

Annual German History Society Conference 2024

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The 'First Lady of Academic Pedagogy'

Recovering the Life and Scholarship of Elisabeth Blochmann (1892-1972)

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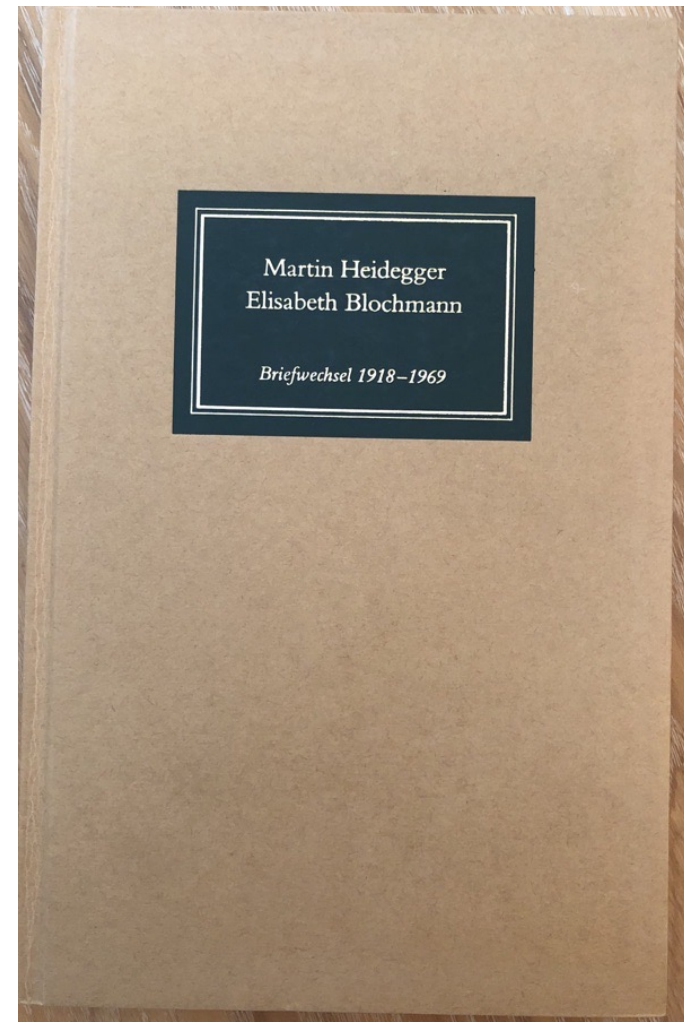


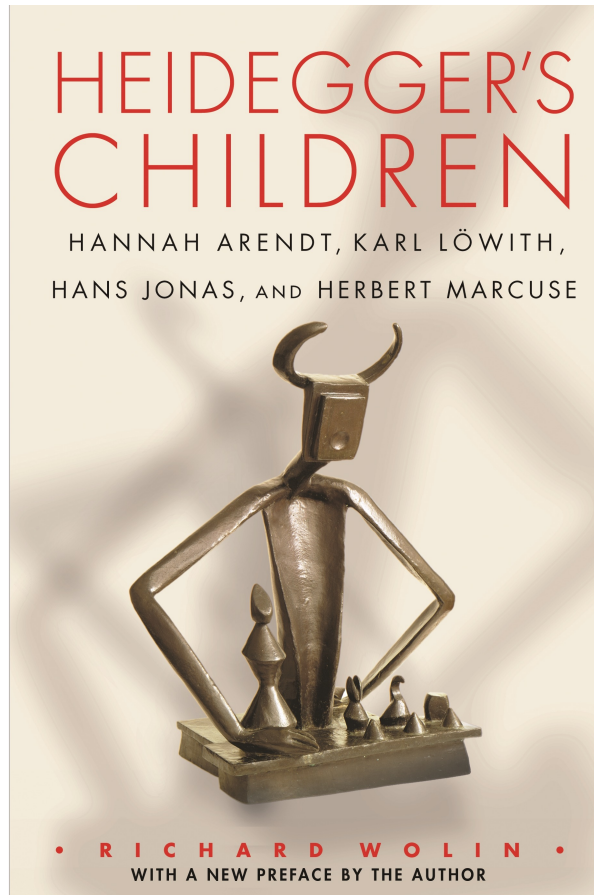


Who was Elisabeth Blochmann?

Elisabeth Blochmann (1892–1972), Wolfgang Klafki and Helmut-Gerhard Müller, ed., Marburg: Universitätsbibliothek Marburg, 1992.

