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Unseen Political Spaces: Gender and Nationhood in the Berlin and Paris Fashion Press during the Franco-Prussian War

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ABSTRACT

The fashion press, and women's magazines in general, might appear to be spaces of political neutrality preoccupied with the trivialities of domesticity. Yet a closer reading reveals that many women's publications often serve as a platform for social critique and political engagement. My article explores how the Berlin and Paris illustrated fashion press participated in the international dialogue on gender, nation-building, patriotism, and consumerism during the Franco-Prussian war (1869–70). It considers works edited and curated by women for women during a time of national conflict, and presents voices often marginalized and forgotten in sociohistorical studies of the Franco-Prussian war.

KEY WORDS

Illustrated fashion press, Berlin, Paris, Franco-Prussian War, Gender, *Der Bazar*, *La Mode illustrée*

The fashion press, and women's magazines in general, may appear to be spaces of political neutrality preoccupied with the supposed trivialities of domesticity, yet a closer reading reveals that women's publications often serve as a platform for social critique and political engagement. Despite the fact that previous scholarship has demonstrated how women's periodicals, including fashion magazines, have engaged with social and cultural commentary, these products and producers of women's narratives are often marked as trivial. My article explores the images and texts in the Berlin fashion journal *Der Bazar: Illustrierte Damen-Zeitung* (1855–1933) as well as the Paris-based *La Mode illustrée: Journal de la famille* (1860–1937), during a critical time for these two nations, namely the Franco-Prussian War (July 1870–May 1871).

As the following examples illustrate, the world of print for women, including the fashion magazine industry, was rich with lessons on life, education, and the role expected of women within and outside the home. My article offers an exploration of how these broader discourses on nationhood and gender were written for and by women in two popular European women's journals. In what follows, I offer the context necessary to understand the impact of the two journals before focusing more specifically on the representations of gender and nationhood depicted in select issues of *Der Bazar* and *La Mode illustrée* during the Franco-Prussian war. Taking as its example Peter Gay's in-depth study of one year of *Die Gartenlaube*, this article similarly seeks to explore a precisely defined time period that is unique in its context and offers readers a specific lens through which to understand these two fashion magazines and their relationships.¹

The fashion industry's strong international component makes a study of gender and nation-building on a domestic level all the more fascinating. What remained uniquely German, especially during a time of conflict? How did the discourse on nationhood reflect the German woman's experience during the Franco-Prussian war and how did that depart from the narratives in its French counterpart? Moreover, since *Der Bazar* had a broad audience within the German-speaking world and beyond, the discourse on nation-building and national identity that was put forth in its pages reached many households and provided an opportunity to impact and shape the views on the German-speaking world held by those living abroad and not just in a domestic context.

A Feminist Reading of the Past

My work is grounded in a feminist methodology in that I aim to highlight a medium (fashion magazines) that functions outside the literary canon due to its gendered appeal, but that contributed in complex and meaningful ways to an evolving understanding of self, nationhood, gender, and the public versus private in nineteenth-century Europe. When it comes to women's histories and narratives, much has been written about the peripheral roles assigned to female authors and women's experiences. Claudia Lenz raises the questions, 'How do stories which are considered worth remembering emerge in public and private contexts? And how do those who are regarded as valuable narrators gain their authority to tell about and interpret the past?'² Lenz uses Michel Foucault's theory of power and discourse to argue that language creates reality and that, in rendering invisible the voices and writings of certain groups and communities, we are shaping the realities that make up the present as well as our understanding of the past. Lenz writes:

- 1 See Peter Gay, 'Experiment in Denial: A Reading of the *Gartenlaube* in the Year 1890', in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. by Nancy Kaiser and David E. Wellberry (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 147–64.
- 2 Claudia Lenz, 'The Second World War in the Popular Culture of Memory in Norway', in *Popular Historiographies in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Cultural Meanings, Social Practices*, ed. by Sylvia Paletschek (New York: Berghahn, 2010), pp. 140–54 (p. 143).

Being 'ruled' by discursive patterns defining what can and cannot be said by whom and how, the negotiation of the past regulates participation, citizenship and exclusion. It mirrors and influences power relations. The simple question is: *Which elements of the unlimited multitude of past events will be regarded as meaningful in the present and the future and thus will be preserved and handed down to coming generations?* This indicates that the 'preserving' of the past is always a 'construction' of narratives and images and is connected to choice and interpretation.³

Lenz's argument provides a useful starting point for the following study of nineteenth-century women's magazines. Studying and preserving these writings and images that were often selected and edited by women and using them as a lens through which to understand this historical period resists a hegemonic re-telling of the past.

