‘to silence women’s objectives and aspirations by knocking her down’ was a worthy achievement according to the Man of Wrath (pp. 68-69) who in real life apparently behaved like this towards ‘Elizabeth’.
‘Elizabeth’s’ husband made her publish this first book in an expurgated version. But its sales paid off his debts, and she kept the family in luxury on her subsequent publications.

Katherine Mansfield’s *In a German Pension* is made up of three groups of prose pieces: seven *pension* sketches distinctive, almost journalistic pieces of *saeva indignatio* (‘Germans at Meat’; ‘The Baron’; ‘The Sister of the Baronea’; ‘Frau Fischer’; ‘The Modern Soul’; ‘The Luft Bad’; and ‘The Advanced Lady’); four short stories far more sophisticated in technique and more technically ‘objective’, all using German elements and having a shared sexual politics (‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’; ‘Frau Brechenmacher Attends a Wedding’; ‘At Lehmann’s’; and ‘A Birthday’); and two studies in romantic love (‘A Blaze’ and ‘The Swing of the Pendulum’), quite different in kind and spirit and which represent a transitional stage to the psychological interests and literary technique of Mansfield’s later work.

The collection is artistically very mixed. Sometimes brilliant, often brittle satire, the vivid *sketches* are not in the same artistic league as the stories. The technique, especially the personal immediacy of the quasi-journalistic narrator and the overt superior and satirical position she takes, makes the Bavarian *Pension* sketches a unique set in the volume, with affinities to other ‘travel’ pieces written at about the same time. Mantfield outgrew her first collection. In technique and point of view she thought it immature and bad.

The satire in the sketches is too close to mockery, and I believe Mansfield came to think so. Her journal of 4 April 1914 records: ‘Nothing that isn’t satirical is really true for me to write just now. And at the same time I am so frightened of writing mockery for satire that my pen hovers and won’t settle.’ The War and its aftermath strongly influenced her perspective. She made a kind of apology to the Bavarians, and an implicit link between her ‘youthful disgust’ and militarism in a letter to her mother, Annie Burnell Beauchamp: ‘The Germans are a very curious people. I suppose this war is as hideous to them, poor souls, as it is to us. It’s the fault of the Prussians and not those simple warm-hearted bavarians, after all.’

It would seem that the aim of Mansfield’s *sketches* was simply caricature arising from disgust or contempt for a national ethos. (Similarly, in a letter to Middleton Murry on 12 April 1920, she comments on her love for the south of France but her dislike of the French - however, not the ordinary people: ‘it’s the voice of *La France officielle* which I loathe so.’) These motives are not entirely unworthy or there would be no value placed upon satire.

Many of her attacks are justifiable. It is in the unrelieved nature of her offensives in the name of Germans and Germany, and the crude
technique (crude in the ‘moral’ sense as well as the technical) that the problem lies, however. The ‘I’ narrator, self-conscious without irony, suggests there is no fictional difference between author and narrator. Where ‘Elizabeth’s’ work is often spoilt by coyness or whimsy, Mansfield’s sketches are spoilt by superciliousness of the narrator. There is little to choose technically between the overt Mansfield of the sketches and Freeman’s book, except for Mansfield’s unmitigated caricature of a whole culture in the name of its worst characteristics. No human warmth is shown on the side of the Germans. All is perjured by their arrogance or ulterior motive, while the ‘I’ narrator is thus rendered supercilious rather than morally superior. The irony is that such a technique serves the very inhumanity it seeks to expose. In the Bavarian sketches it amounts to hate, and hate is a form of corruption, something Mansfield was always to fight against in herself and in things in general through her writing.

In the aftermath of war when Mansfield repudiated her book, she looked to find the lessons of war reflected in writing, and in the behaviour of individuals and peoples. The perspective of inhumanity seemed a crime of similar order to those she held up to question. War had altered things, truth had to include shared humanity.

The four feminist German stories, by contrast, are on a level of technical objectivity and skill with Richardson’s. Here the (sometimes revealingly forced) German setting can be accepted as a correlative signalling a problem in any culture by association with one in which the traits of sexism were then so marked. Perhaps that is why the ‘Bavaria’ of ‘A Birthday’ has an unconvincing harbour, just as the change of setting from Russia to Germany in ‘The-Child-Who-Was-Tired’, Mansfield’s dialectical parody of Chekhov’s ‘Sleepy’, is not a whim, but a recognisable signal to readers asking to be interpreted.13 I doubt whether Mansfield would have repudiated these four stories except that as a perfectionist she might repudiate anything.