- *Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969*, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989; 2nd ed., 1990)





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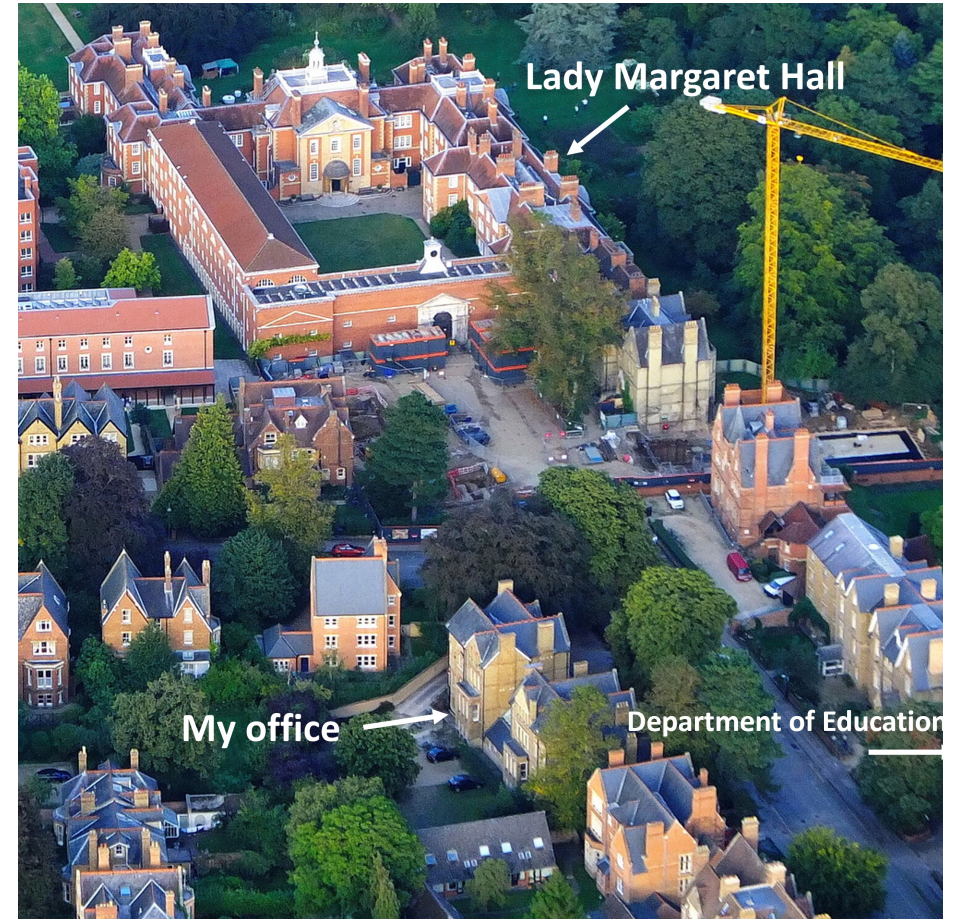
Background

- 'It is probably fair to say that, following his relationship with Hannah Arendt, Blochmann had one of the most important extramarital affairs with Heidegger...'

“Martin Heidegger”, Wikipedia [Accessed 20 November 2022]

- Sources on time in Oxford ‘quite sparse’ and ‘will be a task of future biographical research.’

Wolfgang Klafki, *Pädagogisch-Politische Porträts*, 2020, 148-49.



Archives

- Oxford
 - Taylolean Institute Library - H.G. Fiedler Collection
 - Lady Margaret Hall Special Collections
 - Bodleian Library Special Collections (Weston Library) - Archive of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning
- Germany
 - Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach (Martin Heidegger Estate)
 - Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung

Elisabeth Blochmann

Elisabeth Blochmann is best known as a correspondent of Martin Heidegger. Meanwhile, her life and scholarship have been largely forgotten.

This project aims to uncover her story.



—> *Who was Elisabeth Blochmann?*

News



Aims

- Introduce life and scholarship of Elisabeth Blochmann (first time in English)
- Present new primary material that reveals Blochmann's social world and experience in Oxford and Germany.
- Explore development of Blochmann's philosophical and political worldview, assess her critical reception of Heidegger

Elisabeth Blochmann | Early Career

1892-1933

- **1892** - Born April 14, Apolda, Thuringia; upper-middle class German-Jewish family.
- **1908** – Graduate secondary school for girls with a teacher's examination for higher girls' schools.
- **1917-1920** - Studied history, German, education, philosophy and French, in Jena, Strasbourg and Marburg, and in Göttingen
- **1923** - PhD under historian Karl Brandi on seventeenth century German pamphlet.





