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Review: Rainer Maria Rilke and Ellen Key

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# Rainer Maria Rilke and Ellen Key

## A Review Essay

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■ Rainer Maria Rilke. *Briefwechsel mit Ellen Key*. Mit Briefen von und an Clara Rilke-Westhoff. Herausgegeben von Theodore Fiedler. Insel Verlag: Frankfurt a.M. and Leipzig, 1993. Pp.436.

This is the fifth Rilke correspondence with a Scandinavian to appear in book form. It was preceded by: Wolfgang Herwig's edition (1959) of the letter-exchange with the Dane Inga Junghanns, who introduced Rilke to Bellman, Renate Scharffenberg's edition (1979) of Rilke's letters and other communications to the Dano-German publisher Axel Juncker (both appeared at the Insel, which had become Rilke's official publisher after Juncker was dropped), and Paul Åström's volumes of letters to the Scanian jack-of-all-arts, Ernst Norlind (1986) and, with Brigitte Rausing, to the artist Tora Vega Holmström (1989). These two small books, of which the former was reviewed in *Scandinavian Studies* 62 (1990):495–8, were printed by Åström himself. Professor Fiedler's work as editor and annotator is of a high order, showing the same level of responsibility and thoroughness that Rilke-ites (and interested outsiders) have come to expect from Insel letter-volumes, starting with Ernst Zinn's edition of the *Briefwechsel* with Marie von Thurn und Taxis (1951) and Ernst Pfeiffer's of that with Lou Andreas-Salomé (1952, expanded in 1975); Herwig's performance (criticized in *Germanic Review* [1962]:292–301) was an exception proving the rule.

Fiedler has thoroughly plumbed the Ellen Key papers in the Royal Library at Stockholm and the Rilke Archive in Gernsbach, as well as other instances (listed at the end of "Zu dieser Ausgabe," pp. 299–306) and has followed up all the leads he could. There are eighty-five items from Rilke to Ellen Key (including five written in common with Lou Andreas-Salomé), plus two from Clara Rilke to Ellen Key, and fifty-nine from Ellen Key, mostly to Rilke but also to Clara and Rilke-Lou, for a grand total of 146.

Of Rilke's letters to Ellen, thirty, "fast alle nur in Auszügen," were included in the "Vorstufe" (1931-7) and the final version (1936-9) of the grandiosely titled and capriciously edited *Gesammelte Briefe* and have been quoted by scholars and biographers ever since. Ellen Key's part of the correspondence has not appeared in print before; Fiedler has wisely reproduced Ellen Key's letters in their original, idiosyncratic form; an effort to correct her German would have meant a distinct loss of flavor. Evidently, "eine grössere Anzahl" of letters from both sides has disappeared. The editor's interest in the matter stems, as he says, from his "Rilke, Ellen Key, und die Frauenfrage um die Jahrhundertwende," published in the "Rilke in Schweden" section of *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 16/17 (1989-90:141-54); he belongs to the school of Joachim W. Storck who, with his essay, "Emanzipatorische Aspekte im Werke und Leben Rilkes," in *Rilke heute* (1975:247-86), first got Rilke-readers to take the great esthete seriously as a champion of enlightened ideas, not least on pedagogy.

Presently, it is difficult to appreciate the enormous importance Ellen Key had in the Scandinavian and German public consciousness during her heyday; more than thirty books came from her pen between 1889 and her death in April, 1926, a few months before Rilke's passing, and—a clever business woman—she had an extremely active and major German publisher, S. Fischer, for translations of her works, many of which also appeared in a variety of other languages. She was so famous that Bonniers had no trouble whatsoever in assembling an international team of voices for a tribute on her seventieth birthday in 1919. She was not a creative writer nor—unlike, say, Fredrika Bremer or Adelaide Ehrnrooth—a travel writer, although one of her few books readable today is her reportage, *I Finland och Ryssland* (1900). Rather, she poured out essayistic, editorializing, and exhortatory books on education, the woman's movement ("Misused woman-power"!), love and marriage (her own affair ended unconsummated, and she never married), happiness and beauty (she was dumpy, with a prominent nose), favorite figures (Victoria Benedictsson, Anne Charlotte Leffler, the Brownings, Goethe, Rahel Varnhagen), her father (the liberal politician Emil Key), peace and war, the human being, and God. Despite her sometimes gassy or exalted prose, her mixture of mildly revolutionary but reasonable opinion and feel-good optimism was entrancing. Trying to explain the Key-phenomenon, the Dane K.Fr. Plesner (in *Gode Klerke*, 1944) said that, growing to maturity during the so-called Scandinavian Breakthrough, she had the capacity to be spiritually shaken by "Ibsen's deep and dark asking-of-questions," but was in fact much more at home with Bjørnson's "bright, all-embracing proclamations." To her contemporaries, Plesner went on, her books were the equivalent of what