Her view of the book in 1917 is a little harsh considering how it shines against so many other writers’ first books, but still apt. Yet she did not totally repudiate the book itself, at least in private. In a letter to Ottoline Morrell she wrote: ‘Would you care for a copy of my wretched old book? It is young and bad, but I would like to send you one. It might amuse you a little’ (14/1/1917. Collected Letters, Vol. I, p. 292). Later, when resisting its republication, Mansfield reinforces this view without specifying the sketches as her particular target, she nevertheless conveys the impression that for content (mockery?) and style (unironic, personal narration?) it may have been these in particular she disliked, a point borne out by her 22 May 1922 letter to the literary agent Pinker:
About *In a German Pension*. I think it would be very unwise to republish it. Not only because it's a most inferior book (which it is) but I have, with my last book, begun to persuade the reviewers that I don't like ugliness for ugliness' sake. The intelligenzia [sic] might be kind enough to forgive youthful extravagance of expression and youthful disgust. But I don't want to write for them. And I really can't say to the ordinary reader 'Please excuse these horrid stories. I was only 20 at the time!'

... *In a German Pension* had a very good press. But it was that unpleasant thing—a succès de scandale. 14

Whatever the different fictional pose in different novels, 'Elizabeth's' 'voice' remains recognizably the same. Mansfield altered her technique; no longer did she use an 'I' narrator to equate unironically with an ethical centre. Her sophisticated use of distanced, polyvocal modes or an ironised narrator create neutral space in which the reader may exercise free judgment, still authorially directed but no longer regimented. Sexism and self-deception and 'corruption' remain prime targets as before, but there is more humanity in all, free indirect discourse becomes her means to achieving this. Her style changed from the 'readerly' one of the sketches to the 'writerly' one of the stories.

Richardson's *Maurice Guest* was being written around the same time as 'Elizabeth's' first book, but was not published until 1908. The typescript reveals the connection between Germany and sexism in Richardson's mind at the time:

> Girls have their very kitchen-apron tied on them with an undermeaning. And poor souls, who can blame them for submitting. What a fate is theirs, if they don't manage to catch a man. In no country in the world is the unmarried woman held in such contempt as here and gossip and needlework are only slow poison. 15

But the author's eye was not primarily on Germany in this book.

To judge by critical opinion and neglect Henry Handel Richardson's ostensible aim in her German stories was to capture quaint scenes of Strasbourg life. No coherent literary account has been published of this set of stories. 16 In presenting a microcosm of German society and culture the stories subversively employ the traditional form of the German *Novelle*, which had become the vehicle for raising difficult questions about society. For Richardson these concerned the fate of women in a patriarchal and very private world of tyrannies and servilities, mainly sexual.

Freeman's book, Mansfield's sketches (*not* the four 'German' stories) and von Arnim's 'German' fiction tended to overt confrontation of the culture via the narrator. In Richardson's stories the point is made with symbolism, irony and an 'objective' polyvocal style. The politically sig-
significant setting, especially Strasbourg, provides her with a ready made set of cultural signs which she re-functions to her purpose.

There is a representative cross-section of society. In ‘Life and Death of Peterle Luthy’ the respectable family is found to be morally corrupt. (‘Germany is the home of the Family’ as the Traveller in Mansfield’s ‘Germans At Meat’ declares.) In ‘The Professor’s Experiment’ sterile academicism and the social institution of marriage are in serious moral question. In ‘Succedaneum’ romantic love and romanticism in art are satirised. Richardson subverts the cherished German notion of Gemütlichkeit. She resists this notion of private idyll, cosy domesticity, exposing its dark side, an obscene deprivation of natural freedom and justice for women. German society may have exemplified male power and its effects more grossly for Richardson, who went through a period of revulsion against Germany.\(^{17}\)

The German detail has been cleverly employed to realize women’s historical and local situation. These stories focus on three young women, powerless and actually or virtually prostituted, in sexual involvements none has freely chosen. Older women are complaisant or compliant. The woman is mocked or condemned by various representative individuals and groups. Critical doubts are raised about societies professing such cultural values. But Germany as a correlative is more objective, it is never openly berated. It is available as analogue in Richardson’s ‘writerly’ text. These three stories are Richardson’s twentieth-century contribution to the Novelle form, which, according to Martin Swales, is distinguished by ‘hermeneutic unease’ and modernity in challenging the ‘social universe as traditionally defined and inhabited’.\(^{18}\)

Hilda Freeman’s original aim was the personal one of keeping a diary of an exciting new experience, the daily life of an Australian bush girl in the utterly foreign deeps of northern Germany on the estate of a Baron. Then fate made her witness to the psychologically fascinating workings of jingoistic patriotism and later made her a prisoner of war. An Australian Girl in Germany is the result.

