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**Between Commodification and Emancipation:  
Image Formation of the New Woman through the Illustrated Magazine  
of the Weimar Republic**

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Martha B. Helfer

And

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Image Formation of the New Woman through the Illustrated Magazine  
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This dissertation investigates the conflict between the powerful emancipatory image of the New Woman as represented in the illustrated magazines of the Weimar Republic and the translation of this image into a lifestyle acted out by women during this era. I argue that while female journalists promote the image of the New Woman in illustrated magazines as a liberating opening onto self-determination and self-management, this very image is simultaneously and paradoxically oppressive. For women to shake off the inheritance of a patriarchal past, they must learn to adjust to a new identity, one that is still to a large extent influenced by and in the service of men.

The ideal beauty image designed by female journalists as a framework for emancipation in actuality turned into an oppressive normalization in professional and social markets in which traditional rules no longer obtained. Women enjoyed the sexual

liberation the New Woman's image proffered. Yet, at the same time, they struggled to adjust to the image the media promoted – in particular to the demands of a perfect body and a blemish-free surface. Through an analysis of the contributions of female authors to the popular illustrated magazines of the Weimar Republic and the literary texts of these same authors, I draw out the subtleties of the identity struggle the New Woman endured. The authors I consider were themselves torn between the demands of the largely masculine publishing house Ullstein and their personal interests as female authors. While Ullstein asked its authors to retail the New Woman image and sell themselves as authentic New Women, Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus and Irmgard Keun nonetheless took a critical position toward this very image in their works. This complication informs my reading of Irmgard Keun's Gilgi-eine von uns (1930) and Das kunstseidene Mädchen (1932), Vicki Baum's Pariser Platz 13 (1930), and Gina Kaus's novel Die Verliebten (1929). These texts show a deep ambivalence about the representation of women in the Ullstein magazines *Uhu*, *Die Dame* and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. While the image of the New Woman is constructed in these illustrated magazines, its feasibility is problematized in the literary works of the female writers I consider in this dissertation.



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## Introduction

*Selbstbewußt ist die Frau aus dem Schatten des Mannes herausgetreten und hat sich kameradschaftlich neben ihn gestellt. Sie gibt dem Leben der zwanziger Jahre unverwechselbare Konturen und Farben, gestaltet kräftig mit und bleibt dennoch in den traditionellen Rollen, den alten Fesseln verstrickt.<sup>1</sup>*

This dissertation investigates the conflict between the powerful emancipatory image of the New Woman as represented in the illustrated magazines of the Weimar Republic and the translation of this image into a lifestyle acted out by women during this era. I argue that while female journalists promote the image of the New Woman in illustrated magazines as a liberating opening onto self-determination and self-management, this very image is simultaneously and paradoxically oppressive. For women to shake off the inheritance of a patriarchal past, they must learn to adjust to a new identity, one that is still to a large extent influenced by and in the service of men.

The ideal beauty image designed by female journalists as a framework for emancipation in actuality turned into an oppressive normalization in professional and social markets in which traditional rules no longer obtained. Women enjoyed the sexual liberation the New Woman's image proffered. Yet, at the same time, they struggled to adjust to the image the media promoted – in particular to the demands of a perfect body and a blemish-free surface. Through an analysis of the contributions of female authors to the popular illustrated magazines of the Weimar Republic and the literary texts of these same authors, I draw out the subtleties of the identity struggle the New Woman endured.

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<sup>1</sup> Vollmer, Hartmut. Liebes(ver)lust. Existenzsuche und Beziehungen von Männern und Frauen in deutschsprachigen Romanen der zwanziger Jahre. Erzählte Krisen -- Krisen des Erzählens. Oldenburg: Igel. 1998. 30.

The authors I consider were themselves torn between the demands of the largely masculine publishing house Ullstein and their personal interests as female authors. While Ullstein asked its authors to retail the New Woman image and sell themselves as authentic New Women, Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus and Irmgard Keun nonetheless took a critical position toward this very image in their works. This complication informs my reading of Irmgard Keun's Gilgi-eine von uns (1930) and Das kunstseidene Mädchen (1932), Vicki Baum's Pariser Platz 13 (1930), and Gina Kaus's novel Die Verliebten (1929). These texts show a deep ambivalence about the representation of women in the Ullstein magazines *Uhu*, *Die Dame* and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. While the image of the New Woman is constructed in these illustrated magazines, its feasibility is problematized in the literary works of the female writers I consider in this dissertation.

### **Defining the New Woman**

The phenomenon of the "New Woman" was a widespread concept at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Western Europe, as well as in the United States, women fought for their emancipation, and the New Woman was one outcome of this struggle.<sup>2</sup> Historian Ute Frevert explains that "the feminization of white-collar work was the 'beginning of the real emancipation of women'" (177).<sup>3</sup> Within German speaking countries, the concept of the New Woman is limited to the Weimar Republic. This suggests that World War I offered the necessary conditions of possibility for women's

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<sup>2</sup> For further information on the concept of the New Woman in the United States see Matthews, Jean V. The Rise of the New Woman. The Women's Movement in America. 1875-1930. Ivan R. Dee. Chicago. 2003. For the New Woman in England, see: Richardson, Angelique, and Willis, Chris. The New Woman in Fiction and Fact. Fin-de-Siecle Feminisms. Palgrave. 2007.

<sup>3</sup> Frevert, Ute. Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation. Berg Publishers, 1990. 177.

liberation and made the rise of the New Woman possible. In contrast, World War II strictly enforced a maternal, traditional image of women, and thereby terminated the era of the New Women in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

A substantial change in women's lifestyle and their role in society encouraged the development of the image of the New Woman. The women's movement of the late 1800s fought for more legal rights for women.<sup>5</sup> Before 1908 women were not allowed to attend political gatherings; this changed when women were admitted to parties with equal rights (Frevert 139). In 1908 women were granted access to higher education at universities, and in 1918 they received the right to vote (Bridenthal et al. 10; Frevert 169; Pänke 368).<sup>6</sup> World War I made it necessary for women to work outside the home to keep their families alive while the men went to the war front. After the war ended, many women remained employed, many of them becoming part of the newly established pink-collar

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<sup>4</sup> The historian Ute Frevert argues that the increase of female labor force during WWI did not show an extraordinary rapid growth during that time but followed a steady trend that had begun in the late nineteenth century. The important change is the shift or relocation of women's work from textile, clothing and footwear industries to essential industries (155-7).

<sup>5</sup> The historians Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan explain in their book When Biology Became Destiny. Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany that the women's movement split 1894 into two class distinctive groups that had differing goals and aims. The socialists saw "productive labor as a path to women's emancipation," while the middle class "wanted higher education and careers for women" (2). "In that year (1894), a bourgeois wing, led by Helene Lange (and later Gertrud Bäumer) consolidated itself into the Federation of German Women's Associations (Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine; BDF). A proletarian women's movement, led by Clara Zetkin, was organized under the aegis of the Social Democratic Party. [...] Both movements shared a commitment to women's traditional roles in the family and to ideals of female duty, service, and self-sacrifice. Their feminism, like that of women in most other nations, was time and culture-bound. It consisted of an amalgam of women-oriented concerns, internalized patriarchal values, and a peculiarly German deference to the whole community, whether perceived as the class or the nation" (1-2). Bridenthal, Renate, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan. When Biology Became Destiny. Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984.

<sup>6</sup> Pänke, Hedda. "Frauen als Mitarbeiter und Leser." Hundert Jahre Ullstein. 1877-1977. Ed. W. Joachim Freyburg and Hans Wallenberg. Berlin; Frankfurt am Main; Wien: Ullstein, 1977. 367-87.



group of workers.<sup>7</sup> The bureaucracy of the growing cities and the growth of consumerism and department stores required women who would work as secretaries and shop girls.

“While men saw it as an affront to their dignity if they had to stoop so low as to become typists, women seemed to be blessed with a certain aptitude for the keyboard,” which is to say that woman filled a space that men could not or would not occupy (Frevert 178).

The result was that for the first time women had their own money to spend, and could be financially independent of men – a fact that added to the establishment of a consumer culture.

Nevertheless, this change in lifestyle introduced a double burden for women. As Falk has noted: “Sexismus am Arbeitsplatz und Doppelbelastung gehören ebenfalls zu den neuen Erfahrungen. Der für die Frauen bis heute ungelöste Konflikt zwischen Berufstätigkeit und Mutterschaft entsteht zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte für einen großen Teil der Frauen” (Falk 167).<sup>8</sup> The liberation of women from masculine domination in marriage and society did not release women from their role as mothers and few structures were in place to allow women to do both. In short, Weimar society was not prepared to accommodate the female needs of having both a career and a baby.

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<sup>7</sup> Katharina von Ankum elaborates on the configuration of the group of pink-collar workers. They were women from the middle class who had previously not suffered from financial distress, and lower class servant girls who lost their positions due to the middle class’ increasing inability to afford such paid labor. “The increase in the numbers of Angestellte from 6.5% to 12.6% between 1907-1925 was the consequence of two developments: the economic decline of the middle-class resulting from inflation and the accelerated rationalization in German industry after World War I. The former released into the work force a large number of women who had not been engaged in paid labor previously. The latter displaced many from their traditional employment in households and agriculture while creating new positions in business and retail that were considered suitable for women” (von Ankum 1995:180).

<sup>8</sup> Falk, Sabine. “Aufbruch und Stagnation: Zum Frauenbild der 20er und 30er Jahre und seiner literarischen Bearbeitung durch Irmgard Keun.” Frauenalltag, Frauenforschung: Beiträge zur 2. Tagung der Kommission Frauenforschung in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Volkskunde, Freiburg 22.-25. Mai 1988 (1988): 165-170.