Thomas à Kempis' *De imitatione Christi* and collections of homilies had been for earlier times. But events did not go as brightly or beautifully as Ellen Key thought they should and would, and she lost her public. At the end of Anna Bondestam's *Klyftan* (1944), the teen-aged survivor of Finland's Civil War bitterly reflects that she and her contemporaries were born into an age dubbed the child's century when it began, but which turned out to belong to terror. The allusion is to Ellen Key's most famous book, *Barnets århundrade* (1900), *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes* (1902), reviewed by Rilke in the *Bremer Tageblatt und General-Anzeiger* for June 8, 1902.

The correspondence stretches from 1902 to 1921, with the balance (121 items) before 1908. Particularly in its earlier part, it shows Rilke at his begging, hinting, flattering, and complaining worst. He was determined, in the new century of the child, to present himself as a loving father to his daughter, little Ruth (p.3: "eine liebe, liebe kleine Tochter"), a theme to be much developed as Ruth grew and had to be stowed away; as well, he played the role of a devoted husband to Clara, about whose own artistic career he was much concerned, both genuinely and for rhetorical purposes. Repeatedly, he said, he was the victim of poverty and isolation (p.9: "sehr allein und sehr verlassen geh ich meinen Weg" and "ich bin aber ein sehr wehrloser Mensch [wie ich ein sehr banges, verlorenes, wehrloses Kind war]"), and subject to vague illnesses (p. 14: "Ein trüber Influenza-hafter Zustand mit Fieber, wechselnden Schmerzen und grosser Unfrische und Unfroheit"). His condition was first described on September 6, 1902, from a frightening Paris (the Rilkes had had to tear themselves away from little Ruth, after all, but they thought of her "in allen stillen Stunden"); and Rome was just as bad for him (p.45: "meine Nerven, die schreckhaft sind," p.57: "O dass ich etwas mehr Kräfte hätte," p.80: "die drückenden Tage ... liegen mir noch in den Nerven und im Blute"). On May 10, 1904, from Rome, Clara chimed in: "Nun denke ich mir in meinem stillen Sinn ob nicht Sie in Ihrem schönen Norden einen ruhigen Winkel für ihn wüssten" and, on May 30, Rilke drew up his biggest emotional guns, quoting his poem, "Ich sehne oft nach einer Mutter mich" from *Advent*. (He had his eye on Ellen Key's Nordic contacts, too; he had already asked her to put an extra copy of his Rodin book into Georg Brandes' hands (p.29): "wenn es Ihnen gar keine Umstände macht.")

The campaign was bound to succeed, how could it not? Ellen Key was a soft-hearted (and inquisitive) pen-pal (p.38: "Ich habe ein Gefühl als wären wir schon aus einer Preexistens Freunden") and quickly conceived the idea of writing about the "Wunderkind, oder ein Königssohn mit eine Königsreif ums Haar" (p.16), for which she would need more information. (Her plan would turn out to be the source of many a friction.) Priming the

pump, she had told him, in a remarkable and almost incoherent letter of March 23, 1903, about her own distinguished lineage; see pp.17–8: “ich selbst bin von meine Mutter Seite (eine Gräfin Posse) mit das beste Blut Schwedens, mit deutsche Kaiser und nordische Könige verwandt und zeit unser Gustav Adolph—meine schottische Familie, ein Zweig aus der große Klan McKey—ist mir die meines Vaters d.h. zeit 1600 Jahrhundert gekannt, auch da nur Krieger, Gutsbesitzer Rechtsanwälte—nie ein Priester oder Kaufmann!” In this contest of reciprocal blue-blooded boasting, Rilke replied with the saga, cited in every Rilke biography, of his father’s ancient family (“schon 1376 gehörte sie dem Kärntner-Ur-Adel an”) and a curt notice of his mother’s regrettably commercial heritage: “Von meiner Mutter Familie weiss ich nichts. Ihr Vater war ein reicher Handelsherr”. Both Ellen and Rainer ended up, by the way, in appropriate residences, Ellen on her estate, Strand, supposedly bought with the royalties from *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*, Rilke in the tower at Muzot, purchased for him by the wealthy if bourgeois Swiss, Werner Reinharts.

