**Luxemburg, Rosa (1871-1919)**

Also known as ‘Red Rosa’, Rosa Luxemburg was a writer, philosopher, feminist and labor activist who fuelled the socialist movement in Weimar Germany. For modernists such as Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), who dedicated the activist song ‘Up, up, Let’s Fight’ to her, she was an iconic revolutionary (http://bit.ly/MmR2rv). Born in Polish Russia of Jewish descent, Luxemburg was multilingual and well-educated, representing an international, rather than a nationalist outlook. She published Die Akkumulation des Kapitals (The Accumulation of Capital, 1913; http://bit.ly/Lav5uD) and numerous essays, pamphlets and speeches (http://bit.ly/LWaedx), and co-founded, with Karl Liebknecht (1871-1919), Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) and others, the radical Spartacus League in 1915, whose goal was the fight for a revolution in Germany similar to the Russian Revolution of 1917. Tracing her unconventional life (which included several incarcerations) in deeply felt letters to lovers, friends and family, Luxemburg passionately exhorted her contemporaries to activism, as she articulates to friend and early biographer Henriette Roland Holst (1869-1952): ‘For a revolutionary movement not to go forward means to fall back. The only means of fighting opportunism in a radical way is to keep going forward oneself’ (*Letters* 179). In 1919, Luxemburg and her comrade Liebknecht were arrested and assassinated in Berlin, and her body was discarded in the Landwehr Canal. The brazen brutality of the state-sanctioned act, carried out by a group of paramilitary men, shook Weimar’s fragile democracy.

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**List of works**

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**References and further reading**

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