Erich Weniger

Elisabeth Blochmann

Herman Nohl

Elisabeth Blochmann lehrt in von links) Erich Weniger, Elisabeth Blochmann, Herman Nohl vor dem Tagungsheim in Lippoldsberg | © Bibliothek für bildungshistorische Forschung, Nachlass Blochmann, Berlin © Bibliothek für bildungshistorische Forschung, Reichwein-Archiv, Berlin



Elisabeth Blochmann lehrt in Halle © Bibliothek für
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Rosemarie Pallat und Elisabeth Blochmann 1932 © beide Bilder: Bibliothek für
bildungshistorische Forschung, Reichwein-Archiv, Berlin

Elisabeth Blochmann | Meeting Heidegger

1917-1969

- [Elfride Heidegger]: ‘During the First World War she studied in Strasbourg and often came to us young married people for short or long visits to Freiburg, later also to Todtnauberg. During this time, a very nice friendship developed with Martin Heidegger.’

Storck, Briefwechsel, p. 121.

Photo source: Elisabeth Blochmann (1892–1972), Wolfgang Klafki and Helmut-Gerhard Müller, ed., Marburg: Universitätsbibliothek Marburg, 1992.



Heidegger to Blochmann, 12 September 1929

- ‘But this, and even the painful hardship of the last hour, I took upon myself that I took it upon myself as the - should I say - set limit of our friendship, by enduring which I preserve the happiness of your convictions.’
- ‘And since you helped me find my way back, I also took the absence of the 'happier tone' and the 'resonance' as a form of help and guidance in shaping our friendship.’

Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989; 2nd ed., 1990)



Heidegger to Blochmann, 30 March, 1933

- 'I'm glad you aren't letting your experience and your knowledge lie fallow at present and are taking part in shaping the future of the German woman and in overcoming the distress of the children of an unemployed people.' [...]
- **I hope, dear Elisabeth, you weren't all that serious about your begging off our correspondence because of its "intensity."**

Edler, Frank. "Letters to Elisabeth Blochmann (Translated by Frank H. W. Edler)."
Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 14/15, no. 2/1 (1991): 563–77.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/gfpj199114/152/139>.



Blochmann to Heidegger, 14
Sept 1933

‘I am very reluctant to come back with my case today, because I can imagine how much your own great task is now taking up your thoughts and energy. Nevertheless, I dare it again, because in these September days it will inevitably be decided whether or not I can continue to belong to Germany and to German work in some way. [...]’

Storck, Briefwechsel, p. 56.

Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989; 2nd ed., 1990)



Heidegger to Blochmann, 19
Sept 1933

'I am here on home ground for several days to reflect and come to a decision. Elfride sent me your letter, and I wrote immediately [to Zunkel, the new head of the pedagogical academy]. **The most painful thing for me is that I can no longer do anything to help** [to keep Elisabeth's teaching position].'

Edler, Frank. "Letters to Elisabeth Blochmann (Translated by Frank H. W. Edler)."
Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal 14/15, no. 2/1 (1991): 563–77.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/gfpj199114/152/139>.



Blochmann to Heidegger, 1933

- 'And I found it so difficult to understand, after our last meeting, that you did not want to write me a word after your conversation with B[aeumler].'

Storck, *Briefwechsel*, p. 68.

- 'I have had very difficult days, but I could not have imagined that such an expulsion would be possible. I may have lived too naively in a deep security of mind and feeling - so at first, I was quite defenseless and very desperate. For the harshness of this law is so great that it excludes one not only from immediate work, but in the foreseeable future from any co-operation in German education.'

Storck, *Briefwechsel*, p. 78.

