

Jenny (Jeanette) Riedemann (1872 - not before 1927)

Jeanette Riedemann (1872 – not before 1927) was born 1872 in Emden as the daughter of Fritz Riedemann, a pharmacist with a doctorate.¹ So far nothing is known about her mother, about herself only very little.

It is the irony of history, when women's names, who probably were lesbians, are passed on through denunciatory records. This is also the case with Jeanette Riedemann, who mostly referred to her first name as "Jenny"² She is said to have been the friend or even lover of Johanna Elberskirchen (1864-1943).

When after Elberskirchen's death, her last partner Hildegard Moniac (1891-1967), one of her sisters, as well as a niece 1943/1944 acrimoniously fought over the inheritance, especially the house in Rüdersdorf near Berlin [Rüdersdorf bei Berlin], vast pages of correspondence from solicitors and judicial documents were produced.³ In this context, Elberskirchen's niece, with a PhD in physics, Blandine S. (*1904), who lived in Jena⁴ made a statement for the record on 6th December 1943. She was the daughter of Elisabeth (Elisa) Paula Stansfeld (geb. Elberskirchen) (1873-max. 10/1939) and Cologne based artist Otto Georg Stansfeld (died 1923).

Amorous Adventure with Johanna Elberskirchen?

Blandine S. testified amongst other things: "4. Frau Stansfeld hat Johanna Elberskirchen, als sie erst 17 Jahre alt war, mit einer gewissen Jenny Riedemann in Bonn bei der Ausübung der lesbischen Liebe überrascht. Das hat sie der Tochter Frau Dr. S. [...] erzählt."⁵ (4. Mrs Stansfeld surprised Johanna Elberskirchen when she was only 17 years old with a certain Jenny Riedemann in Bonn exercising lesbian love. This she told the daughter Mrs Dr. S. [...]).

At least posthumously the niece didn't hide the fact that she found Johanna Elberskirchen's lesbian orientation disgusting.⁶

Jeanette Riedemann was eight years younger than Elberskirchen. The timeframe regarding the amorous adventure of the two as stated by the niece is unlikely to be

true. The reason: At the time in question 1881, Elberskirchen was seventeen years old – whereas Riedemann only counted nine years.⁷ This mistaken allegation might be due to the perspective, looking a long way back. Geographically it is possible that the ways of these two young women might have crossed at two different locations: either in Rinteln near the Weser, where Elberskirchen worked for a drapery shop in the marketplace as a business accountant from 1884 until 1890/91, or in Bonn.

Restless Childhood and “higher” Education for Girls

Due to the early death of her parents – Jenny Riedemann lost her mother at the age of four and her father at the age of six – she had to move already when she was a child several times.⁸ Since there were no more close relatives, the girl was brought up under the care of so called superintendents, that is administrative clerks of the evangelical church. At first she stayed with her uncle Beckmann in Höxter, where Jenny visited the so called all-girls school for higher education until 1887. In autumn 1888 she came to a pension in Markholdendorf with Mrs Superintendent Grosse, because her uncle, who had been a widower for a long time, had remarried and apparently his new wife didn't want to take care of the adopted child any longer. Jenny Riedemann writes about this: Dann “verlor ich meine Heimat, die mir sein Haus bis dahin gewesen war” (Then I lost my homeland, which his house had been to me so far). From Markholdendorf she went to Bremen to a boarding school.

Student of the Arts in Berlin, Family Work in Rinteln and an Occupation in Düsseldorf

Coming of age in 1894 she moves to Berlin, to visit the Royal School of Arts. There she worked from October 1894 until June 1895. However “mußte [ich] dann leider meine Arbeit unterbrechen, da meine Großmutter erkrankte. Um sie zu pflegen war ich mehrere Monate in Rinteln [sic]“⁹ (unfortunately I had to discontinue my work since my grandmother fell ill. In order to take care of her I spent several months in Rinteln). Definitely it was from summer until autumn 1895 that the art student from Berlin and teacher to be, Jenny Riedemann lived in Rinteln. Possibly the two women got to know each other before this time in Rinteln, by any chance on the occasion of one of the visits, Jenny paid to her relatives.