Karen Offen argues that looking at the past through a feminist lens, which she defines as a lens that centres the experiences of all persons without falling into the trap of labelling women's history as a niche approach, opens our eyes to an entirely different understanding of history: 'When reconsidered critically, from the perspective of feminist concerns, and with a whole new archive of recovered knowledge, the past looks different.'⁴ When looking at nineteenth-century Europe, particularly during times of war or conflict, how does our understanding of past events and cultural products shift when we make room for narratives and material artefacts traditionally excluded from canonical consideration?

The International Fashion Press: *Der Bazar* and *La Mode illustrée*

Der Bazar was published weekly between 1855 and 1933 by the Louis Schäfer Publishing House in Berlin. *La Mode illustrée* appeared on the market five years after *Der Bazar*'s inception and ran from 1860 to 1937, published by the Didot brothers in Paris. Typical content for both magazines included fashion commentary as well as news reporting, science writing, fiction published in instalments, and a prolific classifieds section that included items for sale, job postings, and marriage and adoption queries. Later issues incorporated colour ink into their images, a novel technique bringing an unparalleled vibrancy to the lithographs that previously only existed in black and white. While both magazines positioned themselves in the fashion and domestic goods category, they did not shy away from offering social commentary and political rhetoric coded within many of the published texts and visuals.

In *Clothing: A Global History*, Robert Ross asserts that 'since clothing is inescapably a demonstration of identity, wearing clothes — or for that matter not doing so — is inevitably a political act, in the widest sense of that word.'⁵ If we take this as our departure point, it stands to reason that the images and texts in the fashion press of the nineteenth-century did not exist in a vacuum outside of the cultural and political climate in which they were being created, promoted, and sold. What makes this period especially interesting is that the fashion industry as well as the publishing world of the nineteenth century began operating on an international playing field. Growing industrialization and free market economies boosted the production of reading material and the dissemination of fashion culture to an international plateau. As a result, questions of class, gender,

3 Lenz, p. 144 (emphasis mine).

4 Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950: A Political History* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

5 Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), p. 12.

and national identity were also increasingly influenced by the international discourse on these topics.

One of the key events that changed the role of fashion and clothing during the nineteenth century was the abolition of sumptuary laws at the end of the eighteenth century. Prior to this, sumptuary laws — a set of state-implemented rules and regulations — dictated what people could wear based on class, occupation, and rank. For instance, the working classes were prohibited from wearing the rich and bold hues associated with the aristocracy and were restricted to drab browns and black.⁶ Certain headwear or accessories (the apron, the delicate glove) could also signal a distinct class belonging. According to fashion historian Philippe Perrot, clothing performed a ‘sociopolitical function’, communicating at once rank, power, lineage, and profession.⁷ It signalled ‘self-affirmation’ for some and ‘subordination’ for others.⁸ A breach in clothing regulations could be punished as severely or as mildly as the context demanded; the consequences of sumptuary transgressions ranged from ‘mere ridicule’ to ‘legal penalties’.⁹ Clothing not only functioned to enforce and make visible existing social hierarchies; it also served to distinguish among nations and cultures. One could easily differentiate an upper-class German woman from her social equal in France by means of the vestimentary cues provided.

To explain how clothing continued to signal class and lineage long after sumptuary laws were removed, Perrot offers a semiotic analysis of nineteenth-century fashion trends in Europe. Garments not only carry use-values (their functionality) but also, and perhaps most importantly, sign-values. The latter is the abstract quality of a garment that signals information about its owner such as level of income, class belonging, age, and occupation.

In addition to this new way of reading clothing, several other nineteenth-century innovations served to internationalize the fashion industry and, by extension, the fashion press. The invention of the sewing machine, the advent of the department store, the proliferation of inexpensive ready-mades, and the increase in travel and shipping meant that clothing circulated in new ways: it was to be quickly obtained, quickly devoured, and just as quickly discarded for the latest trends. Marianne van Remoortel, in her article ‘Women Editors and the Rise of the Illustrated Fashion Press’, notes that ‘this shift away from leisure-class luxury towards a more practical, hands-on approach was a key moment in the history of fashion and in women’s history. The new magazines actively targeted women as consumers and practitioners of style, granting them an unprecedented sense of control over their public identities. Femininity became, quite literally, “makeable”’.¹⁰

Van Remoortel names Louis Schäfer and the Didot brothers ‘trailblazers of the illustrated fashion press.’¹¹ They recognized the business opportunity presented by the fashion world of the time and capitalized on it by establishing international ties and sharing content to the benefit of all. Schäfer, the publisher of *Der Bazar*, was especially set on creating a magazine with an international reach. By 1863, *Der Bazar* was being published in multiple languages: 105,000 annual copies in German, 50,000 in English, 32,000 in French, and 15,000 in Spanish. According to the editors, the magazine’s aim

6 See Carl Köhler, *A History of Costume* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1963) as well as John Peacock, *Kostüm und Mode: Das Bildbandbuch*, trans. by Heike Rosbath and Diethard H. Klein (Bern: Verlag Haupt, 1991).