Therefore, many women chose not to marry and also not to have babies, preferring to keep the freedom they had just gained.<sup>9</sup> As Mary Ann Doane argues, the women who chose not to marry became associated with the image of the femme fatale who “is represented as the antithesis of the maternal – sterile or barren, she produces nothing in a society which fetishizes production” (Doane 2).<sup>10</sup> The reduction of women concentrating on their own pleasure and catering to the self instead of doing what had heretofore appeared “natural” can be observed in the New Woman. However, the rejection of motherhood does not indicate that these women did not “produce” anything or contribute to a changing society. In fact, many women writers were very much engaged in giving birth to the image of the New Woman in the illustrated press of the time. This form of work resembles a distinct non-biological motherhood: these women created a new image of woman and her possibilities that functioned as an education for the female readers who absorbed and imitated the lifestyles presented in the magazines.

The social shifts in women’s lives both reflected and promoted a change in their appearance. Women stripped off the confining fashion of the corset and cut their hair.

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<sup>9</sup> “Die Abhängigkeit vom Manne, in welche die Frau um ihrer generativen Aufgabe willen gesetzt war”, vertrage “sich nicht mehr mit den Ansprüchen der Persönlichkeit”, betonte Rosa Mayreder, “viele wirtschaftlich selbständige Frauen vermeiden deshalb die Ehe und ziehen es vor, das einem freien Verhältnis entsprossene Kind vermöge eigener wirtschaftlicher Leistung aufzuziehen” (Mayreder ctd. in Vollmer 1998: 59). That means if there was a child, women felt solely responsible and tried to raise the child alone because they were making money. Regulations about child support were instated only at a later point.

Katharina von Ankum explains that the bourgeois feminist movement created the idea of a “spiritual motherhood” in the 1890s. But this “politics of motherliness” went against the emancipation of the androgynous “New Woman.” “Public interest in reproductive issues was far less an expression of new morality or solidarity with women than the result of a perceived need to channel female sexuality into forms where it could best be functionalized” (von Ankum 1995: 172).

<sup>10</sup> Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes Fatales*. Routledge, 1991.

The New Woman was athletic, body conscious, and emulated by degrees a youthful masculinity. On the one hand, women wanted to participate in the emergence of a body culture which sought to establish a healthy lifestyle for a society that became more and more sedentary.<sup>11</sup> In order to engage in these athletic activities women needed more flexible clothing; skirts gradually shortened to knee length and blouses became increasingly sleeveless.<sup>12</sup> This style of clothing in turn required women to work out in order to fit into this attire and adapt to an aesthetic of the skinny, flat-chested girl type promoted by the media. On the other hand, the fashion for women became more androgynous and masculine because women hoped that through an approximation of men on the surface they would also gain more power, respect, and rights in their male-dominated society. The idea here is that a changing surface would penetrate to deeper levels, engendering substantial reforms in the lifestyle of women.

Some scholars ascribe the New Woman's influence to a mere media existence; one that just "hints" at the complicated changes in the working woman's life and process of emancipation. For example, Marsha Meskimmon labels the New Woman as "first and foremost an icon of her time, and the imagery associated with this type, even when mere media hype, always hinted at the complexities and contradictions surrounding women's emancipation in the inter-war years" (Meskimmon 163).<sup>13</sup> However, I will show in my

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<sup>11</sup> For a detailed description of this body culture please see Hau, Michael. The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany: A Social History, 1890-1930. University of Chicago Press. 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Mila Ganeva offers with her book Women in Weimar Fashion a detailed analysis of the fashions available to women in the Weimar Republic, as well as the implications these fashions had on women's lifestyles. She furthermore investigates fashion journalism in the Ullstein magazines as an active participation of women in the shaping of the modern experience in the Weimar Republic, and as a tool for women's self-realization.

<sup>13</sup> Meskimmon, Marsha. We weren't modern enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism. 1st ed. University of California Press, 1999.

dissertation that the female writers I consider did much more than just “hint” at their identity struggle. The illustrated magazines taken in tandem with these women’s literary texts become a battleground where women struggle with their status as New Women—torn between the imperative of being modern and behaviors that were nonetheless still expected and anticipated by men. This struggle between modern and traditional roles, between aspirations and reality is summarized by Renate Bridenthal, who writes:

The ‘new women’ – who voted, used contraception, obtained illegal abortions, and earned wages – were more than a bohemian minority or an artistic convention. They existed in office and factory, bedroom and kitchen, just as surely as – and more significantly than – in café and cabaret. Their confrontation with the rationalized workplace, their heightened visibility in public places, and their changing sexual and procreative options preoccupied population experts and sex reformers (Bridenthal et al. 11).

It is important to stress that definitions of the New Woman are manifold and require a multifaceted approach.

The New Woman’s image keeps shifting in a dynamic interaction between image and reality, mythology and everyday life. Maud Lavin suggests keeping its definition fluid by arguing that the New Woman’s image is fragmented. No matter how one tries to define her, the definition will always be unsatisfactory, twisted and lacking information. Lavin’s position is informed by Hannah Höch’s photomontages: “Any attempt to derive a uniform definition of the New Woman, therefore, results in a disjointed composition of ill-fitting representational fragments. And, in fact, to consider the New Woman as a montage, a juxtaposition of allegorical fragments, is to capture perfectly the uneasy

alliance of women with modernity in twenties Germany” (Lavin 4).<sup>14</sup> My research confirms this position in so far as the image of the New Woman is in constant flux. In opposition to a stereotypical image of the housewife, the New Woman is a framework that allows its consumers to project their own personalities into this image, as well as to choose the best characteristics of this image that fits the female consumer who aims for imitating.

The idea of the New Woman became a focus for male anxiety and disappointment. She was appropriated by men as a scapegoat for a crumbling patriarchal power system, and the turmoil of a struggling Republic.<sup>15</sup> Richard McCormick and Mary Ann Doane elaborate this position by explaining that the image of the emancipated New Woman caused “castration anxieties” in men, who felt robbed of their dominant position in a vanished patriarchic monarchy.<sup>16</sup> Men believed that the loss of this stable system was caused by the lost war, a failure brought about by women at the home front. This legend

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<sup>14</sup> Lavin, Maud. Cut with the Kitchen Knife. the Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Höch. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> Atina Grossmann describes the New Woman as “a much abused and conflated image of the flapper, young stenographer, typist, and working mother, a symbol of actual social and demographic changes in Germany during and after World War I” (Grossmann 155). Grossmann, Atina. “The New Woman and the Rationalization of Sexuality in Weimar Germany.” In Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality. Ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson. New York: Monthly Review Press. 1983. 153-71.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Ann Doane writes in her book Femme Fatales: “The femme fatale is an articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and centrality of the self, the “I,” the ego. These anxieties appear quite explicitly in the process of her representation as castration anxiety” (Doane 2). Richard McCormick maintains: “One might even label the male anxieties in Weimar culture a ‘discourse of castration.’ I mean this term in a broad, evocative, even hyperbolic sense, figuratively and not literally, in order to specify a complex of anxieties around loss of power, control, and mastery – ultimately issues of social, political, and economic power, not sexuality, yet often as not discursively represented as a type of castration. What do these mainly social anxieties have to do with men’s sexual fears? In them sexual potency and sexual identity are confused with power over women and social power in general (the power over anyone seen as ‘less’ than masculine). Related to this confusion is the tendency to blame women for any lack of social power experienced by men” (McCormick 21).

is also known as “die Dolchstosslegende.”<sup>17</sup> Disabled and mutilated, men became suspicious of women who remained unharmed throughout the war, and even profited from the men’s loss of power. In her book Lustmord, Maria Tatar analyzes how this misconception and blaming of women led to misogynistic tendencies and latent, vengeful desires to harm women. Tatar finds support for her claims in drawings and paintings of men who depict a sexualized act of murder.<sup>18</sup>

In my dissertation I propose to investigate the dynamic interaction of the different, often fluid roles of the New Woman: as performers and receivers. I argue that there are performers (the female journalists under consideration in this dissertation as well as the protagonists they create in their literary texts; the beauty salon entrepreneur Helen Boss, and the stage actress Gabriele) and the receivers who try to imitate (female readers of the illustrated magazine, as well as Irmgard Keun, who was not involved with the press, and also her protagonists who aim for the ideal image they see in the media). The receivers want to become performers because these New Women’s lives seem to be glamorous and happy and independent (such was its presentation in the press). Rarely do we look behind the curtain of these performed lives that are equally controlled by men and cause women a lot of misery. Yet there are hints of this condition in the magazines —Yva’s photo story “Kätchen Lampe,” which I discuss in the first chapter as such an

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<sup>17</sup> “According to this myth, the war was lost on the home front, rather than by the army, because of subversion by Jews, Communists, Social Democrats – and also women” (Bridenthal, Renate et al. 7).

<sup>18</sup> Maria Tatar explains: “That fantasies of sexual assault on women might be driven by the combination of resentment, self-doubt, and vulnerability experienced by several generations of German men seems almost inevitable in the context of the asymmetrical effect of the war on men and women. The amputees everywhere testified to the brutalization of men’s bodies in the theaters of war. Women, who had escaped the shells and shrapnel of the trenches and survived the war with bodies intact, could easily slide into the role of a covert enemy, one that had cheered them on and had thereby become complicit in plunging them into physically devastating military combat” (Tatar 12). Tatar, Maria. Lustmord. Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995.

example that wants to expose the oppression inflicted by the image of the New Woman and the psychological stress that comes with it.<sup>19</sup> The discrepancy between the performed image and the inner struggle is laid out in great detail in the novels and plays of Irmgard Keun, Gina Kaus and Vicki Baum, dramatizing, and by extension highlighting each woman's vexed position as both producer and consumer, performer and receiver, of this complex new set of possibilities for a New Woman.