At first Jenny Riedemann moved from Rinteln to Düsseldorf, where she worked for Professor Körner. Afterwards she was in Cologne “auf eigene Hand kunstgewerblich” occupied (self-employed in applied arts). “[D]och da die Kenntnisse auf diesem Gebiet für Frauen nur schwer zu verwerten sind, entschloss ich mich die Examen für die technischen Fächer zu machen, für die ich mancherlei Vorkenntnisse besaß. Zu diesem Zweck trat ich im April 1897 in einen Kursus in Düsseldorf ein und bestand im Juli [1898] an der dortigen Luisenschule das Handarbeitsexamen“ (But since the knowledge in this field is hard for women to utilize, I decided to take the exams for the technological disciplines, for which I had various previous knowledge. For this purpose I joined a course in April 1897 in Düsseldorf and passed the exam for handicraft in July [1898] at the local Luisenschule) she wrote in her curriculum vitae about her further education.

After the death of her grandmother in August 1898, who assumedly also might have been appointed to manage her heritage, she had become “völlig heimatlos geworden” (completely homeless). Finally her cousin Beckmann offered her to live in his house in Burbach which lies south of Siegen in Westfalen.

Drawing teacher in Burbach, Exam for Gymnastics in Bonn

Apparently she took the offer. In any case she gave drawing lessons at the local school. It is questionable whether she couldn't bear the situation in Burbach with her cousin any longer, whether Johanna Elberskirchen or other reasons caused her to end up in Bonn. On 28th September 1898 she came (according to bureaucratic sources) from Düsseldorf (!), lived from September until mid November 1898 in Kreuzstraße 1a in Bonn and then moved on the 15th November 1898 to Burbach.¹⁰ The omission of this period in her CV may be due to strategic considerations, to suggest that she continually lived under the care of her relatives in Burbach, what was regarded as more appropriate for a woman of her age rather than living on her own. In any case Jenny Riedemann wrote in her CV that she did her Exam for Gymnastics in Bonn, from August 1899 until November 1899 while living in Burbach.

Did the two women see each other in Bonn for the first time? During this time Johanna Elberskirchen rushed – chased by the husband of her woman friend Anna Eysoldt und the crime investigating authorities – between Switzerland and Germany back and forth. Elberskirchen stayed in May/June 1898, in June 1899 and in spring 1900 as well as at the beginning of the year and in June 1901 (possibly after her mother had died) ¹³ in Germany, amongst other places in Frankfurt on the Main, which was not so far away from Bonn even for the circumstances at the time. Could it be that Johanna Elberskirchen and Jenny Riedemann in 1899 spent an exciting summer together in Bonn?

For example, it is possible to think that the two got to know each other while Riedemann went shopping in the delicatessen of her parents or in the boutique of the sister Ida where by any chance Johanna happened to be present. But maybe they met in a totally different context, f.e. in one related to the women's movement.

From Bonn Jenny Riedemann moved again (or at least officially) to Burbach, where she was temporarily responsible at the local rectorate's school for drawing lessons.

(Head) Teacher at Grammar School in Cologne and Dortmund from 1900 until 1927

Since spring 1900 Jenny Riedemann worked at the grammar school for girls of "Fräulein" (Miss) Wegner in Cologne, where she taught the disciplines handicraft, gymnastics and drawing at all levels. For grade one she also taught the reputable "Kunstgeschichtsunterricht" ¹⁵(history of arts class).

Jenny Riedemann knew – despite her lateral career move – how to make good use of her working and career chances. She expanded her repertoire and after one and a half years she was able to teach all these disciplines at all levels. At least in November 1901 she lived in Cologne in Luchnerstraße 4.

From 1902 until 1927 Jenny Riedemann was employed as a teacher in Dortmund, at the latest since 1927, as a teacher for higher education at the *Städtischen Goethe-Lyzeum nebst deutscher Oberschule*.¹⁸ The exam for woman teachers for higher

education was introduced in 1894 and required five years teaching experience as well as two to three years further education courses.¹⁹

Within the scope of the reform regarding the school system for girls in Prussia, the *Städtische höhere Mädchenschule* gained recognition as a school for higher education, that enabled young women to access university. Since the school year 1911/12 the school was called *Lyzeum* and the women teacher seminar, established in 1890, then called *Selecta*, was renamed into *Oberlyzeum* and in its body three regular classes as well as one class for teaching practice had to be successfully completed.