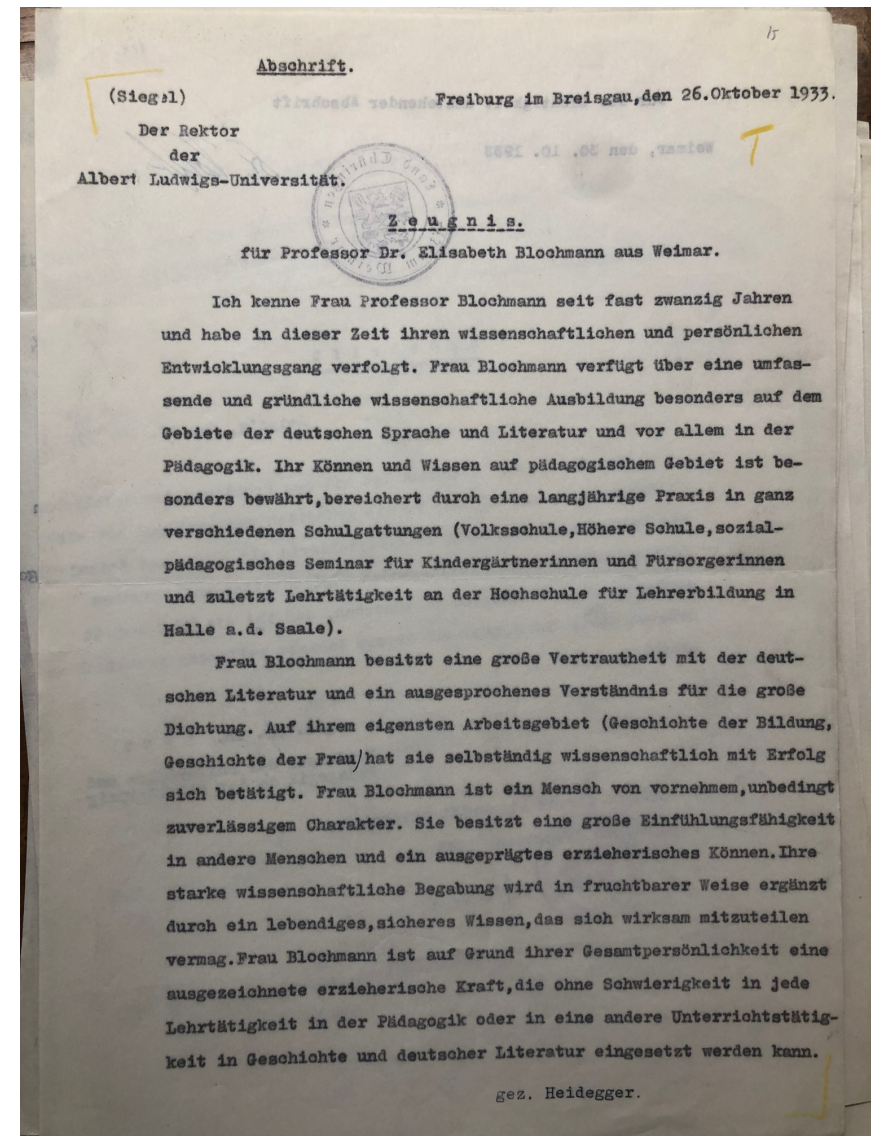
Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989; 2nd ed., 1990)



Elisabeth Blochmann | Exile in Oxford 1934-1952

- **4th January 1934** – Leaves Germany supported by networks.
- **31st January 1934** – Offered post of German *répétitrice* at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford
- **1938** – Granted Oxford MA degree
- **1939** – Ceases communication with Herman Nohl, Heidegger

Reference letter from Martin Heidegger, in 'Elisabeth Blochmann', Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MS. S.P.S.L. 241/1-7'. Catalogue of the Archive of the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning, 1933-87.



Blochmann to Nohl, 18th January 1934

- ‘Among the Jews you meet out here (and from whom my heart flees), I see two positions so far: unspeakably radical: war against war, i.e. an eye for an eye, a tooth for, a tooth. Or: we don't fight against Hitler but Hitler never concerns us – we belong entirely to the country in which we now live and which recognizes us.’
- ‘In addition, they are a blessing for me the Quakers with their unswerving will to love, their power of peace and their understanding from which fruitful deed grows. And charitable, too, this liberal attitude of educated English women, in the most beautiful sense.’

Blochmann to Heidegger, 10 March 1934

- ‘...I cannot believe in an education that does not allow children to be truly rooted in a "homeland," that does not give them the secure feeling of belonging to a nationality as it has been given to us.’

Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969,
ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989;
2nd ed., 1990), 80.





Elisabeth
Blochmann
in Oxford

Photo source: Elisabeth Blochmann (1892–1972), Wolfgang Klafki and Helmut-Gerhard Müller, ed., Marburg: Universitätsbibliothek Marburg, 1992.



Hans Grimm

[Grimm, Hans](#): Schriftsteller, Deutschland ([GND 118542249](#))

Deutsche Bild. 183-561180
2. o. 4. u. 1. 1935



In Marburg in conversation with friends:
Elisabeth Blochmann (second from right)



J. Ewert

R. Sutherland M. G. Skjerve

M. Denzke

In the S. C. R.