### **The Illustrated Magazine**

The definition of the New Woman relies largely on the illustrated magazine of the Weimar Republic, which survived World War II as authentic documentation of the hopes, dreams, and aspirations of a generation of women who profited from and were exploited by a mass media market.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Clutching her [Flämmchen from Baum's novel *Menschen im Hotel*] typewriter, she rushes from job to job to earn money for clothes and make-up to attract a man who might liberate her from her treadmill" (Boa 127). The performance of the New Woman has a social aspect in which women try through the look of the New Woman and the exposure to men in their jobs to find a better-off husband and climb the social ladder.

<sup>20</sup> The circulation numbers for the magazines I consider are as follows: *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* 1,140,120, *Die Dame* 32,870 and *Uhu* 89, 870 surveyed as the averages of July, August and September 1933 (Freyburg 256).

Eva Noack-Mosse provides more circulation numbers for the *Uhu*: June 1926: 168.000; July 1928: 180.000; July 1929: 207.000; peak numbers in October 1929: 211.000; October 1932: 136.000; and April 1933: 111.000 (Noack-Mosse 186).

"In 1926, Ullstein Verlag began to publish its circulation figures for its advertisers; this publication, called Ullstein Berichte, was an early example of self-promotion through reporting of notarized circulation levels. In a full-page ad for *Die Dame* on September 6, 1926, the Berichte emphasized the importance of female readers as buyers, explaining that not only were women responsible for the daily shopping, but they also gave advice to men on their personal purchases, and in general had the last word on all buying decisions. As the Berichte reported in January 1927, Ullstein circulation levels ranged from the ever-popular *BIZ* (1,563, 880), to the housewife's *Blatt der Hausfrau* (146,400), to the witty, urbane *Uhu* (170,360), to the elite cultural journal *Querschnitt* (13,000)" (Lavin 55-56). "Approximately half the income generated by *BIZ* came from ads (the rest derived from newspaper sales), usually for cosmetics, food, cigarettes, automobiles, and toiletries" (Lavin 56).

Even though the illustrated magazine might not accurately or realistically reflect the lives of women in the Weimar Republic, it nevertheless depicts their fantasies and ambitions. Being surrounded by the image of the New Woman reinforces this ideal, and hence it becomes part of the everyday woman's reality and a product of desire, creating the need to aspire to the new norm. This is to say that the illustrated magazine enables women's engagement with the New Woman's image, allowing her to identify with and copy this image. I draw here from Virginia Postrel's ideas about fashion in her book The Substance of Style.<sup>21</sup>

By making fashionable clothes available to people who a generation earlier would have had no such choice, the apparel industry increased not just pleasure but aspiration. And with aspiration came, inevitably, the disappointment of limits. In industrialized countries, working women had access to new forms of self-expression and adornment, the sorts of aesthetic pleasures once reserved for the social elite. But [...] they would also ache for the unattainable (Postrel 86).

Postrel's emphasis on availability indicates that if fashion or magazines are readily obtainable they will find acceptance with the customer who lives in a media-driven society that tries to alter peoples' consumer behavior and appearance. Fashion and the media go hand and hand, catering to each other by evoking needs that are reinforced by what people see in their surroundings.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Postrel, Virginia. The Substance of Style. How the Rise of Aesthetic Value is Remaking Commerce, Culture and Consciousness. New York: Harper Collins, 2004.

<sup>22</sup> The idea that mass media markets have the power to create new needs in people has been proposed by the Frankfurt School. Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer write in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: "The stronger the positions of the culture industry become, the more summarily it can deal with consumers' needs, producing them, controlling them, disciplining them, and even withdrawing amusement: no limits are set to cultural progress of this kind" (Horkheimer and Adorno 144). While I agree with their argument that consumer needs are essentially driven by producers, which in my subject matter makes the spread of the New Woman's image possible, I disagree with their negative evaluation of this circumstance. In the case of the New Woman this effect advanced women's emancipation.



One of the media tycoons of the 1920s who created and catered to the population's needs for news and images was the Ullstein publishing house, a family enterprise that was taken over by the Nazis during the Third Reich. The Ullstein publishing house was led by the powerful Ullstein brothers, with Hermann Ullstein in charge of the magazines. Although they tried to refrain from political statements, the magazines promoted women's equality with men. "Von Anfang an räumte der Ullstein-Verlag dem Themenkreis Gleichberechtigung der Frau relativ breiten Raum in seinen Blättern ein" (Pänke 370). Ullstein put this agenda into action by hiring many female journalists to participate in the creation of illustrated magazines that would appeal especially to female readers. "Damals gab es in Deutschland keine einzige Zeitschrift für die gehobene Gesellschaft, wie zum Beispiel in England längst üblich. Das gab dann schließlich den Ausschlag: Man setzte sich zusammen, entwarf ein Konzept: ‚Die Dame‘ war geboren. In diesen, speziell auf die Frauen zugeschnittenen Zeitschriften arbeiteten von Anfang an Frauen in führenden Positionen" (Pänke 374). Obviously, the Ullstein Verlag provided a space for women to actively engage in the creation of the New Woman's image. "Hermann Ullstein als Verleger und Kurt Szafranski als Direktor der Zeitschriftenabteilung waren für das neue Produkt des Verlages verantwortlich, aber sie ließen den Redakteuren freie Hand, nachdem die Grundkonzeption einmal feststand und griffen nur dann ein, wenn sie es für absolut nötig hielten" (Noack-Mosse 187).<sup>23</sup> The framework for each magazine's tone and message was set by the leading men; hence the image of the New Woman was in a general way controlled by men. However, female journalists had a lot of freedom and room to fill out this framework with their own ideas.

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<sup>23</sup> Noack-Mosse, Eva. "Uhu." Hundert Jahre Ullstein. 1877-1977. Ed. W. Joachim Freyburg and Hans Wallenberg. Berlin; Frankfurt am Main; Wien: Ullstein, 1977. 177-207.

A brief overview of the three magazines under consideration in this dissertation will be helpful here. The decision to analyze *Uhu*, *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, and *Die Dame* was informed by the plentiful presence of texts by the female authors Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus in these magazines.<sup>24</sup> They became “Sprungbretter[...] für weibliche Talente”(Pänke 376). Many of these authors’ books were first published as serialized novels in these magazines. While Kaus’s novel Morgen um Neun appeared for the first time in *Die Dame*, Baum’s novels Feme and Stud. Chem. Helene Willfüer were published in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. These magazines prove increasingly important to Irmgard Keun’s novels. She draws from the advertisements in these publications by placing brand-name products into her narratives, and thereby has her protagonists engage with the contemporary media culture. In addition the *Uhu* is specifically mentioned as one of Keun’s protagonist’s favorite magazines.

## **Uhu**

The magazine *Uhu* was supposed to be “dick wie ein Buch, gescheit und amüsant, voll guter Laune und Lebensfreude” (Noack-Mosse 181). The concept for the *Uhu* was to reach a broad audience. The physical size of the magazine was innovative: only 17.5 by 24 cm, it could easily fit into a man’s coat pocket or a woman’s handbag. In the span of the magazine’s existence, 1924 -1934, it assembled an amazing group of writers. For example, Walter Benjamin, Bert Brecht, Hermann Hesse, Erich Kästner, Else Lasker –

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<sup>24</sup> My choice to analyze Ullstein publications exclusively was informed by the fact that Ullstein was the largest publishing house during the Weimar Republic, and also the most influential. I have researched a few issues of magazines from the Mosse and Scherl publishing houses, which did not show substantial differences. Much more I found similarities in content and layout that exhibit common standards in the bourgeois popular magazines from different publishers. Moreover, the fact that all publishers could draw images from the same picture companies led to the publication of the same photograph in various magazines, and therefore the assimilation of these publications in style (Hardt 2000:71).

Schüler, Heinrich and Thomas Mann all contributed to this publication (Noack-Mosse 185). The *Uhu* magazine's readership was not limited to any particular group of professions. The magazine was widely read by workers, white-collar workers, physicians, students, housewives and craftsmen (Noack-Mosse 199).

### **Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung**

The *BIZ* was the most popular weekly magazine. It perfected the installment novel – the “Herzstück” of the *BIZ*—and enticed the readers to buy the magazine with a single image that covered the entire front page (Luft 94; 91, 93).<sup>25</sup> As soon as it became possible, the *BIZ* integrated photography throughout its pages. Important contributions came from Ricarda Huch, Arthur Schnitzler, Carl Zuckmayer, Hans Fallada, Clara Viebig and Vicki Baum. To boost the steadily increasing circulation of the *BIZ*, which reached its peak in 1931 with 2,000,000 readers, Leopold Ullstein found a way to bypass the law that magazines could only be sold through subscriptions. Selling single issues on the streets of any magazine was prohibited until 1904 (Luft 112). “Er [Leopold Ullstein] wußte, daß der “kleine Mann”, für den er diese Bilder – Zeitung machen wollte, sich kaum dazu überreden lassen würde, ein schweres Fünf – Mark – Stück beim Buchhändler für eine Ware auf den Tisch zu legen, die er erst im Verlauf der kommenden zwölf Monate erhalten sollte. [...] Der Groschen an jedem Donnerstag tat dem Leser nicht weh” (Luft 112). The *BIZ*, therefore, was not only a remarkable magazine for its time, but helped to establish how we buy magazines in Germany to this very day.

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<sup>25</sup> Luft, Friedrich. “Berliner Illustrierte.” *Hundert Jahre Ullstein. 1877-1977*. Ed. W. Joachim Freyburg and Hans Wallenberg. Berlin; Frankfurt am Main; Wien: Ullstein, 1977. 87-118.