Until the end of the 1920s the head teacher Jenny Riedemann prepared young girls and women in these classes for the women teacher's exam. Then her trace vanishes. Since in 1924 the last exams for the teacher's training certificate took place which thereafter were taken at an institution specifically established for the education of women teachers, Riedemann supposedly left the school to find an employment somewhere else, that was more adequate for her qualification. Apparently Jenny Riedeman knew how to make good use of her relatively privileged starting position. Her father's heritage enabled her to higher education as well as to a relatively profound qualification; as a pharmacist who held a doctorate he was probably in possession of sufficient financial resources.

Whether the paths of Jenny Riedemann and Johanna Elberskirchen also crossed after their adolescent years remains unclear, as well as the native of Emden's further journey of life.

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Vanessa Tuttlies (Translation, Berlin 2009)

Proposal for quotation:

Leidinger, Christiane: The Teacher Jenny (Jeanette) Riedemann (1872 – not before 1927) [online]. Berlin 2009. Translated by Vanessa Tuttlies. Available from: Online-Projekt Lesbengeschichte. Boxhammer, Ingeborg/Leidinger, Christiane. URL <http://www.lesbengeschichte.de/Englisch/bio_jenny_e.html> [cited DATE].

¹ Cp. Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 6. Cp. Mail des Stadtarchivs Emden vom 17.4.2003. Cp. Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 6. This text summarises the present insights into the life of Jenny Riedemann and is based on research in the context of Johanna Elberskirchen's biography, cp. Leidinger, Christiane: Keine Tochter aus gutem Hause. Johanna Elberskirchen (1864-1943) Konstanz: UVK 2008.

² Cp. Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 6.

³ Cp. for further details Leidinger, Christiane: Keine Tochter aus gutem Hause. Johanna Elberskirchen (1864-1943). Konstanz: UVK 2008.

⁴ Nachlaß-Sache Johanna Elberskirchen, Akte 5 VI 109/43, Bl. 35 (Vorder- und Rückseite), Archiv des Amtsgerichts Fürstenwalde.

⁵ Nachlaß-Sache Johanna Elberskirchen, Akte 5 VI 109/43, Bl. 35. For reasons of data protection laws the name cannot be written out in full.

⁶ Even if the considerations take into account that it could have been a highly problematic (abusive) relationship between a young woman and a young girl, due to the denunciatory character of the report of this connection it is very unlikely that such a fact wouldn't enter the denunciation, as to underline the 'Ungeheuerlichkeit' (atrociousness) of the lesbian relationship.

⁷ Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 6.

⁸ Ibid., Bl. 2-4; 6.

⁹ Cp. mail des Stadtarchivs Bonn vom 27.1.2003. Unfortunately, the Kreuzstraße does not exist anymore today because she merged into Bonner Platz due to the so called breakthrough in 1971. Probably all the houses were leveled to the ground. These informations were generously researched by Ingeborg Boxhammer.

¹⁰ Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 4.

¹¹ Cp. dazu Leidinger, Christiane: Keine Tochter.

¹² Her mother, Julia Elberskirchen, died on April 7th 1901. Cp. entry in the Meldekarte (record card) (Stadtarchiv Bonn).

¹³ Cp. Mail from Stadtarchiv Bonn from 01/27/2003. The personel file of Jenny Riedemann contains a CV dated 1901 in which her time in Bonn is dated within the year 1899. Cp. Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 3f.

¹⁴ Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 4f.

¹⁵ For this and other references about the teaching profession during this time I sincerely thank Katja Koblitz.

¹⁶ Nordrhein-Westfälisches Staatsarchiv Münster, Personalakte Schulkollegium R 57 (Riedemann), Bl. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid., Bl. 6-8; 10-12. The first „höhere Töchter“- school in Dortmund 1867 is today's *Goethe-Gymnasium* in Dortmund. The school obtained the name *Städtisches Goethe-Lyzeum nebst deutscher Oberschule* since 1918, cp. Goethe-Gymnasium. Online: <http://www.home.t-online.de/home/goethe-gymnasium-dortmund.koll/gg130.htm> (download 2/2004).

¹⁸ Cp. 100 Jahre Frauenstudium. Frauen der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn. Katalogbuch zur gleichnamigen Ausstellung. Berlin: Edition Ebersbach 1996, 18f.

¹⁹ For the school's history confer Goethe-Gymnasium.