7 Philippe Perrot, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. by Richard Bienvenu (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 10.

8 Perrot, p. 10.

9 Perrot, p. 6.

10 Marianne Van Remoortel, ‘Women Editors and the Rise of the Illustrated Fashion Press in the Nineteenth Century’, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 39.4 (2017), 269–95 (p. 269).

11 Van Remoortel, p. 269.

was to establish a 'Weltruf' ('global reputation') as a 'Weltblatt' ('global newspaper'), priding itself on its international scope and influence.¹² Meanwhile, the French *La Mode illustrée* came to press five years after *Der Bazar* bearing striking resemblance in layout and content not only to *Der Bazar* but also to another well-circulated German publication of the time, *Die Gartenlaube*.¹³ Van Remoortel demonstrates in great detail how the fashion press of the nineteenth century worked in an interconnected web of content-sharing, largely managed and edited by the women at the helm of these publishing houses.

While it is obvious that *La Mode illustrée* and *Der Bazar* shared content (see, for example, the identical cover pages published in January 1878, showing two women roller skating [1 and 2]), the details of their arrangements are unclear. Van Remoortel argues that *Der Bazar* is to be credited for creating much of the original content that Didot used in *La Mode illustrée* without attributing credit to its German peer publication. Van Remoortel writes, 'in the fast-changing fashion magazine market, the competition was rife among publishers as to whose journal was the most innovative, the most influential, and the most prestigious.'¹⁴ Didot positioned itself to be well suited to creating a sister publication that was able to draw from the German publishing world (be it from *Der Bazar* or *Die Gartenlaube*) by employing a German-speaking editor who managed the publication's content.¹⁵ Emmeline Raymond, long-time editor of *La Mode illustrée*, was born to a German mother and grew up in a multicultural home that allowed her access to both French and German-speaking connections and influences, which later played a significant role in her approach to running the magazine.¹⁶ Raymond also served as the Paris correspondent to the American *Harper's Bazar*, a spin-off publication created by the New York Harper Brothers in 1867 modelled after the German *Der Bazar*.¹⁷ In short, the German *Der Bazar* was first on the women's fashion scene, followed by the French *La Mode illustrée*, which drew in content and inspiration from the German magazine. *Der Bazar*, in turn, also inspired the creation of the American sister publication, *Harper's Bazar*, which received content from Berlin that was intended to be published in synchronicity with the German fashion magazine. Additionally, the American *Harper's Bazar* employed Raymond, editor of *La Mode illustrée*, as its Paris correspondent. By the late nineteenth century, the fashion press became an industry characterized by its dedication to creating and disseminating content on a vast and far-reaching international playing field. To return to the initial question posed in this article: what then remained uniquely German and nation-specific, particularly during a time of high conflict between France and Prussia?

12 *Der Bazar: Illustrierte Damen-Zeitung* (January 1869), p. 1.

13 For more on the resemblance between the two and a chronology of European fashion periodicals with emphasis on their overlap and shared use of content see Van Remoortel.

14 Van Remoortel, p. 270.

15 *Die Gartenlaube* is the nineteenth-century family periodical most widely recognized by scholars today. For an intensive study on how *Die Gartenlaube* contributed to the formation of a national identity in nineteenth-century Prussia, see Kristen Belgum's *Popularizing the Nation: Audience, Representation, and the Production of Identity in Die Gartenlaube, 1853–1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

16 Raphaëlle Renken-Deshayes, 'Miroir, mon beau miroir...': *L'Identité féminine définie par un journal de mode: La Mode illustrée: Journal de la famille* (Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2004), p. 62.

17 For a better understanding of women's role in the public sphere in France, Aruna D'Souza and Tom McDonough's edited anthology *The Invisible Flâneuse? Gender, Public Space, and Visual Culture in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006) is an invaluable resource. In a German context, in addition to Belgum's previously noted *Popularizing the Nation*, Lynn Abram's *The Making of the Modern Woman: Europe 1789–1918* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002) offers great insight on this topic.



Fig. 1 Front cover of Der Bazar (January 1878), image my own

Nationhood and Gendered Acts of Patriotism

Few wars have been given as much scholarly attention as the Franco-Prussian war, according to Michael Howard in *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France 1870-1871*. He reasons that this has to do with the unprecedented access to war technology and intelligence as well as the changing demographic of enlisted soldiers. More than ever before, both sides were conscribing an increasingly literate military comprised of individuals who wrote letters, kept diaries, and documented the war in



Fig. 2 Front cover of *La Mode illustrée* (January 1878), image courtesy of Kent State University Museum

their personal writings.¹⁸ As a result, we have a rich collection of primary sources to inform our understanding of the events of the war from multiple viewpoints and national identities. While much has been written on military tactics and the experience of soldiers on the war front, less has been studied in terms of women's experiences especially as portrayed in the illustrated fashion press of the time.