## Die Dame

The first issue of *Die Dame* was published in 1912. The magazine evolved from a magazine called *Illustrierte Frauen – Zeitung*. Ullstein bought it and transformed it into the first glamour magazine for women. “Und im Inneren roch es nicht mehr so stark nach Küche und Nähzimmer, sondern nach Parfum, Salon-Bohnerwachs und etwas großer Welt” (Ferber 8).<sup>26</sup> The bi-monthly magazine had a cover price of 1.20 Reichsmark: rather expensive. The readership that could afford such a luxury most certainly was to be found in the upper middle-class and perhaps even among some members of nobility (Ferber 10). A short list of authors who contributed includes Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus, Bert Brecht, Arthur Schnitzler, and Carl Zuckmayer. Ferber describes the content as “Seide, Samt und Spitzen, schöne Häuser, schöne Menschen, interessante Schauspieler und all die krähenden Hähnchen, die es bis zum Dachfirst der Gesellschaft geschafft hatten” (Ferber 9).

## Gender Roles

These magazines pursued and followed the changes in women’s lifestyle and looks. Women’s appropriation of male fashion and male behavior led to an outcry about the masculinization of women in the Weimar Republic. Pänke cites a male journalist who complains that women would now also pick up a monocle as an accessory. “Das ‘neue Weib‘ mag unsere Kragen und Krawatten, unsere Hüte und Westen usurpiert haben und nun auch noch die Hand nach dem Monocle ausstrecken, der Gedanke sollte den

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<sup>26</sup> Ferber, Christian, ed. *Die Dame. Ein Deutsches Journal für den verwöhnten Geschmack. 1912-1943*. Berlin; Frankfurt am Main; Wien: Ullstein, 1980.

Korrespondenten doch trösten, daß uns immer noch eine Hochburg bleibt, die es bis jetzt umsonst zu erobern suchte – die Hosen” (Pänke 375). At a time when Magnus Hirschfeld conducted his studies about the “Third Sex” in order to do “justice to gender and self-perception by breaking down socially acceptable gender performances and proposing alternative gender structures” (Prickett 103), women embraced the new freedom to explore specific activities formerly attributed to men (such as smoking).<sup>27</sup> However, men felt that their power was being diminished and traditional structures (like the family) were being undermined.

Drawing from Judith Butler’s argument that gender is performative, and, therefore, not biologically prescribed, I argue that gender roles in the Weimar Republic were in flux and going through a redefinition for women and men alike.<sup>28</sup> Richard McCormick calls this gender interaction a “blurring of traditionally gendered roles and behavior” (4). While he is very hesitant to call this “blurring” a substantial change in the power relationship between men and women, I maintain that it was precisely that. For the female writers under consideration in this dissertation, making money and supporting their husbands, lovers and male partners was a reality. In their fictional accounts, they reflect on this experience by describing a feminization of men in reaction to the New Woman’s changed looks and roles in society.

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<sup>27</sup> Prickett, David James. “Magnus Hirschfeld and the Photographic (Re)Invention of the “Third Sex”.” Visual Culture in Twentieth-Century Germany. Ed. Gail Finney. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006. 103-119.

<sup>28</sup> “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ,expressions‘ that are said to be its results” (Butler 33). Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble. New York; London: Routledge, 1990.

While the New Woman adjusts to a new understanding of her status in society and to a new lifestyle, the authors also suggest that the two sexes exchange gender roles. In Baum's play Pariser Platz 13, Helen embraces the strong masculine position of a business woman, while her love interest, Pix, becomes an effeminate male. In Die Verliebten, Kaus presents a woman who is on a par with men and engages with them in the form of a business transaction. She dumps her first lover, Christian, because he expresses his love for her in a passive, sentimental, feminine manner. Keun's character Gilgi is several times addressed as "Junge" (Gilgi 118) in the course of the novel, and accepts this, and she feels uncomfortable when Martin (who is not a traditional breadwinner) tries to make her more feminine by dressing her up.

### **Emancipation**

Harrigan observes that "[w]ork cannot in and of itself create emancipation, but emancipation surely will not occur without it" (Harrigan 100).<sup>29</sup> I agree that work is necessary for a woman to emancipate herself financially from the men in her life (be it her father, her husband, or her brother). Work in and of itself cannot create emancipation if we think of labor in terms of blue collar work. But the creative work of a female journalist, an author or photographer who found creative outlets in the illustrated magazine of the Weimar Republic did gain emancipation for these women because the message they sent was about emancipation, sexual liberation, and self-management.

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<sup>29</sup> Harrigan, Renny. "Novellistic Representations of die Berufstätige during the Weimar Republic." Women in German Yearbook 4 (1988): 97-124.

The consumer market that developed with the breakthrough of the illustrated magazine can be seen as a chance to externally mark a significant change in the way women perceive themselves and want to be seen by others. Creating the surface of the New Woman is a transition to a feeling of emancipation and compliance. The New Woman employs the media-created mask as a vehicle to independence until she finds out what she herself really wants. I agree with Falk when she describes the female authors' work as a valuable tool to try out certain lifestyles before they are put into action.

In diesem komplizierten Prozeß von Selbstfindung und erneuter Entfremdung kann der schriftstellerischen Tätigkeit von Frauen ein hoher Stellenwert zukommen. Die literarische Bearbeitung birgt die Möglichkeit in sich, die Hoffnungen und Utopien, die da am Horizont erscheinen, anhand von fiktionalen Figuren auszuphantasieren und durchzuspielen (Falk 167).

However, as I argue, Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus and Irmgard Keun do not just write their articles and books for themselves. They write for other women to offer them models and ways to effectively construct an emancipated lifestyle as a New Woman. To that end, these female authors exercise Enlightenment work, because they provide women with ideas on self-determined lifestyles.<sup>30</sup> By reading these authors' works, women are encouraged to make informed decisions about the lives they want to lead. The authors support this decision-making by not just naively disseminating a flawless image. Instead, they use their authority and influence as precursors of the New Woman to also inform their readers of the problems and shortcomings of this very image in their novels and plays.

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<sup>30</sup> I see this "Enlightenment work" in the true Kantian sense of daring to use one's own mind, and stepping out of the domination by a second party. The female journalists have already accomplished their Enlightenment by leaving the financial dependence on men behind. In the magazines and novels they are passing their insights on to the female readers in the hope that they would engage in a self-determined lifestyle as well.

## The Chapters

The image of the New Woman as the journalists Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus and Irmgard Keun present her in the press informs my reading of their literary output. I argue that the illustrated magazine offered women writers a space for emancipation due to financial independence and the opportunity to do creative work that would influence how women dressed and acted in society. However, when this image became a norm—expected by men, who still had the power to employ women or to prohibit wives from working—it turned into an oppressive system. I suggest that men offered women a limited “emancipation space” that allowed them to invent a new appearance for themselves and experiment with exciting new lifestyles; nonetheless, these women were still controlled by men. I see this binary development in Andrea Capovilla’s description of Baum’s literary career. On the one hand, for Baum, becoming a successful author was a triumph over the father (the hated dominant male figure); on the other hand, she entered with her writing an essentially masculine space.<sup>31</sup> The literary canon is dominated by men; and the niche that women could find in this system during the Weimar Republic was the genre of Trivialliteratur or popular literature. Naturally, this type of literature was seen as entertainment rather than having an educational function.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “Her [Baum’s] career as a best-selling author was a triumph over her father. At the same time, Baum felt forced into a female role by the paradigm of ‘serious’ (male) literature, namely that of author of novels which are merely entertaining” (Capovilla 2000:151). Capovilla, Andrea. “Written on Water? Re-Reading the Autobiographies of Gina Kaus and Vicki Baum.” *Autobiography by Women in German*. Ed. Mererid Puw Davies, Beth Linklater, and Gisela Shaw. Oxford; Bern; Berlin; Bruxelles; Frankfurt am Main; New York; Wien: Peter Lang, 2000. 149-162.

<sup>32</sup> As Capovilla argues, Baum fought especially towards the end of her life in her autobiography for a recognition of her works as high literature, while Kaus accepted her status as a popular literature writer. I would like to add that Kaus accepted this fate only after a huge disappointment. Her novel *Die Verliebten* was published in the Ullstein book series, novels meant for entertainment rather than in the Propylen



Although disregarded as light entertainment literature, these authors' literary works attempt an unraveling of the emancipatory potential as well as depicting the limits and problems of the New Woman's ideal image. By following the traces of the Weimar Republic's affinity with the illustrated magazine in these novels and plays, I show how the creation of the New Woman's image was inextricably linked to contemporary visual culture. Writing literary texts about the New Woman becomes a self-reflexive act of the female authors' engagement with, and work for, the illustrated press.

**Chapter One** introduces the image of the New Woman in the Ullstein magazines *Die Dame*, *Uhu*, and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. I will argue that this very image was created as a space of feminine emancipation for the consumers and producers of the illustrated magazine alike. Nevertheless, the expectations for an ideal New Woman ironically became another form of oppression.

**Chapter Two** analyzes Irmgard Keun's Weimar Republic novels Gilgi – eine von uns and Das kunstseidene Mädchen. I argue that Keun's writing is deeply influenced by the media of the period, while her status as an outsider allows for a deeper engagement with the reader's side of the New Woman's image. While Baum and Kaus create protagonists who promote the New Woman's image (as a beauty parlor proprietor or an

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series, which was reserved for high literature. "Baum is not inclined to pander to the cliché of the best-selling authoress of lightweight fiction, and Kaus is not willing to define herself as 'Freundin bedeutender Männer'. The writers employ differing strategies to free themselves from these labels. Baum's novels are extremely rich in intertextual references to biblical and mythological material and canonized authors such as Balzac, Zola, Thomas Mann or Goethe. This intertextuality has been ignored up to now because of the works' status outside the canon. [...] Irony, literary allusion and intertextuality often characterize her texts. These elements are, however, never mentioned in the secondary literature. This academic neglect of these textual elements seems to be due to fixed expectations of the genre. Baum reacts bitterly to the reception in store for her, Kaus takes it relatively calmly" (Capovilla 2000: 154).

actress), Keun's novels depict the interior struggles of women who attempt to mold themselves into the ideal this image promotes.