Once Rilke had gotten to Sweden (June–December, 1904), for a stay at Borgeby (near Lund), hosted by Norlind’s fiancée, arranged by Ellen Key, and then with Ellen Key’s friends, the Gibsons, at Furuborg in Jonsered (near Gothenburg), things began to go sour. The correspondence is transformed from a tale of successful string-pulling into the chronicle of an entanglement in which Rilke felt steadily more uncomfortable. The industrious woman-of-the-pen was determined to carry out her notion of expressing her enthusiasm in print; Rilke’s overt defiance began with his gentle refusal to use a translated fragment of a lecture she had written about him as a preface to a new edition of the *Geschichten vom lieben Gott* (April 29, 1904); he had only himself to blame, having asked for “eine kleine Vorrede, einen Eingang,” about two months before (February 6, 1904). In Appendix VI, the editor reprints the Insel Verlag’s proof, discovered in the archive at Gernsbach; its exalted prose, about “die neue Frömmigkeit,” was evidently too much—even for Rilke, or perhaps he felt a certain *envie du métier*.

The meetings with Ellen Key were fraught with trouble. Fiedler rightly points out at least one error in Ernst Norlind’s highly colorful account—and he was a notorious yarner—of Ellen Key’s visit to Borgeby in a chapter of *Borgeby Minnen* (1939), first printed in French in *Fontaine* (1943) and excerpted in German in the Åström edition of the Norlind letters: to wit, that Ellen Key, at the Scanian chateau, brought Clara there to protect Rilke from temptation—Clara, in fact, arrived ahead of Ellen. Yet, circumstantial evidence lends credence to Norlind’s piquant account of Key’s mildly prurient suspicion that some adolescent schoolgirls *were* after Rilke; see

Ellen Michelsen's story, in the *textes de liaison* of her letters from Ellen Key (1952), about the latter's snooping into the love-life and sleeping arrangements of another young friend, Sissy Frerichs. Even Rilke's snow-covered excursion to the Oby estate of Ellen Key's brother, Mac, on November 26–8, 1904, would eventually have a bad aftermath; however wonderful Rilke made it out to be (in the thank-you letter of November 29, 1904: “wie wenn jemand aus weichem weißem Etui einen schönen alten Familienschmuck nimmt und ihn leise wieder in den Sammt zurücklegt”); this was the visit Rilke subjected to an ironic treatment in the Schulin episode of *Malte*, as Fiedler notes (p.353), following the proposal of another American scholar. The Paris days from May 27 to June 16, 1906, were an absolute catastrophe, causing Rilke to send Clara his nasty reports about Ellen (reprinted in Appendix III) as a tightfisted and tiresome old maid (p.280: “das alte Mädchen [tut] nichts, als über die unbeschreibliche Ehrbarkeit ihrer Abkunft zu weinen,” surely a case of the pot calling the kettle black). Not very perceptive, Ellen herself wrote to Rilke from Switzerland on July 3: “Wie schön war es in Paris!... Wie herrlich der Tag in Fontainebleau” (p.178), the excursion at whose end Ellen and Rilke symbolically went off from different platforms, in opposite directions.