18 Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–1871* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. vii. For a wonderfully in-depth analysis of the Franco-Prussian war and its precursors, see Howard's text as well as Geoffrey Wawro's *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), both of which give an in-depth analysis of the political, social, and financial facets of the war.



Fig. 3 ‘Ein politisches Märchen’ on front cover of *Der Bazar* (September 1870), image courtesy of Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf

In the period leading up to the Franco-Prussian war, the influence of French fashions and Parisian designers is not to be missed in the many issues of *Der Bazar*. A regular column titled ‘Pariser Mode’ (‘Parisian Fashion’) informed readers on the latest developments in Paris and the French fashion industry that was hailed as the trend-setting fashion empire on which the German industry modelled itself. French terminology peppered the German fashion language and the average consumer no doubt understood what was meant by *bouffant*, *crinoline*, *epaulettes*, and garments for a *promenade*. All of this came to an abrupt end by July 1870 with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war. By 1871, the formerly titled ‘Pariser Mode’ column in *Der Bazar* was renamed to simply ‘die Mode’ (‘Fashion’) and references to French fashion

iconography were removed. While issues of *Der Bazar* that went to press during the first few months of the war are almost deafening in their silence surrounding the conflict with France, later issues printed after several victorious battles, take on a more confident tone in addressing the state of affairs between France and Prussia from a number of different perspectives.

One such example is the cover story of the 23 September 1870 issue that greets readers with a narrative titled 'Der Geist des Rauches und die Tochter der Luft' ('The Spirit of Smoke and the Daughter of Air') with the subtitle 'ein politisches Märchen' ('a political fairy tale'; Fig. 3). The text describes the conflict between the fantastical figures of Smoke 'Geist des Rauches' and Air 'Tochter der Luft.' While Smoke and Air battle outside the home, inside sits a small child playing with his tin soldiers:

The soldiers stood across from one another while shooting without halt at each other, and out of the grit came fire and smoke [. . .] there was a horrific battle today, and that smoke came closer and closer, as it liked to get into everything.¹⁹

The young boy's mother rushes in complaining about the smoke and noise, which she perceives as coming from outside. Opening a window, she invites air to come in and purify the home. The thinly veiled metaphor of the two battling forces (clean, fresh 'air' and meddling, dusty 'smoke') hints at how the Prussian people saw the war. Smoke, as a metonym for the French battling forces, kept threatening to overtake the German home but was steadily held at bay not only by the German soldiers fighting on the battlefield but also by the German mother and housewife keeping those dark influences out of the home. The German son, too, is learning the tactics and ways of battle; play-acting his role until his time to engage comes. Noteworthy in this narrative is that the German wife and mother is the one to rescue her son and defend the home. Her defense of the domestic sphere, especially during this time of conflict, is critical in helping Prussia secure a victory.

Meanwhile, across Europe, facing the other side of the battlefield, stood French female readers likewise looking for meaning and instruction as to their role during a time of war. They too received cues from the illustrated fashion press on how to behave at a time of critical need. In her study of fashion plates published during the Franco-Prussian war, Justine De Young writes:

In 1870, Paris suffered not only a war with the Prussians and a change in government from an Empire to a Republic, but also a harrowing siege — all of which dramatically altered the situation, representation and expectations of Parisiennes. After the declaration of war in July 1870 and the commencement of combat in August, fashion journals began fielding questions of mourning from their readers.²⁰

In contrast to the more triumphant and celebratory tone that the Berlin press continued to feature as the war waged on, the Parisian press took on a more pragmatic and conciliatory turn in narrative. For instance, Raymond, editor of *La Mode illustrée*, advised

19 'Die Soldaten standen sich gegenüber und zielten unaufhörlich aufeinander, und aus dem Flintenläufen kam Feuer und zinnerner Rauch heraus. [...] Es gab heute eine furchtbare Schlacht, und der Rauch kam neugierig näher, denn er mischte sich gern in Alles.' 'Der Geist des Rauches und die Tochter der Luft', *Der Bazar* (23 September 1870), p. 2. All translations from *Der Bazar* in this article are my own.