**Chapter Three** on Vicki Baum's play Pariser Platz 13 takes issue with her previous statements about beauty, lifestyle, and appearance by revealing that the beauty concept of the Weimar Republic is an oppressive system that women have to adjust to in order to be considered "emancipated." Baum also creates a text about gender role reversals, and plays with the common masculine fear that women would gain the upper hand. Although the play takes place almost entirely in a feminized space—the beauty parlor – the women take on masculine identities, while the men assume feminine traits.

**Chapter Four** on Gina Kaus's novel Die Verliebten analyzes the New Woman's lifestyle as an act of a continual, self-conscious performance. The stage actress Gabriele keeps monitoring herself from a spectator's viewpoint to make sure she complies with the image of the New Woman. I suggest that Gabriele's perception of herself is less an effort of the mind's eye than a reflection on herself from an internalized, external viewpoint. However, living her life with persistent vigilance leads to a split personality. In this context, love between man and the New Woman is re-imagined as a power struggle, troubling traditional gender roles and gender relations but also functioning as a valuable tool for the New Woman to overcome her split personality, and find her true self through reinvented engagements with the other sex.

## Chapter 1

### Being modern: Female Visual and Textual Interactions in the Illustrated Magazine of the Weimar Republic

*Zum Tanzen gehören zwei, die sich gleichzeitig, wenn auch nicht gleichartig, bewegen – wenn sich aber die Tänzerin allein dreht und wendet und der Tänzer am selben Fleck stehen bleibt, so macht das Tanzen kein Vergnügen mehr.*<sup>33</sup>

In this chapter I read the literature written by female authors in the Weimar Republic in tandem with their editorial work in illustrated magazines. Such a reading makes possible a reevaluation of these authors' ideas about the New Woman. The articles and short stories examined in this chapter include work by Vicki Baum and Gina Kaus, which promoted the image of the New Woman and were produced for the Ullstein publications *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, *Die Dame* and *Uhu*. There is an image of the New Woman presented in these publications, one that promoted feminine emancipation for both the consumers and the producers of the illustrated magazine. Yet, this new image of emancipation ironically became another form of oppression; that is, the female editors, writers, and photographers who articulated the principles of a New Woman's lifestyle were themselves compelled to replicate and authenticate this image. As a consequence, they experienced the complexities of merging an ideal of emancipation with the oppressiveness of concrete, everyday reality. To put it another way, these magazines at once promoted and exploited the ideal of female emancipation, and it is this ambiguous agenda that is examined in the following pages.

#### Women in Images/Women as Images

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<sup>33</sup> Anita. *Die Dame*. Issue 10. First February issue 1928.

There were more than 4,700 magazines and newspapers in circulation in the Weimar Republic. Giving voice to various and often competing political agendas, they ranged from the far left *Arbeiter-Illustrierte Zeitung* (AIZ) to the far right *Illustrierter Beobachter*.<sup>34</sup> While the AIZ adapted a documentary style of photojournalism from the Soviet Union to address the concerns of the proletarian class, the less visually oriented *Illustrierter Beobachter* was the Nazi party's official magazine. The more centrist bourgeois magazines avoided explicit political rhetoric in order to appeal to the greatest audience possible.<sup>35</sup> Readers of these middle-class magazines—*Uhu*, *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung*, and *Die Dame*—wanted to be entertained, to escape from the burning social problems of the day; magazines, therefore, restricted their representations of reality to the bubbly, glossy, upbeat and marketable.<sup>36</sup> Their pages were filled with stories about foreign cultures, technologies, art, the life of film stars and high society, as well as fashion, beauty, and romantic relationships. The New Woman as a topic appeared in short stories, jokes, photo essays, beauty columns and photographs. While photographers and writers actively promoted this image, they also questioned it.

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<sup>34</sup> Hardt, Hanno. *In the Company of Media. Cultural Constructions of Communication, 1920s-1930s*. Westview Press. 2000.76.

<sup>35</sup> "Magazine publishers shared the goal of providing politically non-controversial representations of contemporary conditions. As a result, their magazines provided readers with insufficient information about the crises of everyday life during the late 1920s in Weimar Germany while offering a good deal of coverage of their cultural heritage" (Hardt 67).

<sup>36</sup> My choice to analyze Ullstein publications exclusively was informed by the fact that Ullstein was the largest publishing house during the Weimar Republic, and also the most influential. I have researched some issues of magazines from the Mosse and Scherl publishing houses, which did not show substantial differences. Much more I found similarities in content and layout that exhibit common standards in the bourgeois popular magazines from different publishers. Moreover, the fact that all publishers could draw images from the same picture distribution companies led to the publication of the same photograph in various magazines, and therefore promoted the assimilation of style in these publications (Hardt 2000:71).

The impact that the image of the New Woman had on its audience was in part due to the changes in journalism during the Weimar Republic. Photojournalism exploded thanks to the seductive immediacy of the reproduction of reality it provided. The visual became the language of modernity, for it allowed the audience to respond to it intuitively, instinctually, or so it seemed to many. Images opened up the magazine market to a greater audience allowing everyday people to absorb the news effectively and effortlessly.

Because photographs have more of an immediate impact than text, many daily newspapers adopted the practices of photojournalism from illustrated weekly magazines. While these photographs were used to supplement textual narrative of events (Hardt 68), they were often published solely for their independent visual appeal, as was the case, for example, with a report on plastic surgery that stretched over three pages in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (Figures 1.1.-1.3.).

Naturally, the changing speed of modernity with its photographs, movies, cars, and trains required a shift in perception; one that also included a change in the way gender relations were viewed.<sup>37</sup> In opposition to the period of Realism, which perceived women as an *Other* that had to be contained and restrained,<sup>38</sup> modernity itself was perceived as an embodiment of woman.<sup>39</sup> As Deborah Parsons explains, women appeared

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<sup>37</sup> Petro, Patrice. "Perceptions of Difference: Women as Spectator and Spectacle." In: Katharina von Ankum. *Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*. California UP. 1997. 41-66.

<sup>38</sup> Professor Eric Downing argued this point in a seminar at Rutgers University, entitled "Get Real or Not!" in Spring 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Andreas Huyssen argues in his book *After the Great Divide* that the mass culture, which includes the popular culture of the illustrated magazine, was connotated as feminine but he revises this notion by saying that this gender connotation does not come from the masses but rather from above. "The critical intention behind these changes [Adorno and Horkheimer's "culture industry"] in terminology is clear: they

in the 1890s in new organized group movements such as women pursuing voting rights but also as the masses of shoppers and shop girls.<sup>40</sup> The sheer number of women outside in the streets walking freely with a purpose to fight for their rights, to go to work or to go shopping, marked a change in power relationships between men and women. Because this change was so closely connected to the public space (the city, the streets, the department store) women became more visible. While this was very appealing to men, women's determination to become a part of the public also threatened their sense of identity. In the illustrated magazine women celebrated their new status engaging in creative labor as producers, while also serving as an attentive and malleable audience.

With the degeneration of an authoritative patriarchal social structure, women manifested their new-found power in the media. The advertisements were geared mostly to the new consumer – women; however, these ads also played with masculine desires. Good photographs make the reader salivate; one wants to possess an item, or even a person. In the case of Yva's fashion photography (Figure 1.4.), the fabrics and materials emerge from the pictures with such potent verisimilitude that the reader fully entertains

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all mean to suggest that modern mass culture is administered and imposed from above and that the threat it represents resides not in the masses but in those who run the industry. While such an interpretation may serve as a welcome corrective to the naïve notion that mass culture is identical with traditional forms of popular art, rising spontaneously from the masses, it nevertheless erases a whole web of gender connotations which, as I shall show, the older terminology "mass culture" carried with it – i.e., connotations of mass culture as essentially feminine which were clearly also "imposed from above," in a gender-specific sense, and which remain central to understanding the historical and rhetorical determinations of the modernism/mass culture dichotomy" (Huyssen 48). While I agree with Huyssen that mass culture is connected to the feminine, I do not agree with his claim that this sort of culture was entirely directed "from above." As I will show in this chapter, women very much participated in the creation of the New Woman's image in the form of editorial writers and photographers.

<sup>40</sup> Parsons, Deborah. *Streetwalking the Metropolis*. Oxford UP. 2000. 44.

the fantasy of being able to touch and feel the texture of the photographed material.<sup>41</sup> In the case of Yva's stockings advertisement the observer is confronted with the sight of sexy legs. While a woman tends to see herself as the subject in the sensuous tableau, men imagine the visual and tactile pleasures they might derive from women who wear stockings. Therefore, the image elicits the desire to buy this product in both genders: women want to feel like the ad looks, while men want their women to embody the sex-appeal they see in the photograph.

As John Berger explains in his book Ways of Seeing, the advertisement image evokes a feeling of envy for the beauty of the image. He suggests that by purchasing a product one acquires not only the item but also the knowledge that other women might envy the buyer. Therefore, the feeling one had for the advertisement is replicated in the audience who sees the woman with her purchase (new shoes, a dress, etc.). This knowledge contributes to making the decision whether to buy an item or not.

The spectator – buyer is meant to envy herself as she will become if she buys the product. She is meant to imagine herself transformed by the product into an object of envy for others, an envy which will then justify her loving herself. One could put this in another way: the publicity image steals her love of herself as she is, and offers it back to her for the price of the product (Berger 134).

A woman's affinity with images thus creates a very fragile sense of self-confidence, a sense that needs to be renewed constantly through purchases. As Berger suggests, these advertisement images have the potential to instill love in the self but also to take it away, creating a vicious circle that closely binds women to the consumer culture.

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<sup>41</sup> Similarly, recipes are illustrated with staged images of a tempting meal. The combination of the photographed meal and the written ingredients lead to the perception that the reader might be able to already taste the dish based on the experience of having tasted the ingredients before.

