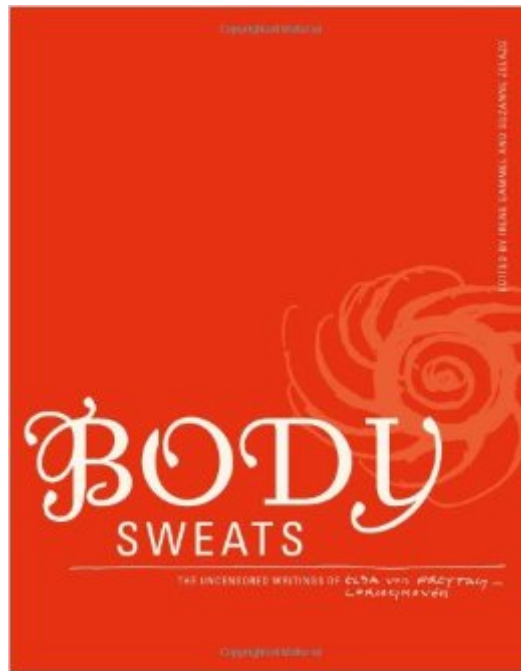


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Body Sweats: The Uncensored Writings Of Elsa Von Freytag-Loringhoven (MIT Press)



Synopsis

As a neurasthenic, kleptomaniac, man-chasing proto-punk poet and artist, the Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven left in her wake a ripple that is becoming a rip -- one hundred years after she exploded onto the New York art scene. As an agent provocateur within New York's modernist revolution, "the first American Dada" not only dressed and behaved with purposeful outrageousness, but she set an example that went well beyond the eccentric divas of the twenty-first century, including her conceptual descendant, Lady Gaga. Her delirious verse flabbergasted New Yorkers as much as her flamboyant persona. As a poet, she was profane and playfully obscene, imagining a farting God, and transforming her contemporary Marcel Duchamp into M'ars (my arse). With its ragged edges and atonal rhythms, her poetry echoes the noise of the metropolis itself. Her love poetry muses graphically on ejaculation, orgasm, and oral sex. When she tired of existing words, she created new ones: "phalluspistol," "spinsterlollipop," "kissambushed." The Baroness's rebellious, highly sexed howls prefigured the Beats; her intensity and psychological complexity anticipates the poetic utterances of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. Published more than a century after her arrival in New York, *Body Sweats* is the first major collection of Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven's poems in English. The Baroness's biographer Irene Gammel and coeditor Suzanne Zelazo have assembled 150 poems, most of them never before published. Many of the poems are themselves art objects, decorated in red and green ink, adorned with sketches and diagrams, presented with the same visceral immediacy they had when they were composed.

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Customer Reviews

Body Sweats remaps the frontiers of modernism. It allows us to see, for the first time, just how radical Freytag-Loringhoven was: her linguistic fearlessness puts her in the same league as Mina Loy, Gertrude Stein, and Abraham Lincoln-Gillespie. These poems also offer a challenge to contemporary writers; a century on, her work is still as extreme as anything being published today. (Craig Dworkin, Professor of English, University of Utah)The Baroness's legendary but barely glimpsed 'omnipulsespun' oeuvre takes its place here as the most vital recovery of a neglected modernist since Mina Loy. Her panoramic 'arabesque grotesque' of sex poems, city poems, nature poems, sound poems, and an astonishingly rich visual portfolio is given an ingenious arrangement by the scrupulous editors, along with a poignant and sensible introduction. The Dada queen prankster comes to life at long last in all her 'stuttering incandescence. (Jed Rasula, Helen S. Lanier Distinguished Professor of English, University of Georgia, author of Modernism and Poetic Inspiration: The Shadow Mouth)Once rebuffed by William Carlos Williams and banished from Rutherford, exiled to Europe, where she lived in abject poverty and died, the iconoclastic Baroness, Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven, has been brought to life by Irene Gammel and Suzanne Zelazo. An informative introduction for newcomers, a detailed set of notes on her poems for scholars, a generous presentation of her poetry, and, best of all, manuscript reproductions of her distinctively printed poems rescued from various archives -- what a marvelous gathering at last for the magnificent Baroness, who deserves no less from all her admirers. (Dickran Tashjian, Professor Emeritus of Art History, University of California, Irvine, author of A Boatload of Madmen: Surrealism and the American Avant-Garde, 1920-1950)

Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven (1874--1927) was an artist and poet in Berlin, Munich, New York, and Paris. Irene Gammel is Canada Research Chair in Modern Literature and Culture at Ryerson University, Toronto, where she directs the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre. She is the author of Baroness Elsa: Gender, Dada, and Everyday Modernity (MIT Press). Suzanne Zelazo is a postdoctoral fellow at the Modern Literature and Culture Research Centre

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