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Erfahrung nach dem Krieg: Autorinnen im Literaturbetrieb 1945-1950. BRD, DDR, Österreich, Schweiz. (Inter-Lit,4) (Book Review)

Kathrin M. Bower

University of Richmond, kbower@richmond.eduFollow this and additional works at: <http://scholarship.richmond.edu/mlc-faculty-publications>Part of the [German Literature Commons](#)

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Christiane Caemmerer, Walter Delabar, Elke Ramm and Marion Schulz, eds. *Erfahrung nach dem Krieg: Autorinnen im Literaturbetrieb 1945–1950. BRD, DDR, Österreich, Schweiz*. (Inter-Lit, 4). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002. Pp. 304. Paper \$39.95.

This fourth volume in the Inter-Lit series produced by the Stiftung Frauen-Literatur-Forschung is a collection of 18 papers from a literary studies conference held at the Universität Bremen in fall 2000. The essays examine women writers from different generations: those who were established authors prior to 1933 and whose careers were interrupted by the Third Reich, those who continued writing during the 12 years of Nazi rule, and those of a younger generation who saw the end of the war as an opportunity to break into the literary market. Although the title of the volume seems to promise a review of women's literature from all four German-speaking areas, Swiss authors are not addressed. In their brief introduction, the editors summarize the central questions that inspired the conference: how did the transformation of women's professional and private lives during the war carry over into the immediate postwar period? Specifically, what was the experience of women writers during the first years of reconstruction from 1945–1950? Why did their careers evolve as they did? How did their language differ from that of male writers? Can one speak of an *écriture féminine* during this period?

The authors covered in the volume range from the well known (Ilse Aichinger, Marieluise Fleißer, Nelly Sachs) to the relatively obscure (Jenny Aloni, Lina Haag, Hertha Kräftner). Their literary careers and postwar reception were influenced by a number of factors: practical (choice of publisher; scarcity of paper in the immediate postwar years); political (misjudgment of the political mood by the author; ideologically biased interpretations of the author's works); and personal (the author's manipulation of her own biography; sacrifice of literary career to support a husband). Other topics addressed, in addition to the social and political influences on postwar women writers and the conditions of publishing from 1945–1950, are the concern with language (faith in an inherited poetic language vs. the search for a new literary language); a movement toward more differentiated expression of female sexuality; and the vicissitudes in the secondary literature and its complicity in promoting ideological agendas. The contrast between the reception of the authors' works when they appeared between 1945–1950 and their reputation today

is another prominent feature in *Erfahrung nach dem Krieg*.

The theoretical positions and quality of the essays vary. The most compelling are those that rely on contextualized close readings of the author's life and literary production substantiated by archival research. The diversity of authors discussed in the volume engenders a nuanced picture of the postwar literary scene and the pressures on women writers. While some writers such as Irmgard Keun began to insert more male protagonists into their post-1945 novels in deference to the *Heimkehrer*, others, like Susan Kerckhoff, insisted on expressing their political views as women and suffered the consequences. The sexism and male dominance of the literary establishment, particularly Gruppe 47, was yet another obstacle to the development of a distinctly female voice. And as the case of Lina Haag reveals, political activism was not to be confused with feminism, just as support for civic rights and freedoms was not to be mistaken for gender equality. *Erfahrung nach dem Krieg* contributes valuable insights into how practical, political, and personal factors influenced the careers of women writers in Austria and Germany between 1945 and 1950 and raises probing questions about the ideological positions reflected in critical scholarship. As a reference tool, the volume's usefulness is undermined by the absence of a compiled bibliography and an index of titles, although an index of personal names is included.

KATHRIN BOWER, *University of Richmond*