A woman's identification with the images she sees leads to a collapse of boundaries in which she becomes both image and viewer. As Berger observes, social limitation "has been at the cost of a woman's self being split into two. A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself."<sup>42</sup> Women are conscious of the male gaze that divides them into self and image. This explains the great allure the illustrated press had for women during the 1920s, a time when the photographic coverage of women's fashion, women in advertisements and daily activities, mirrors the complex appropriation and internalization of this gaze. It also attempts to turn the dominating male gaze into a tool for female emancipation by playfully reversing this stare or inviting it, – as I will show later in the chapter. Paradoxically, the photographic coverage supplies women with an image to perceive while reducing them to that object of perception.

The advertisements and photographs of the illustrated magazines enabled women to step out of the man's shadow promising them bright images of self-fulfillment and emancipation; yet, the complexities of 'woman as image' exceed a simple teleology of liberation. The history of images (art history) suggests that images are made by men for male consumption. Indeed, female painters were singled out as miracles or cursed as unnatural "Malweiber." Even in the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century female artists who tried to reach into the masculine realm of painting were seen as abnormal. Caricatures show this "Malweib" as a masculinized woman who acts against her own

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<sup>42</sup> Berger, John. Ways of Seeing. Penguin Books. 1972. 46.



nature.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the portrait of a female or the representations of her body always targeted the masculine gaze.<sup>44</sup> Paintings of women looking at themselves traditionally carried subtitles with names suggestive of vanity, quietly perpetuating a taboo on female spectatorship or consumption of the feminine by women.<sup>45</sup> Male painters liked to paint the mysterious female body for the masculine spectator's eyes; however, fixing women into images was meant not only to represent their beauty, but also to freeze them in time, to contain them in a non-threatening form incapable of maturing. Men were scared and at the same time fascinated with the "Otherness" of the female body. An image provides men with an opportunity to take an unthreatening look at women, which condemns them to the status of an object. The photo or painting captures the moment in the represented woman's life, which irrevocably secures a presence that cannot be repeated.<sup>46</sup> For the women this signifies dematerialization into an object. As Sue Thornham argues,

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<sup>43</sup> A discussion of this terminology can be found in Schulz, Isabel. Künstlerinnen. Leben. Werk. Rezeption. Zweitausendeins. 1991. especially pg.15-18.

<sup>44</sup> Clarisse Nicoidski exemplifies that women throughout art history were considered as muses and models. Most often the well-known male artist would use his daughter as a model for his paintings exposing her to his as well as the spectator's view of the finished art work. "Manchmal standen die Töchter, kaum der Wiege entwachsen, zunächst in den Ateliers der Väter Modell, als Cherubinen, oder, gerade halbwüchsig, als Madonnen oder Nymphen, oft Grund genug, die Väter perverse Beziehungen zu verdächtigen" (Nicoidiki 15).

<sup>45</sup> Nicoidski, in opposition, explains that female self-portraits show a blurred and distorted mirror image to express the taboos of their complex personalities. I conclude that we can then assume that the presentation of a composed female figure contemplating herself in a mirror is a male painter's fantasy to legitimize painting the naked female body. "Das [Selbstbildnis] bot den Frauen Gelegenheit, die vielfachen, durch die sozialen Tabus unterdrückten Seiten ihrer Persönlichkeit manchmal geradezu halluzinatorisch auszudrücken. Wenn Frauen sich selbst porträtieren, fingen sie ihr Bild – und das mitunter mehrfach – in verzerrenden Spiegeln ein oder in Mineralien, die sie ins Unendliche verformten und damit unendliche Deutungsmöglichkeiten zuließen" (Nicoidski 13-14).

<sup>46</sup> While Lessing argues in his study about the Laocoon that visual art is spatial, and poetry is temporal, this distinction collapses in the photograph. As a recording device, the camera creates in an instant, a two dimensional representation of an object in one particular moment. The temporal and spatial converge in the instant of exposure, which captures that moment in a human's or object's life in a frozen, death-like state. Photographs usually represent the past, the fleeting moment. Therefore, we look at old images with strong feelings of nostalgia and the awareness that this moment when the picture was actually taken will

The moment the look predominates, the body loses its materiality. [...]. If the dematerialized, fetishised body of woman is seen to give access to a transcendent realm, it also signals the loss of that very materiality. Art thus both enshrines and kills. Stopping time, its realm of perpetual representation is associated not only with transcendence but also with death. This argument was to be used again about photography [...]; here it is important to note the sense of loss which is an integral part of the aestheticisation of woman-as-object which is being described here (Thornham 30).<sup>47</sup>

In part, the enshrinement of women coincides with the history of the flâneur. Only men were allowed the privilege of free movement through a city and the liberty to lay their eyes on whatever they wanted. The man's counterpart, the flâneuse, who also made her way through the public realm of the city, was most often interpreted as the prostitute. Nevertheless, the ability to move around in the public realm without losing one's status or honor was claimed in the 1920's by the working woman. She was out on the streets because she had to go to work. Some articles of the *BIZ*, however, indicate a surface coupling of these two groups in the masculine gaze: working women were difficult to separate in the men's eyes from the common streetwalker because prostitutes were encouraged to behave more like ladies and hide their actual reason for being out on the streets.<sup>48</sup>

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never return. At the same time the moment is always there, because it is frozen in the photograph as Roland Barthes suggests in his reflections about photography *Die helle Kammer (Camera Lucida)*. "Der Name des Noemas der PHOTOGRAPHIE sei also: 'Es-ist-so-gewesen' oder auch: das UNVERÄNDERLICHE" (Barthes 87).

<sup>47</sup> Thornham. Sue. *Fixing into Images*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, UK. 2007. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Soltau argues that single women had to accept insults on the streets because an unmarried woman was considered to be "Freiwild," and could be approached by every man for sexual services. "Als ledige Berufstätige konnte sie selbständig leben. Aber selbst dann hatte sie mit alltäglichen Unterdrückungen zu rechnen. Die Spottnamen: alte Jungfer, Blaustrumpf oder Emanzipierte waren noch harmlos. Vielmehr unterlag sie im Bereich der Öffentlichkeit dauernden Einschränkungen und galt vielen als „Freiwild“. So z.B. mußten Frauen damit rechnen, abends von der Polizei aufgegriffen und zur Zwangsuntersuchung gebracht zu werden, wenn sie sich allein, ohne Begleitung eines Mannes, auf der Straße aufhielten. Die preußische Polizei legitimierte das mit Verdacht auf Prostitution" (Soltau 158-9).

The visibility of the working woman on the streets engendered a new consumer culture targeted specifically at women. Product advertisements and the smiling woman from the cover of the illustrated magazine (Figure 1.5.) were not merely incentives to buy the product, the magazine, but also invitations to identify with the woman on the cover.<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, Rachel Bowlby argues that women's active gazing and looking at both magazines and products made them into consumers of both material and aesthetic products. This places them into the same role of spectatorship that men had occupied.

The 'new commerce' which characterized modernity made its appeal above all *to* women [italicized in the original], urging and inviting them to procure its luxurious benefits and purchase sexually attractive images for themselves. They were to become in a sense like prostitutes in their active, commodified self-display, and also to take on the role almost never theirs in actual prostitution: that of consumer (Bowlby 1985:11).<sup>50</sup>

There is an interplay between the financial independence of women and the need to spend this money on products unrelated to family and household needs.

This emancipated economy is troubled, however, by the dual role of woman as consumer and object of consumption:

There is a continuity between the shop window, 'the glass which reflects an idealized image of the woman... who stands before it, in the form of the model she could buy and become' (Bowlby 1985:32), and the fashion pages of a magazine (both themselves forms of advertising), as there is between the shop

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<sup>49</sup> Nancy Nenno makes a similar point in her dissertation "Masquerade: Woman Nature Modernity." She points out the similarities between the shop window and women who both become commodities in their own right. "Similar to the manner in which the individual seeks to become a visible entity in the mass crowds of the modern metropolis, so too do the commodities in the windows of the department stores create an advertisement for both their own and the store's individuality – an ironic comment upon the production of mass individuality" (Nenno 18). While Nenno refers to the shop window as a mirror for the New Woman to identify with, I would like to suggest that the cover of the illustrated magazine had a similar function. (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Bowlby, Rachel. Just looking: Consumer culture in Dreiser, Gissing, and Zola. Metuhen. New York. 1985. 11.

window and mirror. There is continuity between all of these and the commodity images, which we usually think of as advertising images, whether in magazines, on billboards, or as television or cinema advertisements. What links them all is the triangular positioning of the woman: as seducer/saleswoman, as commodity, and as consumer (Thornham 39).

This triangular relationship is further complicated by the fact that women look at other women. In doing so, they look at themselves imagining that they could adapt to the image of the other. They become consumers in a market where they are presented with endless opportunities to change their own image into a better version that conforms to wishes which are not entirely their own.<sup>51</sup>

It is commonly argued that the images women try to live up to are men-made or established to please the masculine eye. John Berger even goes so far as to call the woman's look at herself a male gaze: "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female" (Berger 1972:47).<sup>52</sup> And Janice Winship adds, "As women, our pleasures in cultural forms such as the women's magazine are constructed always within the terms of masculine fantasy and desire" (Winship 1978:133).<sup>53</sup> While basically agreeing with Winship's remarks, I argue that ideas concerning the masculine position

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<sup>51</sup> While Renate Bridenthal argues in the introduction of the book When Biology Became Destiny that the New Woman's connection to consumerism did not allow for her emancipation, but merely a moral upheaval, I would like to stress that the New Woman indeed found a form of emancipation by contributing to this cycle of production and consumption of the New Woman's image. "In the developing consumer industries, women manufactured, sold, and consumed new items, thus becoming representative of a new pleasure-seeking consumerism. While the 'new women' did not signal female emancipation or the collapse of patriarchy, she did represent –to some— a moral crises" (Bridenthal et al. When Biology Became Destiny. Monthly Review Press. New York. 1986:13).