Actually, Rilke had made his entry into a more glamorous realm a year before and did not need Ellen any more. In the late winter of 1905, both Ellen and Rilke were in Dresden, she to give three lectures (the first on him), he on the way to a sanatorium. During the night of March 1–2 (“Du bist nur wenige Häuser von mir entfernt”), he sat up writing her an uncomfortable letter: “Meine Kunst aufzeigen vor einer grossen Menge, das muss zu Missverständnissen führen ...”; through clever detective work (p.361), Fiedler proves that Rilke did *not* hear her lecture about him. A few days afterward, at the Sanatorium Weißer Hirsch, Rilke met Luise Gräfin von Schwerin, née Freiin von Nordeck zur Rabenau, and under her aegis entered the authentically noble circles for which he had yearned—and the moneyed world of the Rhenish banker Karl von der Heydt. The letter of November 6, 1906, written in Berlin, “dieser (ach so abscheulichen!) Stadt,” has a comical juxtaposition of topics; on the one side, Rilke complains in the old familiar fashion about dental treatment, which has been so hard on him “dass mein ganzer Organismus in einen Zustand arger Erschöpfung sich befindet” (unlike H.C. Andersen, Rilke never turned his tooth troubles into literature); on the other, he remarks that he has been invited to Capri by Frau Alice Faehndrich, née Freiin von Nordeck zur Rabenau, the late Gräfin von Schwerin's sister. Accompanied by her good friend, the painter Hanna Pauli, Ellen Key visited him there in March, 1907, and things apparently went better—but, for all her European repu-

tation, Ellen stuck out like a sore thumb amidst Rilke's supremely refined hostesses; as Rilke wrote to Clara, "Frau Alla und die [Villa] Discopoli haben manches zu verwundern und zu verwinden." (Rilke's last effort to use Ellen, and her network of Swedish friends, did not get anywhere: not long after Capri, he announced to Ellen that Clara planned to go to Sweden in the fall with her mother, her youngest brother, and Ruth, to be an art teacher at the Samskola, in which Ruth would be enrolled. Ellen's reply very clearly waved him off: the school had degenerated, the children would not know the language, Gothenburg had a terrible winter climate and was expensive, and—the clincher—Jimmy Gibson had a cousin who was a sculptor and meant to stay in Gothenburg—i.e. there was no position at the school for poor Clara!)

In May, 1909, and again in June, Ellen Key was back in Paris, where Lou Andreas-Salomé served as a temporary buffer, a visit about which, as Fiedler points out (p.XVI), very little is known; after Lou's departure, Rilke wrote to this confidante that he had spent "eine ruhige Stunde" with Ellen, a turn of phrase implying that he otherwise found her very wearing. *Malte* appeared in 1910, and Fiedler states that there are no letters, nor provable missing letters, between the epistolary sixtieth-birthday greetings of December 5, 1909, plus the simultaneous "strangely distanced" public accolade, written for the journal *Idun* (reprinted in Appendix IV), and Rilke's brutally frank letter of December 17, 1911, occasioned by "Ein Gottsucher (Rainer Maria Rilke)" in Key's *Seelen und Werke*. (The body of the essay is based on Key's Swedish article, "En österrikisk diktare," printed in *Ord och Bild* for 1904, which Rilke had approved after hearing Norlind's viva-voce translation of it at Borgeby; it was then formally translated into German by Marie Franzos for the Bohemian-German cultural journal of August Sauer, *Deutsche Arbeit* 5 [1905–6] before re-appearing in *Seelen und Werke*.) In the coda, which Ellen had written after reading *Die Aufzeichnungen*: "Viele werden wohl dieses wunderliche Buch wunderbar nennen," she actually implied that Rilke—whom, as he charged, she confused with Malte—was going insane: "Wir haben in Fröding ein Beispiel dafür, daß dieser seelische Zustand einen Dichter verstummen lassen kann." (Commenting on Ellen's coda [pp.416–7], Fiedler does not bring up the unpleasant implication of the reference to Fröding's mental illness; however, Rilke surely got the point.) Responding, Rilke read her the riot act, a catalogue of her misapprehensions and short comings; e.g., on pp.221–2: "es kam Dir auf Präzision nichtmehr an, Dein Herz wurde ungenau und andere völlig ungenaue Herzen bestärkten Dich in Deinem Betrug."

