

Good evening, my name is Lotte, Lotte Hahm but my friends call me Lothar. I was born in Dresden, 1890. I moved to Berlin in the 20s and what times we had there, let me tell you. After the war, women like me became more visible. Oh there were 30-odd novels about women who love other women, and even stage plays and films. Of course the establishment railed against our new liberation. In the Reichstag, von Rheine, a self-appointed expert in lesbianism (or some might say dirty old man), who liked to write articles describing in detail these activities said;

‘Germany is currently experiencing a boom in Lesbierium along with other perversions’.

Ahh, good I say, let’s drink to this boom.

Here in Germany, we have a movement for the liberation of homosexuals and it’s very well organised, with magazines and speakers and meeting places. They want to repeal Paragraph 175 which outlaws homosexuality but, like in England, laws make no mention of lesbians. So now another quarrel: should women put their energies into fighting for the rights of male homosexuals or should lesbians work towards their own freedom from this sexual tyranny? My answer to this: social events so that queers can meet each other and dance and drink and enjoy their lives in this beautiful time. Oh, they say, this is avoiding real politics, they call me ‘passive’. I say: this is the only real politics because personal lives are the most important thing there is and I say: yes I can be ‘passive’, with the right woman, that is.

By the way, you might think my English is very good; well, that’s because I had a lot of English girlfriends. To be honest, I had a lot of girlfriends. In 1926 I set up Violetta, a social club for entertainment and parties. I appeared in all the advertisements in my dashing suit. At one time we had 400 members. You know, the most anticipated event of the year was my annual moonlight cruise up the Spree to a beach hotel for cabaret and ... well, I’ll leave you to guess, but I can tell you we didn’t sail back until the sun was up. I made it cheap too, so that those women without means could sail with us.

They call me a masculine lesbian, some might say transvestite, but there’s so much disagreement and hatred between our own people about masculine women and feminine men and those who like merely to dress and those who must live their lives in the sex not of their birth and even those who like to dress from the waist up. I think this is hilarious. I see many photographs of your English writer, Radclyffe Hall, in skirts and men’s collar and tie and I laugh until I cry. Personally, I would rather go without my tuxedo than my pants. I don’t like to see the animosity that exists between women who fight for their rights and those who wish to

live as the opposite sex. They are fighting the wrong enemy. What I wanted to do was unite all these groups under one flag - that of human rights. Everyone was welcome at my parties.

Of course things changed and the scourge of Fascism swept through Berlin and there were those from our own ranks who supported this barbarism. I didn't last long after Herr Hitler came to power, I can tell you. I was arrested in 1933 for seducing a minor. Lies, all lies, but it didn't matter. I was sent to Moringen concentration camp - five years they kept me. The regime was so hard I became semi-paralysed. Then Himmler visited the camp in '38 and decided to close it down and send us all elsewhere. In my poor state, I couldn't have lasted another year but a miracle happened and I was released. And you know what I did? I went straight to Berlin and I organised a secret party for all the queers still at large. They broke my body but they couldn't break my spirit.

You know what I wish? I wish I'd been born a hundred years later because I'm sure the world would be free of all this hatred and fascism. Don't you agree? Still I can't complain, Berlin in the crazy Weimar years was quite a place you know - maybe it was the best of times.

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