20 Justine De Young, 'Representing the Modern Woman: The Fashion Plate Reconsidered (1865–1875)', in *Women, Femininity, and Public Space in European Visual Culture, 1789–1914*, ed. by Heather Belnap Jensen and Temma Balducci (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 97–114 (p. 103).

her readers to spend less time thinking about their fashion choices and more about finding ways to help outside their homes.²¹

The fashion plates mirrored this advice in depicting women actively engaged in their communities. As De Young notes, fashion plates that previously showed elegantly clad women at social gatherings now took on the look of Realist paintings and offered a much more nuanced understanding of womanhood in the public eye. Unlike earlier, the women depicted in the fashion plates during the Franco-Prussian war were out in their communities, tending to the poor and the ailing. For instance, one fashion plate published in the December 1870 issue of *La Mode illustrée* shows two women in the home of a much poorer family, offering food and comfort to the mother and children who look hungry and in need of proper clothing. De Young writes

These sorts of anecdotal scenes of dedicated motherhood and beneficent bourgeois behaviour had never so explicitly featured in *La Mode illustrée's* plates. Indeed, the journals took pains to model positive feminine behaviour during the siege, including such charitable and patriotic scenes likely in part to justify its continuous publication during the war, for which it was criticized.²²

The French examples cited by De Young offer an interesting foil to the German examples found in *Der Bazar*. While the Berlin fashion press seemed to encourage more traditional and 'safe' ways for women to contribute — that is to say: within the home, as the aforementioned 'political fairy tale' emphasized — the French woman is depicted as taking action within her community. Looking at how the fashion press presented these gender-specific acts of patriotism offers us insight into how mainstream publications were treating the topic of war and women's roles during a time of conflict. De Young notes this shift in narrative in the fashion plates published in *La Mode illustrée*, arguing that

Whereas plates of the 1860s virtually always depicted women in walking dresses promenading in gardens, in the 1870s, the *bourgeoise* walks the streets of Paris [...] the visual and editorial discourse of the 1870s fashion journal becomes one of independence and autonomy; the chic Parisienne cannot be contained.²³

The German woman, by contrast, was urged to prove her worth within the more typically sanctioned space of the domestic realm. Hers was a role less drastically redefined. As is often the case, the losing party in a conflict tends to be the one to make more changes in the aftermath of war. Reparations have to be paid and greater losses in both resources and people dictate how closely the pre-war status quo can be maintained. While the Franco-Prussian war and the siege of Paris were undoubtedly traumatic events for the French people, the gains made were not entirely on the side of Prussia. In fact, it was perhaps this very trauma on a national level that allowed greater gender equality and more significant momentum for the French women's movement because French women had to step into traditionally male-dominated spaces and care for those needing help. In this way, the Franco-Prussian war may have been more beneficial to the French women's movement than it was for the German counterpart.

Noteworthy is that an article comparing the German woman to her French peer, published in the German *Der Bazar* in April of 1862, well before the war, painted a

21 De Young, p. 104.

22 De Young, p. 104.

23 De Young, pp. 109–10.

picture of the French woman as coquette and somewhat superficial in contrast to her more pragmatic and no-nonsense German foil. The article is signed simply with the initial 'E,' which begs the question whether Emmeline Raymond, editor of *La Mode illustrée*, and connoisseur of both French and German cultures and customs, did not contribute it. The article, titled 'Die Deutsche und Die Französin' ('The German woman and the French woman'), offers readers the following side-by-side comparison of French and German womanhood:

The French woman primps, the German woman dresses herself. The French woman glides, the German woman walks. The German woman is either beautiful or ugly, the French woman never decidedly one or the other, but always alluring. Whether calm or agitated, the German woman's eyes always look bright and honest, whereas the French woman's eyes flash lightning, always seemingly preoccupied with something other than what they are observing.²⁴

This reproduction of national stereotypes indicates that even at a time when the French and German magazines were looking to one another for inspiration and were participating in an international dialogue on fashion and gender roles (at this point, *La Mode illustrée* would have been in existence for two years and *Der Bazar* for seven), there were clear delineations based on national and regional identity. Even before the war, a sense of belonging to a national community with distinct features and characteristics permeated the popular press. Another question worth considering is whether this article would have reached a French audience and how that reader might have responded to it. By 1862, when this article was published, *Der Bazar* was already being translated into Spanish and French for international distribution.²⁵ The editors were aware that this type of discursive play with national identity might be met with varying degrees of understanding across its vast readership and allowed for an individual interpretation of the text rather than offering too heavy-handed of a moral. To wit, the article concludes with the charge: 'May each reader decide in her own heart how accurate this portrayal may be'.²⁶

The message of this particular article on gender as a national and cultural artifact suggests that the German woman is more grounded in her daily tasks and less preoccupied with the frivolities of appearances and fashion. The war, however, prompted a change to this narrative. In fact, it becomes the German woman's imperative and civic duty to delight in ostentatious fashion and conspicuous consumption during the war. The reasons offered are two-fold: first, the economy depends on this continued spending and investment in all sectors including garments, fashion, and domestic goods. Second, the visual and symbolic signalling of victory and triumph relies on the continued semblance of prosperity and levity in Prussia.

