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## Andreas-Salomé, Lou (1861-1937)

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**Andreas-Salomé, Lou (1861–1937)**

Lou Andreas-Salomé was born in 1861 into a German-speaking community in St. Petersburg, Russia. She moved to Zürich at age 19 and ultimately settled in Germany. Intellectually gifted with an inquiring and incisive mind, she studied philosophy, religion, history, and psychology, and wrote extensively on the psychology of religion, philosophy, art, femininity, and eroticism.

Although perhaps best known for her liaisons and friendships with Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926), and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Salomé was an original philosophical thinker, respected psychoanalyst, and acknowledged novelist in her own right. Her essays on philosophy, religion, and the psychology of woman were an inspiration to Nietzsche and Freud. Salomé studied with Freud in Vienna, but developed her own views on psychoanalysis, especially regarding the unconscious, where she differed from her teacher in her emphasis on its positive and creative capacities.

Her work on femininity and eroticism, most notably the essay “Der Mensch als Weib” (The human as woman), 1899, and the study *Die Erotik* (The erotic), 1910, was ground-breaking in its challenge to accepted views of woman and sexuality,

and offered a revaluation of the feminine essence, focusing on woman's self-sufficiency, multiplicity, and utopian possibility. Salomé herself defied categorization and earned the criticism of many nineteenth-century German feminists because of her apparently contradictory views of woman, eroticism, and marriage, and for her own manipulation of social conventions.

Salomé focused on femininity and social conventions also in her fiction. Two representative works are *Fenitschka*, 1886, and *Eine Ausschweifung* (A debauchery), 1898. In these stories she explored the hybrid nature of woman, whom she later delineated in her analytical work on femininity. She constructed female characters who model her theoretical construction of woman as resistant to regulation and classification. Salomé offered a complex depiction of woman through these characters, intended to subvert and critique conventional turn-of-the-century attitudes toward women. She remained fascinated with issues of love, sexuality, and marriage until the end of her life. Her posthumously published memoirs, *Lebensrückblick* (Retrospective on life), 1951, testify to her continued resistance to social expectations that she found restrictive to her sexual and intellectual freedom.

Salomé was a brilliant and controversial figure whose prolific work provides insights not only into her own life as an intellectual, independent woman active in a community of the most noted minds in Europe, but also into the psychology and structure of modern German society as it was evolving and changing at the turn of the century.

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*See also* Feminism and Anti-Feminism, 1871–1918; Feminist Writing; Freud, Sigmund; Imperial Germany: Literature; Nietzsche, Friedrich; Psychoanalysis; Rilke, Rainer Maria

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