<sup>52</sup> Berger. John. Ways of Seeing. 1972.47.

<sup>53</sup> Winship, Janice. "A Woman's World: *Woman* – An Ideology of Femininity." In: Women's Studies Group, CCCS. Women Take Issue: Aspects of Women's Subordination. London. Hutchinson. 133-54.

toward authority over the New Woman are more complex than she suggests. As I will show later in this chapter, one of the lifestyle columnists, Anita, argues that men passively observe the transition of the traditional woman into the New Woman. While men might set the limits of the New Woman's space for liberation, female writers, photographers, and consumers could test and contest them in important ways.

The magazine *Uhu* featured an article that might suggest that men were actually unhappy with the New Woman and longed for old-fashioned qualities. The *Uhu* November 1930 issue asked men in a survey what they love about their wives (Figure 1.6.). Those who answered seem to be very traditional, dominating and patriarchal, still deeply mired in the gender constellations of a traditional marriage. One husband writes, for example, that he loves his wife because she is so homey/domestic; another declares: "She's ladylike and doesn't have a bob haircut"; a third praises his wife's talents as a housewife; a fourth declares that he loves his wife for giving birth to his children because that is her purpose in life; and a fifth adds: "I love that she accepts my superiority without questioning it." ("[Ich liebe an ihr], dass sie meine Überlegenheit ohne weiteres anerkennt.")<sup>54</sup> We must consider that these male voices might be invented by the magazine itself for entertainment purposes only. At the same time the *Uhu* bears witness to the contemporary ambiguous discussion of relationship issues: Marriage is problematic for the freedom-loving New Woman, and she rejects the traditional expectations of marriage. After all, the laws of the time trap her into stereotypical and traditional housewife roles: husbands could forbid their wives from working or determine that they

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<sup>54</sup> *Uhu* November 1930, issue 2.

must work in a family-owned business if one existed.<sup>55</sup> Commodification of women through the media was no doubt a problem. Yet, it also carried with it a certain liberation from the traditional lifestyle of a woman as wife and mother. Heide Soltau argues that moral values pertaining to feminine chastity turned women into hybrid moral-material objects. The place of sexual intercourse was marriage, in which women had little or no power at all. Men would decide whom they wanted to marry and allowed women only a very passive engagement in this life-changing event. If women were not objectified as housewives or mothers, positive objects in the moral-material economy, then they were considered prostitutes who had to cater to men's sexual needs. Women, as Soltau explains, were not supposed to have sexual needs—for desire implies an active subject antithetical to the female status as sexual object. Therefore they either had to choose to get married and be dominated by their husbands or abandon sexuality altogether and exist as asexual spinsters.<sup>56</sup> The women's movement at the turn of the century tried to change this on a juridical level, while the illustrated magazine of the 1920s helped to spread the idea of women's sexual liberation. The magazines promoted an image of emancipated women that suggested to women that they could support themselves, and were allowed to explore their sexuality outside the parameters of marriage.

### **The New Body Image**

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<sup>55</sup> "Parallel to the new constitution, the government also maintained a large body of Imperial law, such as the criminal code of 1871, which outlawed abortion and restricted access to birth control, and the civil code of 1900, which restricted women's rights in marriage and divorce." Bridenthal, Renate et al. When Biology became Destiny. Monthly Review Press. New York. 1984: 5.

<sup>56</sup> "In jedem Fall war die Frau zum Objekt degradiert, als Prostituierte zum Objekt der Begierde, als Geliebte, Freundin oder uneheliche Mutter zum Objekt gesellschaftlicher Diskriminierungen. Auch für den Weg in die Ehe mußten sich die Frauen prostituieren, die Männer wählten und sie wurden gewählt. Die Ehe selbst bedeutete Abhängigkeit vom Mann, selbst als Mutter war sie noch Objekt des Mannes, denn allein ihm oblag die elterliche Gewalt. Wollte die Frau Subjekt ihrer Person sein, blieb ihr allein der Weg der Entsagung. Als ledige Berufstätige konnte sie selbständig leben" (Soltau 158).

Along with a greater openness toward extramarital sex, women discovered their own bodies, and the necessity to look a certain way in order to be desirable. To this end, magazines championed the cause of physical activity (such as gymnastics and sports), advertising and promoting new fashions that allowed for these activities. Stereotypical images of the New Woman were the flapper or the *Garçonne*, boasting an adolescent vigor and promise of youth in the former, and favoring a masculine look in the latter. Taking control of one's own body to produce a certain appearance is a form of emancipation because it gives a woman the power to alter her most fundamental circumstances—giving her both ownership and autonomy.

Femininity may be a matter of commodification and performance, but for women without access to other modes of self-empowerment – other forms of ‘cultural capital’ – it also confers legitimacy. Indeed, women's magazines themselves – and increasingly the advertisements within them – often oscillate, as Hilary Radner (1995) points out, between these two positions, so that the images they present are offered simultaneously as the stuff of knowing performance and play, and as an ideal to be approximated through the work of self-regulation and self-management (Thornham 49).

The popular press created and disseminated the look of the New Woman and its attendant qualities, privileges, and responsibilities. To this end, the illustrated magazine offered women guidelines for a self-determined lifestyle. They promoted an ideal that women can live up to, while fostering in her the agency to do so.

In the Weimar Republic, there was a Greek ideal that coupled traditional beauty, the Venus de Milo, with athleticism. This beauty ideal was supported and to a certain extent exploited by advertisements for diet products which tried to discipline the New Woman into the ideal shape of a slender athlete. In my research I found advertisements for diet powders (Figure 1.7.), as well as products that help women to gain weight (Figure

1.8.), marketing an ideal that was difficult to reach for both overweight and underweight women. Of particular interest is the “Punkt-Roller” (Figure 1.9.) that claims to help women lose weight exactly at those spots on the body where one uses it. “Zweckvolle Gymnastik”—wie nötig ist sie dem bürohockenden Städter mit seinem trägen Blutkreislauf und den Verfettungen an Leib und Gliedmaßen.” Curiously, the advertisement refers to the beauty ideal of the Greeks, by contrasting a photograph of a New Woman using the Punkt-Roller with an image of the Venus de Milo. If only she had arms, she would also use the Punkt-Roller, is one of the slogans. “Was vor 2000 Jahren die Griechen, als Väter aller Leibesübungen erkannten, hat für uns heute noch die gleiche Bedeutung.” This advertisement shows that the craze for a slender body was not only a fashion dictate but also followed sound health advice because it acknowledged the detrimental aspects of office work for the body. The “weight issue” presents a narrative about social mobility in which the sedentary lifestyle of a secretary is compensated for through more exercise in order to control her weight, remain attractive and be able to keep her job. The New Woman has an opportunity for self-management and self-determination. But these elements of control are themselves linked to an increasingly commodified status.

A focus on appearance and healthiness raised questions about the New Woman’s ability and willingness to follow her “natural” inclination to become a mother. Sabine Hake describes the flapper or the Girl as an example of the masculinized New Woman: “slim, almost angular body with narrow hips, small breasts, and long legs. The de-emphasizing of all secondary sex characteristics, especially of bust and buttocks, betrays a fixation on youth and a symbolic rejection of the maternal as the most oppressive



element in traditional gender roles” (Hake 196).<sup>57</sup> The body image of the New Woman was driven by the dream of eternal youth and the rejection of motherhood, as Hake points out, but I would further argue that the rejection of the maternal body was also associated with a desire for masculine autonomy. The fashion of the flat chest that made some women swaddle their bosoms thus allowed women to look not only like androgynous adolescents but also more like men. The desire to gain greater power over masculine realms led many women to imitate the male look.<sup>58</sup> The identification with the masculine would also explain women’s objection to becoming mothers. The New Woman wanted to enjoy her freedom and independence just as men did. A baby would not fit into this equation, and therefore we experience the New Woman as barren.

## **Fashion**

The illustrated magazine was a rich source of tips on how to alter one’s body to measure up to the perfect image of the New Woman. Part of this perfect image was fashion, which was covered extensively in the magazines of the 1920s. The attention given to fashion converted clothes into a tool of self-expression. Ironically, for the New Woman, keeping up with the newest fashion trends often meant having to pick up traditional activities such as sewing. If the working woman did not earn enough money to

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<sup>57</sup> Hake, Sabine. “In the Mirror of Fashion.” Women in the Metropolis. Ed. Katharina von Ankum. University of California Press, 1997. 185-201.

<sup>58</sup> Patrice Petro describes the masculinization of women as a self-consciously masculine masquerade that is a response to men’s status as a neutered being. Petro focuses on an editorial in the BIZ by the columnist Anita. Anita writes: “Today, however, the man is neither strong nor weak but too realistic, too neuter; he has ‘no time’ for his soul and for his wife. For this reason, the suffering woman responds ironically to this neutered being by parodying his masculinity; she makes fun of these men whenever she is among those who are like her” (Anita ctd. in Petro 111 and 114). I disagree with Anita because I see in the novels and plays that I’ll discuss in the next chapters a tendency of men to become more effeminate in reaction to the New Woman rather than becoming indifferent.

buy the readily available Konfektions-dress, she had to create these clothes by herself.<sup>59</sup> Gütermann's Nähseide (Figure 1.10.) and the sewing patterns in *Die Dame* offered some help in accomplishing this task. These advertisements, then, unveil the hidden reality that women still had to have traditional skills. While most common advertisements of New Women with luxury items and objects of pleasure, such as cars, jewelry, chocolates and hair products promote a commodification of desires and the promise of the ease of being a New Woman, advertisements for sewing silk and sewing patterns emphasize the hard work that goes into becoming a New Woman – hinting at insecurities and anxieties that are closely connected to achieving the ideal look.