According to Fiedler's introduction (p. XVII), Rilke's thank-you to Hanna Pauli of January 10, 1913 (printed in Appendix V)—prompted by photographs Pauli had sent him of her paintings, among them a portrait of Ellen Key and a "große Leinwand," *Vänner*, showing Ellen Key surrounded by her friends in the Pauli salon—brought about a reconciliation, in which Lou Andreas-Salomé also helped. Four letters were written by Rilke to "Meine liebe Ellen Key" and "Meine liebe Ellen" in the course of 1913, as well as two by Rilke and Lou together; in a brief reply, of August 7, 1913, Ellen sent greetings to "Liebe Menschen, Lou (der Filou) und Rainer (der Stachelkferkel)," appellations with considerable meaning. During the war years, contacts were fleeting (although Lou and Ellen kept up a fairly active correspondence, still unpublished). In October, 1921, Rilke sent Ellen the wedding announcement of Ruth, no longer little, and Ellen Key answered (November 16, 1921) in a friendly tone: "es kommt mir vor als wäre ein Jahrhundert verfluthet seit wir uns sahen in Paris mit Lou." But she was still disturbed by the turn his poetry had taken: "Dann und wann sah ich neue Gedichte von deine Hand. Aber leider ist die Dichtkunst seit 1914 so trübe, so dunkel geworden daß ich auch in Deine nicht ganz mein Lieber Rainer wiederfindet," a sentence displaying not only Ellen's troubles with German grammar but her vain desire to have him remain what he had called himself to her back in November, 1904, "Dein liebevolles Kind." Rilke's reply of November 30, 1921, from Muzot, is mature, balanced, wryly humorous, and happy at last: "Ich bin nun recht glücklich, dass ich, für diesen Winter, noch ein stilles Versteck in diesem herrlichen Wallis gefunden habe." Correctly, Fiedler says that the poems Ellen had read, "dann und wann," are not to be identified. One wonders, irresponsibly, if they could have been the four included in the postwar almanach issued by Ellen Key's German publisher, S. Fischer, *Die Erhebung: Jahrbuch für neue Dichtung und Wertung* (1919), among them "Ausgesetzt auf den Bergen des Herzens." For Ellen, the true Rilke was still the mellifluous lyricist of the early collections; in a letter to Ellen Michelsen of November 31, 1919, from faulty memory, she quoted "Herbst," in *Das Buch der Bilder*: "Die Blätter fallen wie von weit und haben all königlich in ihre Gesten ein Vergeuden!"

As a revelatory human document, showing Rilke as an egocentric manipulator and Ellen Key as a well-intentioned (if bossy) bumbler, the correspondence makes fascinating reading. It also contributes measurably to the picture of the "pedagogical" and "enlightened" Rilke; in Appendix I, Fiedler reprints Rilke's review of *Das Jahrhundert des Kindes*, together with another review of "Zwei nordische Frauenbücher," by Skram and Lagerlöf. Appendix II consists both of the "introductory words," spoken by Rilke at Furuborg and taken down in the Gibson's copy book, recently



discovered there by an American scholar, and the well-known *Samskola* essay itself. The correspondence provides less information about Scandinavian literature—transmitted by Ellen Key to Rilke—than might have been hoped for; despite what Paul Valéry called Rilke in his valedictory, “ein tiefer Kenner Skandinaviens,” Rilke’s knowledge was in fact extremely spotty, and one wishes that his main Scandinavian friend had told him more: after all, the protagonist of his only novel was a nobleman from the North, down at the heels in Paris. But Malte, of course, was Danish (as his reading, e.g., in Schack-Staffeldt is supposed to show), and Ellen Key’s strong suit was Swedish literature—Thorild, “en av mina gudar,” “min älskade Geijer,” Runeberg, and Almqvist. Her Almqvist essay, originally in *Ord och Bild* for 1894, which appeared in the German version of *Menschen* (1903) and was sent to Rilke, got no extant reaction. She *did* aid him with his post-Maltean interest in Malla Montgomery-Silfverstolpe and Per Ulrik Kernell, as well as in Lagerlöf; also, she fostered his inexplicable liking for Geijerstam, another Swedish bestseller from S. Fischer. About the authors who played such a large role in the creation of *Malte*—Kierkegaard, Ibsen, Jacobsen, Bang—she had nothing to say, and the references to the putative Malte-model, Obstfelder (whom she had known well), are negligible. Her animosity toward Levertin, who might well have appealed to Rilke, and Strindberg, whose “expressionistic” plays so captivated and horrified him later on, kept the former out of the epistolary picture altogether, and the other appeared only in a most unfortunate connection. Despite his chatter about “nordische Menschen,” “Norden, Weite, Wind!”, and “Malte Laurid Brigge und sein Nordischsein,” Rilke was really too pre-occupied with invitations and connections to ask many questions of a broader cultural import.