24 'Die Französin macht Toilette, die Deutsche kleidet sich. Die Französin schwebt, die Deutsche geht. Die Deutsche ist entweder schön oder häßlich, die Französin niemals entschieden das eine oder das andere, aber immer reizend. Ob ruhig oder erregt, blickt die Deutsche stets klar und ehrlich, die Augen der Französinen leuchten gleich Blitzen, sie scheinen stets noch mit einem andern Gegenstand beschäftigt, als dem, worauf sie gerichtet sind (102).' 'Die Deutsche und Die Französin', *Der Bazar* (April 1862), p. 102.

25 Andreas Graf, *Die Ursprünge der modernen Medienindustrie: Familien- und Unterhaltungszeitschriften der Kaiserzeit* (2007), www.zeitschriften.ablit.de/graf [accessed 4 December 2017], p. 42.

26 'möge jede unserer Leserinnen an ihrem eigenen Herzen die Richtigkeit oder Unrichtigkeit der hier aufgestellten Behauptung prüfen.' 'Die Deutsche und Die Französin', p. 102.

Conspicuous Consumption and Fashion during Wartime

As De Young noted in her analysis of war time fashion in *La Mode illustrée*, for the French illustrated press, the need arose to justify the printing of 'frivolous' content during a time of national conflict. Raymond, editor of *La Mode illustrée*, addressed this criticism, arguing that French women were to don their mourning attire and engage with their communities by lending a hand where possible.²⁷ In the introduction to this article, I raise the question of what remained uniquely German in the Berlin fashion press which, as demonstrated, operated on an international level with many ties to the French fashion world. Here we find one example showing how the German woman received a very different message during the Franco-Prussian war. Not only should she continue to delight in fashion and beautiful garments, it was indeed the German woman's civic responsibility to invest in German clothing and the German fashion industry overall.

In January 1871, in an instalment of the regularly published fashion column 'Die Mode', fashion correspondent Veronica von G. encouraged her readers to continue spending their wealth on fashion proposing that there would be no act more patriotic than that of welcoming home the victorious Prussian soldiers while wearing and displaying Prussia's finest and most celebratory of wares:

And when peace will come, will we not hear music from dusk till dawn, while festive lights shine through our windows in the evenings, and will we not dress ourselves for the occasion in our very finest in honour of our soldiers returning home?²⁸

Here we see how the sign-value of clothing was used to communicate to the returning soldiers that their nation was thriving thanks to their efforts. Indeed, the fashion plates found in the four issues printed in January 1871 belie the reality of the Franco-Prussian war. These images, unlike the ones described by De Young as featured in the Parisian *La Mode illustrée*, suggest little of the hardship experienced or the war traumas likely on the public's mind.

Similar in tone, an 1870 article titled 'Zur Modefrage' ('The Fashion Debate') makes the argument for supporting the fashion industry by offering a complex analysis of the market economy and the value in continuing international trade even during times of turmoil. To appease those concerned with helping the French and, in essence, their enemy's fashion and garment industry, the editors of *Der Bazar* write:

Following recent world events, we have heard from a number of voices asking us to discontinue our column entitled 'French Fashion'. We have heard from numerous sides arguing that we take this step in the name of patriotism.²⁹

By October 1870, we thus witness an explicit discussion of how the fashion world intersects with nation-building efforts and the crafting of a national identity through garments and material goods. In response to these presumed reader concerns, *Der Bazar* makes the following argument:

27 De Young, p. 104.

28 'Und wann es Friede geworden, wird nicht Musik ertönen von früh bis spät, und festlicher Lichterglanz allabendlich durch die Fenster fallen, und werden wir uns nicht schmücken, den Heimgekehrten zu Ehren aufs schönste schmücken?' 'Die Mode', *Der Bazar* (January 1871), p. 20.

29 'Es sind in Folge der jüngsten weltgeschichtlichen Ereignisse Stimmen laut geworden, welche die Abschaffung 'französischer Moden' fordern und von mehreren Seiten wird der Wunsch uns geäußert, daß wir im Namen des Patriotismus hiermit den Anfang machen möchten.' 'Zur Modefrage', *Der Bazar* (October 1870), p. 308.

