Ernst Möbius, who saw an inverse relationship between sexuality and intellect, proclaimed in Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes (1900) that women who studied would have weak and sickly children. Ricarda Huch spoke out against the illogic of his reasoning in her advocacy of a woman’s right to study and work, but her own essay on gender, “Natur und Geist als die Wurzel des Lebens und der Kunst” (1914) continues the German idealistic tradition of gender stereotypes by stating that gender polarity is analogous to the dualism of nature (woman) and spirit (man). Her ambiguous feelings about women’s emancipation were similar to those of her male colleagues who feared social degeneration with the masculinization of woman. Max Horkheimer, in the 1930s, also postulated that the family, centered around a nurturing woman, was a refuge from the social ills of capitalism.

Not until the 1970s was there a widespread questioning of gender constructs. The feminist movement rejected previous connections between sex and gender as well as heterosexual marriage as the foundation of society. Since then, feminist research in the humanities and in the social sciences, as well as feminist literary texts, has continued to critically explore the long tradition of misogynist and asymmetrical gender theories.

See also: Erudite Woman; Essentialism/Constructionism; Gender; Geschlechtscharaktere; Hippel, Theodor Gottlieb von: Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung; Leporin, Dorothea: Gründliche Untersuchung; Marriage; Otto-Peters, Louise; Revolution, German (1848); University Education, Women’s; Women’s Movement.


SUSAN C. ANDERSON

Gender Transformation/Geschlechtertausch. This is a literary theme in texts that focus on the sexual change (from man to woman or from woman to man) of a main character. Rooted in both Greek and Oriental mythology, gender transformation literature seeks to overcome the historical, physical, and psychological gaps between the sexes. The transposed gender role enables the transformed protagonist to perceive society from the point of view of the opposite sex. Despite outward appearances, however, these transformed characters retain their gender experience as the root of their identity.
German male authors have treated the subject on numerous occasions, including Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lucinde* (1799), Bertolt Brecht’s *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (1942), and Peter Hacks’ *Omphale* (1970). One of the better-known modern adaptations of the theme is Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928). The theme rose to prominence in GDR literature in the 1970s with the publication of *Blitz aus heiterem Himmel* (1975), which included four short stories by men (Günter de Bruyn, Gotthold Gloger, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Rolf Schneider), three by women (Edith Anderson, Sarah Kirsch, Christa Wolf), and one essay (Anne-marie Auer). These texts criticized patriarchal society and the dehumanization of society through technology and science. The use of the fantastic depicts social problems in a whimsical light and disturbs or distorts the expected development of social evolution.

Publication of gender transformation stories by three East German women writers, Kirsch, Wolf, and Irmtraud Morgner (*Geschlechtertausch. Drei Erzählungen*, 1980) in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) further emphasized the importance of emancipation for women in socialist countries. Sarah Kirsch’s story “Blitz aus heiterem Himmel” demonstrates the inability of men and women to bond: the protagonist establishes a solid, equal relationship with her male friend only after transformation. In Christa Wolf’s “Selbstversuch” the female protagonist interrupts her gender transformation experiment because she notices the tendency to develop male thought patterns. The text reveals linguistic problems, namely, the struggle between men and women to express themselves within a single language system. This narrative represents Wolf’s first attempt at grappling explicitly with the questions of female identity. Irmtraud Morgner’s “Gute Botschaft der Valeska in 73 Strophen,” which initially remained unpublished in the GDR, depicts emotions from the “other” male side—the transformed protagonist is able to form relationships with women, which she experiences through the underlying female identity.

**See also:** GDR Literature; Gender; Morgner, Irmtraud; Wolf, Christa.


**CAROL ANNE COSTABILE-HEMING**

**Genre, Literary**—see: Authorship; Canon, Literary; Reception

**Germanistik**—see: Canon, Literary; Frauenliteratur/Frauendichtung; German Studies; Reception; Sentimentality; Volksdichtung; Volkskunde

**German-Jewish Literature.** The complexities that govern the relationship between any writer’s identity and her work forbid the formulation of a narrow definition pertaining to a body of texts as diverse as German-Jewish literature. Jewish women have contributed, and continue to contribute to, all forms of