Thanks must go to the editor for his having put the whole surviving record before the public and for his acribia in the commentary and apparatus. The commentary, however, has some weaknesses on the Nordic side. Several errors occur in Swedish and other Scandinavian languages. The commentary, p.321 and, index, p.423, call Ellen Key’s Almqvist essay in *Ord och bild* “Sveriges *modernste* diktare”; on p.315 and p.424, Ellen Key’s lecture of 1903 to the Stockholm Student Union is called “Ny äktenskapsslag,” a misspelling rich in comic possibilities and mistranslated as “Neue Form der Ehe.” (Leche-Löfgren discusses Ellen Key’s thoughts on a new marriage-law at length in her biography [pp.172ff].) The publisher (p.356) of Olof Rosén’s book-length essay of 1904 on Ellen Key cannot be “Wretmans boktryckeri.” In the text of Ellen Key’s letter of December 19, 1904 (p.131), the title of Johan Bojer’s novel, *Hvide fugle*, is given as *Hvide fugte*, a misreading repeated in the note (p.356). On p.401, the Swedish title of the

memoirs of Malla Montgomery-Silfverstolpe is given as *Memorarer*, corrected to *Memoarer* on the next page. The subtitle of the travel letters and diaries of Per Ulrik Kernell—Malla, still in love with the memory of the young man, went to Germany to visit his grave at Erlangen—is given as “Utar hans Bref ...” (p.402). The correct Norwegian name of Amalie Skram’s *Ein Liebling der Götter* is not *Juleheg* (p.411) but *Julehelg*. On p.414 (Appendix III), a commentary to Rilke’s letter about the *Wild Duck* performance he saw in Paris in May, 1906, the Dano-Norwegian title is cited as *Vilanden*. (Two Italian misprints turn up as well: Ada Negri’s *Fatalita* [p.363: correctly *Fatalità*], from which the young Rilke translated two poems, and Petrarch’s *Conzoniere* [p.358: correctly *Canzoniere*].)

More information could be given on several points. In connection with Ellen Key’s slightly confessional letter of March 12, 1903, and her emotional suffering “many years ago,” which the editor says is “vermutlich” (p.315) the break-up between Ellen Key and the married Urban von Feilitzen, it is too bad that the reader is not made aware of the major work on Feilitzen, Axel Forsström’s big dissertation of 1924, dedicated to Ellen Key, and Forsström’s essay on the love affair in his *Om Ellen Key* (1949:123–47). Ulf Wittrock’s *Ellen Keys väg från kristendom till livstro* (1953) deals in great detail with the formation of her world of thought; his essay on Ellen Key and the eighteen-nineties (in *Samlaren* 88 [1967]:7–55) tells much about her literary interests, and leads to other secondary literature. Perhaps considerations of space kept these major studies out of the bibliography or the notes. But reference should surely have been made to Mia Leche-Löfgren’s biography of 1930, with its valuable and extensive bibliography of Ellen Key’s books, articles, and reviews, and to Forsström’s brochure, *Ellen Key* (1963), containing a list of pertinent secondary literature on Forsström’s life-long topic. The only biographical guides listed are a respectable doctoral dissertation by Ronald de Angelis (University of Connecticut, 1978) and Reinhard Dräbing’s turgid *Der Traum vom ‘Jahrhundert des Kindes’* (Frankfurt a.M., 1990).

The note to the postscript of the March 12, 1903, letter (“Diesen Herbst eine andere solche Seele eine kranke Finnländerinn gefunden”) says “Nicht ermittelbar.” The sick woman was Alta (Anna) Dahlgren (1868–1908), a close friend of the daughters of Zachris Topelius; she evidently wrote the anonymous account of the great man’s last days in the *Minnesalbum* (1898) that appeared directly after his passing. Key composed both a lengthy and detailed “In memoriam” for Dahlgren, who died of tuberculosis in Norway, and an essay of 1924 on Dahlgren and the Topelius family. In the letters to the aspiring authoress Ellen Michelsen, edited by the recipient as *Brev från Ellen Key, 1907–1925* (Stockholm, 1952), and mentioned above,