C. Anson

? E. Blochmann

Photograph of faculty at LMH c. 1951

Elisabeth Blochmann | Return to Germany

1952-1972

- Chair of Education, University of Marburg – First woman in West Germany.
- Brings English energy to German academia.
- Resumes contact with Heidegger at distance.
- Publishes 1966 - Das „Frauenzimmer“ und die „Gelehrsamkeit“. Eine Studie über die Anfänge des Mädchenschulwesens in Deutschland. Heidelberg 1966.
- Planned second volume but instead publishes biography of Herman Nohl.
- Dies of cancer 27 January 1972.



Questions

- What was her experience like in Oxford? What happened during her time at LMH to influence her later scholarship?
- What did Elisabeth Blochmann really think about Martin Heidegger?
- What was Blochmann's impact?



Remembrances

- As for Blochmann her idea of fun was to invite us in on a Sunday evening and bring our darning.
- Elisabeth Blochmann who had just arrived as a refugee, taught me German with charm.
- Dr Blochmann was really in the wrong job (it was not really her line to teach literature
- My tutors taught admirable and were very kind, but I wish that I had had more understanding of what Dr. Blochmann, my German tutor, must have suffered during the war years though she never talked about Germany and her family.
- I liked everyone except my own tutor, Elisabeth Blochmann with whom I always felt ill at ease. Some were eccentric but all respected. I felt some were out of touch with the outside world.
- Being a shy person, I did not become familiar with any of [my tutors], but I did have a good relationship with Rhoda Clark (Mrs. Sutherland) and Dr. Blochmann
- Dr Blochmann became a close friend as well as being a gifted teacher. We were all worried she might be whisked off into interment at short notice.

What did Blochmann really think of Martin Heidegger?



Elisabeth Blochmann to Martin Heidegger [draft letter, after mid-December 1969.]

I have to say that, dear Martin, even if it disappoints you, because it is also related to my reluctance to seek personal conversation again, be it in Freiburg or in my beloved Todtnauberg. My way of seeing the things of life is so far removed from your philosophical view - through Göttingen, very strongly also through Oxford and in the distance still through Weimar, but basically in general through my more modest intellectual possibilities - that I fear that a common language exists for us only in a limited but all the more precious area. Of course, you have hit it wonderfully in your good letter and I thank you especially for that. And it is nice to know that "friendly memory" can also bridge and outlast distances of "thinking"

Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann, Briefwechsel 1918-1969, ed. Joachim W. Storck (Marbach a. N.: Schiller-Archiv, 1989; 2nd ed., 1990), 119.

Letters to Herman Nohl, 1933

- "For the friendship between Ma. [Martin Heidegger] and I would have needed a thorough discussion, but he was afraid of it, that was clear to me. [...] What is bad for the relationship at the moment is not the failure in B. [Berlin] itself, but the insincere nature of the communication."

Blochmann to Nohl (on Heidegger)

- 17 October 1933: "I find Misch's testimony touching, really so lovingly done. [..] On the other hand, this M.-H. letter - for God's mercy!"
- "This stupid M.H., now you should be responsible for my dismissal - just so that he doesn't have to tell himself what he missed . Good thing I don't have him here and can't be too clear."
- 21st October 1933 [On H.'s testimony]: "well-intentioned and comically clumsy."

Blochmann to Nohl, 1934

- I had a lovely letter from M. Heidegger. He's reading about this winter – Hölderlin! nIn general, a complete withdrawal from today, apparently. One feels so sorry for him with this great aberration. My other friend from Freiburg wrote that professors, students and the ministry had all been dissatisfied with him – Elfriede was "very beside herself" after the disaster. He wrote that if it weren't for the family, he would have resigned from the professorship with the rectorate. Strange life!

What was Elisabeth Blochmann's impact?

- Historian of the education of woman - Integrated education and pedagogical theory into social and political history. Pioneer of social pedagogy as an academic discipline.
- Leader of feminist pedagogy in post-war German universities – personal mentorship and support of students, imagined emancipatory education for women.
- Fundamentally conservative as a feminist and retained focus on German identity. New generation of women students disinterested.

Juliane Jacobi

- One may regret that a biography of Herman Nohl (Blochmann 1969) seemed more important to her, but, as she writes to Martin Heidegger, it was a *labor of love* (Storck 1989, p. 120).

Emanzipation als Gespant

- There is hardly any other area that has been so neglected by recent research in the history of education as the development of girls' and women's education in the 19th century. This is one of the most profound changes in social life that has taken place in a century, from the almost total neglect of "one half of the human race" to the opening up of almost all career paths and finally to the admission of women to university, a change that has had a decisive impact on all areas of public and private life, including families.

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