To what extent she was persuaded by others to push recruiting-type sentiments in the final pages and how much was her own emotional reaction to the progress of the war is not possible to know.\(^{19}\) Freeman’s daughter Brenda Niccol claimed that the Prime Minister Billy Hughes brought pressure on her mother to help in the conscription rallies, but Freeman’s response was that she could not urge anyone to do something she could not undertake herself.

In the Foreword of her book Freeman discounted any ‘after the event’ alteration of her story; it was not ‘coloured by developments after my leaving Germany’. Freeman’s daughter describes her mother’s subse-
quent attitude towards the world’s differences: she became, says Niccol, ‘an advocate for the dignity of all peoples’.  

Freeman’s observations about Germany resemble those of the other writers. She focusses on food; the menial status of women; sanitation; health; child-bearing and customs of child-raising; rigid formality and precedence; criticism of the fetish made of sewing and linen; women’s exclusion from intellectual status; physical and verbal brutality; condescension or grossness towards women.

Freeman approaches Germany determined to ‘absorb Germany, cultivate its point of view, wear its clothes, eat its food, speak its language, and bow to its customs’ (p. 9). She says ‘adieu to Democracy and ... Australia’ and looks forward with interest to life where ‘the people are so quaint, the houses so pretty, the country so new to me’ (p. 9).

She is to be governess in a family (that of the Baron von Klinggraeff) in all respects similar to ‘Elizabeth’s’. Both von Klinggraeff and von Arnim experiment in agricultural production and use Polish and Russian outworkers (p. 17). Both Freeman and ‘Elizabeth’ remark on the harsh conditions for these people. Like ‘Elizabeth’ and Richardson, Freeman notes both the self-sacrificing ways of the women (specifically mocked by Mansfield in the sketch ‘The Advanced Lady’), which she finds excessive (p. 24) and the condescension of men towards women.

Freeman continually disclaims any feminism in the formula ‘I am not a suffragette, but...’ which becomes a thread running through the book:

Men in Germany are treated as if they are little gods. Of course the women treat them with deference and humility simply because they must do so. Man is the stronger animal; hence the meek and mild obedience of the weaker sex. I am not a suffragette, but still I feel no undue humility where a mere man is concerned, unless of course, his natural character is so truly superior that it demands my respect, then I give it gladly, freely. (p. 29)

The extent of Freeman’s self-proclaimed anti-feminism as opposed to her actual aversion to sexism is shown here:

Tante often tries to press me into the service of waiting on the dear men, but they rouse some latent contrariness within me, and, though I would willingly lace an Australian’s boots if necessary, or wait on an Englishman with pleasure, I certainly cannot bend my knee to a German. An Australian feels that woman is his equal; the Englishman treats her as a delightful ornament; but something about the average German’s attitude towards women makes me shudder. (p. 31)

Freeman observes many German customs which unsettle her, but she involves herself in almost every aspect of the people’s lives: ‘Besides it is heaps more exciting to see things from varying standpoints than always to remain riveted to the one’ (p. 50).
At one stage she quotes Mme de Sévigné: 'The more I see of men, the more I love my dog' (p. 55) (although she attributes the expression to Lafayette). This is the half-serious view of Richardson, and the stated view (in her journal) of 'Elizabeth' whose autobiography was pointedly about All the Dogs of My Life.

Freeman comments sarcastically on the manners of the (upper class) men towards women:

Women are rather despised, I think. They are certainly kept in the background.

The Hausfrau waits for her dear lord's permission, before she gives her opinions. Her ideas are all very simple and homely, and do not interfere in any way with her business in life, viz., the Promotion of the Comfort of the Lord and Master - Man. I don't think I had ever much approval for the militant suffragette, yet after seeing the way in which the women are subtly insulted here, I feel quite in sympathy with them, though the savage tactics of the Wild Women of England, appal my peace-loving nature. (p. 67)

The strongest argument over the suffragettes takes place on pages 76-77 in one of several interesting discussions the German family have, too long to include here, but again revealing Freeman's ambivalence. Frau Grossmutter is disgusted that women have the vote:

'The women have votes. Aber that is terrible. It is not right!'