Over the past quarter of a century, and since we have German fashion magazines, the face of fashion has changed. We *no longer have French fashion*, we have a *European* fashion. Berlin and Vienna, London and Paris, Petersburg and Pest, they are all contributing to one fashion industry that shows the traces of all these cultures. Paris gains just as much from Berlin and Vienna as the latter do from the former. We will return to this topic in future articles.³⁰

The solution, according to the magazine's editors, is not the outright rejection of French goods and internationally sourced designs. On the contrary, *Der Bazar* states that there is no such thing as *national* fashion — a decided departure from eighteenth-century beliefs and practices and the lingering sentiments following the strict dress codes of sumptuary laws. No longer French, German, Russian, or British, fashion in the late nineteenth century, according to *Der Bazar*, has become European. The aforementioned article goes on to dispute the belief that the consumer can or should identify a locus of origin for their wares. Rather, *Der Bazar* makes an argument for viewing all European nations as contributors to a new 'European' fashion world, and by extension, European identity. The French and German styles that previously played the important role of communicating class, nationality, and patriotism are stripped of their previous sign-value and made 'neutral' for the purpose of creating a unified consumer culture that is, at a time of war, encouraged to act as if blind to geopolitical borders.

The editors of *Der Bazar*, however, appear careful about this line of reasoning and employ a second type of argumentation to support their claims. Adopting a more economy- and finance-based line of reasoning, the article continues with the following passage:

At this time, while so many of our soldiers are being killed on the warfront by the French army, while France so carelessly moves in on our land, we are hearing from many the call to reject all French goods and for the press to take a strong stance on boycotting the French fashion industry. We are being asked to support our own domestic industries and our own German workers. We are being asked to free Germany from the clutches of French trends.³¹

What we witness in the German illustrated press during the Franco-Prussian war is a struggle to maintain a loyal and patriotic tone during a time of national conflict while also balancing the needs of an entire industry that grew to rely on international communication and trade. In defiant resistance, the fashion industry as presented in these texts and the popular press is seen as holding firm to its international practices.

Investing in clothing was to invest in a national economy and to don a look that was easily recognized as a desirable international aesthetic. It also signaled the kind of conspicuous spending power afforded to those in thriving, victorious countries. The fashion press not only made these connections clear to its readership but also used its

30 'Seit einem Vierteljahrhundert, und namentlich seitdem wir deutsche Modezeitungen haben, *gibt es keine französische Mode mehr*, sondern nur noch eine *europäische*. Berlin und Wien, London und Paris, Petersburg und Pest schaffen eigene Moden — und die allgemeine Mode trägt sozusagen die Züge dieser aller. Paris erlernt ebenso gut von Berlin und Wien, wie diese von jenem. Wir werden auf dies Thema in verschiedenen Artikeln noch ausführlicher zurückkommen.' 'Die Deutsche und Die Französin', p. 308 (emphasis in original).

31 'In dem gegenwärtigen Augenblicke, da der heiße Kampf auf dem Schlachtfelde Tausende der Unrigen vernichtet, und Frankreich rücksichtslos alle Deutschen des Landes verweist, begegnen wir vielfach in der Presse öffentlichen Aufrufen, welche das deutsche Volk auffordern, künftig allen französischen Industrie- und Modeerzeugnissen den Krieg zu erklären, um durch ihren Ausschuß von unserm Markt die inländische Production, die nationale Arbeit zu befördern und Deutschland von der Vormundschaft des französischen Geschmacks zu befreien.' 'Die Deutsche und Die Französin', p. 308.

influence to sway the behaviour of those with disposable income, even during a time of resource shortage, in a direction that benefited the industry. Articles and images in *Der Bazar* were, however, not limited to discussions only aimed to benefit the economy and address women in their role as conspicuous consumers. The journal also printed texts arguing for social change and greater gender equality, precisely because a time of war allowed for the reconsideration of past beliefs and the status quo.

The New Woman Emerging from Wartime

As noted, the illustrated fashion press engaged with topics beyond fashion and style at face value. Beyond the complex and shifting language of clothing that symbolized national identity and allegiance, the fashion press also offered texts and illustrations that engaged with women's roles outside of their status as consumer. To that end, an October 1870 article in *Der Bazar* calls into question the limited access to medical training available to women. In *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century*, James Albisetti argues that eighteenth-century Kantian thinking still dominated the discourse on women's education throughout the nineteenth century in the German-speaking world. The idea of women learning a trade or pursuing higher education was not only considered counterproductive to men's and women's intended roles but also as unlikely to be successful. In his 1786 work *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, Immanuel Kant writes:

Laborious learning or painful pondering, even if a woman should greatly succeed in it, destroy the merits that are proper to her sex, and because of their rarity they can make of her an object of cold admiration; but at the same time they will weaken the charms with which she exercises her great power over the other sex.³²

