

Theo Schücking (1850–1903), Meta von Salis-Marschlins (1855–1929) & Hedwig Feigenwinter-Kym (1860–1949)

The daughter of the writer Levin Schücking and the narratress Louise von Gall grew up in an environment characterised by language and culture. The mother wrote *women novellas* and dealt courageously with social matters, however, died early. The father belonged to the circle of Malwilda von Meysenburg who became famous for her *Memoiren einer Idealistin* (Memoirs of an Idealist) and who lived in Italy. There, Theo Schücking got acquainted with Meta von Salis in the winter of 1878 and both women used to meet almost daily for half a year. "To meet with you from time to time does no longer seem a decoration to me but a need of my inner life", wrote Theo Schücking and no longer deems her future to be grey. She wears a ring from Meta and writes letters to her to Naumburg in Germany where Meta von Salis is employed in her first position as governess. She also describes her opinion of love and friendship in these letters:

"You know, dear Meta, that I dearly enjoy the marriage plan of your father? It's something indescribably funny, the idea to marry you off like any other common girl; your father will be grossly disappointed. Love - this strange word, which means one thing to one person and another thing to another person. I do not want to differentiate it such strictly from friendship because I think that a great friendship between women is *love*, more often than the feelings between man and women it is, which often varies between "flirtation" and passion; often, I say, not always, however, according to my nature I would say; je pense, donc je suis but j'aime, donc je suis."¹

In 1883, the relationship broke up. Meta von Salis assesses her role in this respect critically:

"At that time I did something unbelievable, something I can only explain from the distance and - when observing it coolly, only from a fanaticism of Don Quixote or self-destruction to which often in my life I had sacrificed my calm and my happiness, but this time also an irreplaceable friend. Because of blindness I jeopardised a relationship whose beneficial warmth I was to miss very much for years and whose lack was to increase the bitterness of my nature/...!"²

Around 1890, Meta von Salis met Theo Schücking in Rome and invited her to Capri. The visit did not take place because Theo Schücking fell ill and died shortly before the planned trip.

Doris Stump describes Meta von Salis in her PhD thesis on the writer and suffragette as “a would-be writer”. She means that Meta von Salis despite her initial will to fight and her optimism was wounded by the limitations because she was a woman such that she was broken by these restrictions. She wrote the major part of her work between 1881 and 1892 between detaching from her parents and the arrests of Caroline Farner, Anna Pfrunder, and Mrs. Pfrunder-Schelling. After her own sentencing she no longer wrote any utopistic poems and no fiction; resignation is dominating in her later poems although the aphorisms remained attacking and acid: “Today, one would even marry the Black Death if it were rich”³ During World War I, Meta von Salis became again very active as a writer. She fought against inhuman behaviours and stood up for a humane life - both for women and men.

In 1884 she wrote a long poem on the ancestral seat of the Salis-Marschlins family, “In der Mondnacht” (In the Moonlit Night), which a.o. reads: “Ich litt zu viel in dieses Rahmens Glanz / und stiess zu blutig mir die Flügel einst / am Gitter dieses Kerkers – durch den Frieden / der lauen Nacht wogt die Erinnerung / an Bitternis.”⁴ (I suffered too much in the glamour of this environment / and my wings became too bloody hitting / against the bars of this prison - through the peace / of the warm night waves the memory / of bitter feelings.) At that time she still clung to the place where she temporarily lived again with Hedwig Kym from 1887. But when the Canton Graubünden showed that they would be prepared to turn her over to the Canton St. Gallen, where she was to pay a fine and serve a sentence because of libel, she was enraged such that she sold her castle and emigrated to Italy.

Agnes Bluhm, who was introduced to the Zurich Nietzsche circle by *Clara Willdenow* in 1885 and who ate at the same student lunch table with some of the members, wrote about Meta von Salis: “She was highly gifted - and Nietzsche obviously appreciated her very much - but of a stiffness and frostiness which I almost felt physically that I instinctively called her ‘the glacier’.” Meta von Salis was aware of her austerity as becomes obvious from the description about the break-up with Theo Schücking. In the first volume of her planned novel trilogy “Die Schutzengel” (The Guardian Angels) she described the motives of her alter ego, Isa von Tiefensee, for studying law as follows: “It’s not a matter of real inclination that I have chosen law. I would have preferred philosophy /.../ But whoever wants to triumph with his/her ideals

must speak of them rarely and only in selected circles, and whoever wants to be proved correct in his/her strife for a brighter living against the existing life may not have the strange suns of his/her heart burn into untrained eyes but must penetrate and saturate his/her actions and behaviour from the inside with such a warmth that others are overcome by a desire to know what gave him/her so much courage and power and love. Serious lawyers are dearly needed by women, however, not fantasists nor moles of the subject, but comparable to those hot springs which rise under glaciers, experienced in business, urbane and eloquent representatives who armour their heart in iron, both against the mushiness and the inflexibility.“⁵