Ellen Key wrote, on Easter Sunday, 1909: “Tack för att du kom in i mitt lif, just då *Alta gick*” (p.13: Thanks for coming into my life, coming just when *Alta went away*). The Michelsen letters could have provided still more germane information; in March, 1908, Ellen Key—visiting the Gibsons at Jonsered—asked her young friend if she would like to go to Germany as the teacher of a little girl near Bremen, one of Key’s several efforts to help the Rilkes with Ruth. Also, in a letter to Ellen Michelsen of March 28, 1915, Ellen Key mentioned the plan—brought up by Lou Andreas-Salomé and Rilke to Ellen Key in March, 1915—to have Rilke foster the publication of the late Sissy Frerichs’s poems at the Insel. Rilke had written about it “day before yesterday,” a detail that would have helped the editor in precisely dating the LAS/RMR letter (cf. p.235, “zwischen 19. und 23.3.1915,” and the note on p.405).

The note (p.315) to Ellen Key’s letter of March 23, 1903, the anniversary of Goethe’s death, says that her “Verehrung von Goethe ... fand in diesen Jahren ihren wichtigsten Ausdruck in ‘Der Lebensglaube’” (the German translation, from 1906, pp.272–89, of the second part of *Lifslinjer*). This is not the case; her greatest encomium of Goethe was in fact the second part of *Människor* (1900), some hundred pages, preceded there by her essay on the Brownings. The enthusiastic teacher at the *Samskola*, Emilia Fogelklou (commentary, p.347), described Rilke’s visit to the school (and Ellen Key’s part in its foundation) in “En skolas födelse,” in her *Minnesbilder och ärenden* (1963). A death date (1947) is available for the Danish philosopher H.Ch.L. Lambek (omitted, p.348); on September 17, 1910, Ellen Key told Ellen Michelsen to read Lambek’s *Personlig Kultur*, which he had dedicated to her, and spread it, “en praktig själens diätik” (a splendid dietetics of the soul), far and wide. The “aus Rassenbiologischer Gesichtspunkt ausgehende Proteste gegen die farbigen Truppen in West Deutschland” (p.241), a project said to be underway in Ellen Key’s last letter to Rilke, is also “Nicht ermittelt” (p.409). The topic was in the center of Swedish public interest just then; Herman Lundborg (1868–1943) had been named professor and director of Uppsala’s newly found State Institute for Racial Biology. The French quartering of African troops in the occupied Rhineland after the Treaty of Versailles called forth great indignation, not only in Germany but Sweden: Ellen Key’s friend Elin Wägner and the pastor Gunnar Vall made an inspection tour and wrote about it, *Rapport över en resa inom de av ententen besatta områdena vid Rhen 20/2–8/3 1921* (Stockholm, 1921). In her last book, *Allsegraren II: Framtidens ungdom* (1924), Key devotes a good part (pp.162–84) of a chapter called “Den helige andens tempel” (The Temple of the Holy Spirit), to questions of “race biology and eugenics,” opening with a lengthy quotation from Lundborg. Finally, another un-

pleasant matter: on January 12, 1908 (p.209), Ellen Key condemned “die Schurkenthat Strindbergs” in his novel *Svarta fanor*: “Gustaf [af] Geijerstam ist da, in *allen* seinen Beziehungen durch den Koth gezogen, *mir* macht [Strindberg] zu Saufer und homosexuell (!!!).” In the commentary (p.394), the editor describes Strindberg’s caricature of Geijerstam “in der Figur des Redakteurs und geistigen Parasiten Zachris und Ellen Key in der Figur der lesbischen und alkoholsüchtigen Frauenrechtlerin Hanna Paj.” He could have noted a still crueller detail; “Hanna Paj” was meant to suggest a contamination of “Ellen Key” and “Hanna Pauli.” One wonders what Rilke thought when he read Key’s *Schwarze Fahnen* passage and a pendant of March 20, 1909 (p.220), where she claims that “die schandhafte Tat Strindbergs” was responsible for Geijerstam’s death. After all, Rilke already had his own “schandhafte Tat” up his sleeve, the sly lampoon of Ellen Key as the busybody Vjera Schulin in *Malte*.