I raised my eyebrows a little. I have before mentioned that I have no political views, but I certainly do not think that female suffrage is a terrible thing. (p. 76)

The doctor's speech openly links English 'weakness' and 'decadence' to the suffragettes' campaign (p. 99). However, the connection between private and public tyranny and servility (and Freeman's ambivalence as a declared non-suffragette) is most apparent in the following revealing anecdote:

They amuse me, these good housewives, who are so much praised for their house-wifely virtues, these placid, docile, obedient, anti-suffragette slaves of the master, Man. They are now relieved [through the general mobilization] from the oppressive sway of their beloved and much feared lords and masters. They are eager to salute the heroes who are brave enough to face those same lords and masters in battle. One poor peasant-woman cried bitterly as the train moved off, carrying her soldier-husband to the front. 'Don't cry my good woman,' said a kindly passer-by. 'Your man will come back safe and sound.'

'Oh, it's not Hans I'm weeping for,' sobbed the woman, 'he can take care of himself. I'm thinking of the poor (sob), poor creatures (sob) who'll come under his fists,' she wailed and sobbed with fresh vigour. Evidently she knew the weight of his fists, and all her sympathies were with his enemies.

The women, oh the women; how they have lost their heads. 'Ach,' said one man, 'our women are the greatest trouble. When we are at home they are quite good, but when we come back from the war they will have found other men -
enemies for preference. It was so in the 1870 war.' I chuckled as I read the accounts of the rebellion of the women. They had always professed their astonishment at the behaviour of the suffragettes. 'The men in England are always too kid gloved; they are too soft, too much the gentleman,' they had said. 'If we had the suffragettes here we would rule them differently. Our men would whip them - they would know how to treat them. Mees Pankhurst! Ach! she would not trouble us long. We would soon put her in her proper place.' I quite believe it. Some of our English women would be vastly astonished if they were under German rule for a while.

'They would not try any starvation tricks with us,' said one man, grimly. 'We'd manage them.' They haven't quite managed their own women, but they will do so. (pp. 195-196)

But after all that Freeman has seen and experienced, patriotic conformism colours her thinking on her return to England: 'Even the suffragettes have ceased from troubling and have settled down to good, sensible work. They are anxious and eager to help their country in some other way than by breaking windows; they are even knitting socks' (p. 367). Nor does she see the ultimate irony of her words, especially the reference to the knitting of socks. For on p. 308 she had written, 'I have heard that in the Frauenverein, the women have been making socks and underclothing for many years. They have been filling storehouses with the fruits of their labour, in preparation for war needs.'

To these four women who all used 'German' in their titles (or descriptive epithets in Richardson's case) Germany exemplified sexism just as it later came to exemplify racism to writers of the thirties and forties, including 'Elizabeth' herself. How women dealt in their work with this potent combination of Germany and sexism, the private life and war would make for an interesting longer study.

NOTES


2. 'Elizabeth'. *The Author of Elizabeth and Her German Garden* (London: The Bodley Head, 1986).


   Elizabeth and her German Garden (1898; rpt. London: Virago, 1985), *Virago Modern Classics*. Pages references will be to this edition and given in the text.

5. The End of a Childhood and Other Stories (London: Heinemann, 1934). Page references will be to this edition and given in the text.


However, Freeman does not appear in Australian Women Writers: A Bibliographical Guide, Debra Adelaide (London: Pandora, 1988), despite her book having been re-printed in 1987, which shows how fugitive published works can become.
7. This has been published posthumously by her daughter Brenda Niccol. Murrumbidgee Memories and Riverina Reminiscences: A Collection of Old Bush History, Hilda M. Freeman (Maryborough, Vic.: The Dominion Press-Hedges & Bell, 1985).
10. ‘The Journey to Bruges’ and ‘Being A Truthful Adventure’, both set in Bruges, and the three ‘Epilogues’ set in Geneva and written about 1913. These may have been titled epilogues as farewells to the form of personal sketch of a foreign setting.
17. In her correspondence Richardson once said ‘Germans lack even a plain everyday decency’: ‘there is a streak of brutality in even the best of them.’ Letter to Oliver Stonor, NLA MS 133/2/243. In ‘Some Notes on My Books’ she says, ‘and in addition came my own intense emotional revulsion against a country that had
meant so much to my development and with which I still had numerous ties.' (Originally printed in Virginia Quarterly Review, v. 16 (1940), 334-347, 'Some Notes...' was reprinted in Southerly 23, 1 (1963), 8-19.) The reference is to the Southerly reprint p. 16.
19. The tremendous loss of life at Gallipoli and in France of local young men (her future husband was also wounded at Gallipoli) probably led to the lecture tours on her experiences in Germany which Freeman gave throughout the Ballarat district.
21. Richardson’s stories were never published separately as a set but were arranged together in her 1934 collection.

The Next Issue: Vol. XII, No. 2
A Celebration of Chinua Achebe