She herself studied history, philosophy, the arts, and law and graduated as first Swiss woman at the Faculty of Philosophy (1. Section) in Zurich. She earned the money for her studies as governess. Meta von Salis neither wanted to participate in the women's association *Fraternité* nor in the newly founded educational reform and legal protection associations, she nevertheless committed herself to the interests of women by writing several articles in various Swiss newspapers, including the *Ketzerischen Neujahrsgedanken einer Frau* (The heretical New Year thoughts of a woman), in which she expressed her opinion on the right to vote).

She had already become acquainted with Hedwig Kym, whom she got to know during a lecture by her father, the philosophy professor Ludwig Kym. Together they visited Friedrich Nietzsche in Sils Maria, lived in Castle Marschlins, or went on long trips. Both wrote for the *Philanthropin*, the magazine of the women's association *Fraternité*.

Then, Caroline Farner, Anna Pfrunder and her mother got arrested and Meta von Salis raged against the scheming of the senior judge Wittelsbach. She wrote the pleading also to prevent his re-election as judge. She was sentenced for this pleading, served the sentence and then sold the family property to settle in Italy together with Hedwig Kym.

The daughter of the philosophy professor Ludwig Kym became acquainted with the student Meta von Salis during one of her father's lectures which resulted “/.../ not only in a close friendship but a union for a joint structuring of life, an emotional growing together of the rarest kind /.../“⁶. Later, she became responsible for the editorial office of the *Philanthropin* and published her own articles, in particular poems. Her friend

von Salis wrote travel impressions, historical and arts articles, the physician Farner did medical education for the public, and *Pauline Bindschedler* – or whoever held the office of the actuary – wrote the association news for the *Fraternité*.

Hedwig Kym accompanied Meta von Salis to Capri where they lived in the Villa Helios for six years. Later, she got married to the Basle attorney Ernst Feigenwinter who had represented both Caroline Farner and Meta von Salis before the court. After several joint years, he died, and Hedwig Feigenwinter-Kym again lived together with her friend who had moved into the same house in Basle in 1910. After the death of Meta von Salis, Hedwig Feigenwinter obtained the diary of Meta from the latter's estate. Whether she wanted to read or destroy it is not known: The diary has been missing ever since. Hedwig Feigenwinter-Kym survived Meta von Salis by twenty and her husband by thirty years.

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Isabelle Jahraus (Translation, Mannheim 2005)

For further reading: - Berta Schleicher: Meta von Salis-Marschlins, Rotapfel-Verlag, Erlenbach 1932; - Hedwig Kym: In memoriam Meta von Salis/Marschlins, Schuler, Chur 1929; - Meta von Salis-Marschlins: Die unerwünschte Weiblichkeit. Autobiographie, Gedichte, Feministische Schriften, hg. v. Doris Stump, paeda media, Tahlwil 1988; - *Chratz & Quer*. Sieben Frauenstadtrundgänge in Zürich, Limmat Verlag, Zürich 1995, u. a. S. 276, 282–285; - Doris Stump: Sie töten uns – nicht unsere Ideen. Meta von Salis-Marschlins (1855–1929). Schweizerische Frauenrechtskämpferin und Schriftstellerin, paeda media, Thalwil 1986; - Dies.: «Nietzsche sprach von seinen geistigen Interessen ...» – Meta von Salis' Begegnung mit Friedrich Nietzsche. In: Nietzsche und die Schweiz, Zürich 1993; - Carol Dieth: Vergiss die Peitsche. Nietzsche und die Frauen, Europa Verlag, Hamburg 2000.

Sources: - Meta von Salis and Hedwig Kym in front of the Villa Helios in Capri (private property); - Meta von Salis-Marschlins: Ketzerische Neujahrsgedanken einer Frau. Enclosure of the *Zürcher Post* as of January 1, 1887, printed in Susanna Woodtli: Gleichberechtigung. Der Kampf um die politischen Rechte der Frau in der Schweiz, Huber, Frauenfeld 1975.

Proposal for quotation

Author name, author first name year: text. Ingeborg Boxhammer/Christiane Leidinger: online-project lesbian history. translation by translator first name name (year).
URL:<<http://www.lesbengeschichte.de>>

¹ Stump 86, p. 69.

² Stump 86, p. 69/70.

³ Stump 1986, p. 154.

⁴ 7th of 25 verses.

⁵ Vol. 1, 1889, p. 18/19.

⁶ Schleicher, p. 53.