A woman engaging in matters of the mind was warned about the dangers of 'painful pondering' and the stigma of being 'bookish', these concepts still loomed large a century later as many women writers still used pseudonyms in order to avoid the stigmas associated with being a 'bluestocking'.³³ Albisetti writes that beginning with the 1860s, education reform was at the forefront of the women's movement and I argue here that echoes of that movement can be traced in articles such as 'Frauen als Ärzte' ('Women as Doctors') in the illustrated fashion press, which is not a space generally associated with the women's movement.³⁴ In this particular *Der Bazar* text published in October 1870, the editors lend support to female doctors by highlighting well-known success stories from the past. Whether as midwives, 'witches', mothers, or caregivers, women are depicted as having a long history in medicine:

Germany had a female doctor in as early as 1699, namely Elizabeth Knillen, who is reported to have had great knowledge of medicine and chemistry and who is known for having written several works on hygiene. In our current century, Lady Siebold is known for being the first female doctor to graduate from a German university, namely the University of Giessen, with the title of Doctor. Her daughter

32 Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, trans. by John T. Goldthwait (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1960), p. 78.

33 Kant, p. 83.

34 James Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. xiii.

Marianne, later known as Dr Heidenreich, studied in both Göttingen and Giessen, completing medical school and earning her doctorate in 1817.³⁵

The text goes on to include examples from British, French, and Russian histories. Finally, a report is offered from Boston, where the journal's correspondent sends word of a medical program 'which is governed entirely by women'.³⁶ Thus, nestled between reports on silks and satins we find these carefully crafted arguments about women's contributions to society, medicine, education, and literature.

What makes them especially worthy of our scholarly attention today is that these journals still operated as traditional fashion periodicals, thus eschewing critical governance and meeting with mainstream approval as appropriate reading material for the 'proper' European woman. In that capacity, they reached a vast domestic and international readership from both urban and rural backgrounds and all across the socioeconomic spectrum. We know that mass-produced periodicals that were less expensive to purchase than traditional hardbound novels were also more likely to be passed from hand to hand. As William St Clair argues in *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, it is much more difficult to trace the reception of canonical texts at the time of their publication. The popular press, by comparison, relied on that immediate consumption and distribution as the content within was only relevant until the next issue came to print. This is especially true of a fashion press that by nature is meant to be consumed in the short term.

Conclusion

In *Women Write Back: Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture, 1790–1805*, Stephanie Hilger stresses the importance of rediscovering and redistributing the works of women writers of centuries past. Hilger names several reasons in support of studying overlooked women's texts. Among those, two resonate particularly well with this study; first, women's texts provide another perspective on a given intellectual and political moment, which is also the argument put forth by Offen and Lenz, used in my introduction to ground my work within a broader feminist and literary context. Secondly, Hilger invokes the argument of a more equitable and inclusive canon construction. According to Hilger, (post)feminists should strive to combat the 'nonchalant attitude toward past, present, and future feminist work'.³⁷ She cites Sharon Marcus, who argues that

When there are no women writers on the syllabus, or fewer than there should be, the message is that women's writing is less valuable than men's, that women, by extension, are worth less than men and that female students will be valued only if they devote themselves to what really counts — the masterworks of genius that too many syllabi still assert to be male handiwork.³⁸

35 'Deutschland hatte schon im Jahre 1699 einen weiblichen Artzt, Elizabeth Knillen, von welcher berichtet wird, daß sie große Kentnisse in Medicin und Chemie gehabt, auch mehrere hygienische Werke verfaßt habe. In unserem Jahrhundert war wohl Frau von Siebold die Erste, welche von einer deutschen Universität und zwar von Gießen zum Ehrendoctor ernannt wurde. Ihre Tochter Marianne, nachherige Frau Dr. Heidenreich, studierte in Göttingen und Gießen, machte hier den wollständigen medicinischen Kursus durch und erwarb den Doctorgrad im Jahre 1817.' 'Frauen als Ärzte', *Der Bazar* (October 1870), p. 310.

36 'dessen Verwaltung ausschließlich in den Händen von Frauen ist'. 'Frauen als Ärzte', p. 310.

37 Stephanie Hilger, *Women Write Back: Strategies of Response and the Dynamics of European Literary Culture, 1790–1805* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), p. 25.

38 Hilger, p. 26.

Hilger, who wrote this in 2009, focused primarily on the greater inclusion of women's works in syllabi and curriculum construction. Writing in 2017, I argue that we have an additional, related reason for including these texts into studies of the past. We have reached a new chapter in the Humanities with a focus on digitizing past works and creating electronic archives that serve as the libraries for future generations. We are thus establishing new canons that similarly signal whose voices are worth preserving. Lenz writes that, 'discourses about the past serve to build and stabilize identities, both for individuals and for collectives'.³⁹ As we continue to create these identities, both for the past and future generations, it is imperative that we do so in a way that strives to include the stories and experiences of those beyond the privileged and empowered few.

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