The diverse market of fashion and make-up allowed women to look presentable. Less attractive women were able to improve their appearance by wearing the right clothes, as the article “Der schöne Hut. Eine Frauenfrage” in the *Uhu* magazine suggests. The article describes various hat fashions for women through several centuries, and is illustrated with various photographs and copper engravings (Figure 1.11.). The central aspect of this feature is the fact that a fashion item such as a hat can determine the entire appearance and therefore the perception of a woman by others. If a woman dresses in the wrong way she becomes aesthetically displeasing as a Parisian caricature suggests (1.12.). In it an elegant lady is drawn with a so-called “wheel-hat” adorned with a fox fur.

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<sup>59</sup> In her essay “In the Mirror of Fashion” Sabine Hake argues that fashion is used as a marker of economic status and social ambition, as an expression of female narcissism and beauty (Hake 185). She further claims that, instead of providing individuality, the fashion photograph projects a forced goal onto women to be original, which inevitably produces the opposite result: everyone dresses the same. Vicki Baum explains: “It is fashionable to be original. Thus all modern women are original. Since all of them are original at the same time, none of them actually is” (Baum ctd in Hake 187). Hake, Sabine. “In the mirror of fashion.” In: Katharina von Ankum. *Women in the Metropolis*. University of California Press. 1997. 185-201.

The fox and the elegant dog that the lady is taking for a walk are sticking out their tongues in disapproval of the woman's look. Moreover, in the text, the author emphasizes that an ugly woman with a beautiful hat is still pleasant to the eye, while a beautiful woman with an ugly hat is unfeminine.

Eine hässliche Frau mit einem schönen Hut – also mit einem Hut, der ihr “steht”, der ihr Gesicht beschattet, verbirgt und an den richtigen Stellen betont – eine solche Frau wird immer noch angenehm anzusehen sein. Aber tiefste Bedenklichkeit, stärkstes Misstrauen ist einer schönen Frau mit einem hässlichen Hut entgegenzubringen. Eine Frau, die ihren Hut nicht zu wählen versteht, ist arm an Instinkten, unweiblich, ihr fehlt es an erotischem Charme, an Liebenswürdigkeit, an dem guten Willen, angenehm zu sein.<sup>60</sup>

Fashion not only adorns but hides the body and as such can be a path to a certain kind of liberation. As Vicki Baum argues in her article “Welche Frau ist am begehrtesten?,” cosmetics and fashion have the potential to liberate women from ugliness.<sup>61</sup> According to her, there are no really ugly women anymore in the Weimar Republic thanks to beautification tips and tricks available to these women. Baum's remarks indicate that a new and different theory of beauty coupled with technology and the market were sweeping through the Weimar Republic – so much so that an inversion occurs between the traditional agon of nature and artifice. The natural, if it is not beautiful, is considered somehow unnatural, confining, and detrimental, and requires the fashionable artifice of the consumer market to liberate, normalize, and thereby, perversely, naturalize.

Fashion means change and change means fashion. Both are tied to the changing role of women and a society struggling to liberate itself from the former class system. A lengthy article in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* “Ist die heutige Frauenkleidung zu

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<sup>60</sup> *Uhu*, September 1927, issue 12. 78-79.

<sup>61</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue 1.

kühn?” gives insight into both aspects by comparing the current “anstössige” (scandalous) fashion to styles in the past.<sup>62</sup> The reason for the change in fashion is officially stated as the need for a greater physical flexibility. Yet, fashion also granted women an opportunity for flexibility in their self-presentation. Women needed to be able to move more in order to engage in sports and be active in their jobs. The unknown author of the *BIZ* article explains that he or she cannot understand people who complain that the newest fashion endangers the female “Züchtigkeit.” “Es gibt Leute, die ernstlich Anstoß nehmen, daß die Frau heutzutage ihre Beine fast bis zum Knie zeigt.” Moreover, the author uses fashion as an agent of critique against the former nobility and, therefore, against monarchists who bemoan the passing of the “good old times.” “Aber in der ehrbarsten –oder wie andere Leute sagen, in der philiströsesten Zeit, die Deutschland durchgemacht hat, ist immer eines anstößig geblieben, nämlich die Tracht der großen Damen bei Hofe. Selbst an dem sittenstrengen preussischen Hof mußte es auffallen, wie unglaublich tief beleibte alte Damen Busen und Nacken entblössten.” Accusing the old, heavy aristocratic ladies of being too exposed implies an endorsement of the New Woman who is young and slender, and “only” shows her legs.<sup>63</sup> While the focus on working girls’ legs rather than aristocratic busts might suggest a new form of social mobility, this movement is checked to some extent by the male gaze. Indeed, contrary to expectations the author concludes that the new fashion is in no way more scandalous than those of former times, and, further, that the status of fashion at any point depends on

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<sup>62</sup> *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, issue 8. 1925. 253-256.

<sup>63</sup> In a conversation with Michael Levine about this passage he suggested that there is a shift in focus from woman’s bosom to her legs. I agree with him on this point. The photographs in the magazine concentrate on the legs of the New Woman because they became visible for the first time. Also, the body image of the New Woman requires the de-emphasizing of the chest.

taste, specifically men's taste. Interestingly, Vicki Baum closes her article on the most desirable woman "Wer ist am begehrtesten?" also with the same words.<sup>64</sup> In the end, it is men who decide which women are most desirable. This closing statement shows the women's awareness of the male gaze, and suggests that no matter what women wear or how emancipated they become, in the end they are always dependent on the approval of their masculine counterparts. The question remains, however: To what extent is the male gaze itself transformed by the movement? While this question might go beyond the scope of this project, one serious development must be noted. With the introduction of photographs in the magazines, the New Woman found a new tool for guiding and playing with the masculine gaze.

### **The Camera as a Tool of Emancipation**

The success of the illustrated magazine in the Weimar Republic was in large part due to the growth of the photography industry. A photograph came to represent 'the truth,' appearing as a signifier of accuracy and immediacy.

Subjective in its aesthetic quality, the photograph as a new way of reproducing the world, became subject to cooptation by the dominant culture, particularly through the expansion of picture magazines and the use of photographs in the press, but also through commercial portrait photography and the marketing of camera equipment as expressions of middle class status and creativity (Hardt 1989: 8).

The advertisements for cameras most often featured a woman engaged in leisure activities, demonstrating just how much women were a target market for camera manufacturers (Figure 1.13.). Clearly they were encouraged to buy a camera and become

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<sup>64</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue 1.

creative by taking their own photographs, and even to use this new device much like a typewriter as an entry tool into the professional world. Thus, a camera not only promised self-fulfillment through the fun that a woman might have exploring her surroundings or herself with this new recording device, but also offered a possibility of emancipation. The camera's association with women marks a symbolic departure from the time when women were associated with the viewed image, turning her from a passive object into an actively creating subject. The camera allowed women to gain an emancipated perspective on their world, one which had previously been denied to them. In contrast to the history of paintings, from which women were mostly excluded, photography became a medium to which women had access right from the beginning. Female photographers, such as Yva and Ringl & Pit (Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach) made money with the camera by opening their own photo studios and providing the illustrated magazine with an abundance of creative attempts at presenting their world from a female perspective. Women engaged in creating their own world by using the camera as a recording device, becoming observers of their surroundings rather than remaining in the passive, objectified position of the viewed image.

The look of emancipation allows women two further freedoms: the ability to encourage gazes at one's own body and the freedom to stare back, as we will see in the following example. By utilizing female nudity, the *Uhu* tried to lure a greater readership into buying the magazine. Very often they would publish photographs of women in the nude. One of these nudes is an artistic photograph by Yva (Else Simon), which shows a bare-breasted female dancer (Figure 1.14.). Her face is hidden behind a dance mask from the southern Pacific; also her wrap-around skirt and her dancing pose justify her nude

torso. The image exposes and hides the represented woman, while alluding to a primordial social context of the Southern Pacific that allows the depicted woman to be naked, because the staged scene is supposedly a natural context for being undressed. While men are captured in the nude during athletic activities – supporting the body culture – women pose naked for the camera. This could be an act of self-conscious self-exploration or a marketing strategy by the Ullstein Verlag. While men enjoy gazing at the naked female body, female readers might use these photos as ideal models of what they want their bodies to look like.

One photograph of particular importance plays with the topic of the female body as the object of the gaze (Figure 1.15.). Contrary to most nude photographs that were justified in the Weimar Republic as studies to promote the ideas of the body culture, here the woman is very conscious that she is being looked at and returns the stare. She is taking the masculine position while expanding it: she is both subject and object, observer and observed. While men in the Weimar Republic developed a body consciousness due to the demands of a new body- culture, they did not become aware of their own looks. Men's athletic activities and desire for a stronger body entailed health, social and political considerations, such as counteracting the detrimental aspects of sedentary office work on the body, becoming part of a community in sports clubs to overcome the fragmentation and separation in modern life, as well as finding a distraction from the male identity crisis and political upheavals, which were an outcome of WWI. In contrast to the men, women of the time cared about their bodies and looks as tools for self-definition, *and* interaction with the opposite sex, by modifying and controlling the way men perceived them.

Therefore, women looked at men not only for their own pleasure but also for receiving feedback about the extent of their success in manipulating the male gaze.

The following example clarifies the viewing and assessment processes involved. A bare-breasted woman is leaning over a mirror. The observer of the photograph does not concentrate on her body, but mostly on her body's reflection in the mirror. This common theme reproduces the trope of vanity: a woman looking at herself in a mirror, while her body is exposed to the male gaze. Yet this representation parodies the trope with the aggression of confrontation: the mirror's reflection stares back at the observer, challenging the supposed authority of the masculine gaze. The woman in the photo is aware of the voyeurism at hand and chooses to take over the power in this staring game. She invites the voyeur to look at her beautiful body and enjoys the appreciative gaze, which is expressed in her staring back at the observer. She has nothing to hide and presents her nudity openly in opposition to the objectified hidden nude in the previous picture. It is like a duel: You look at me and I look at you. The New Woman takes charge in the game of sexual desire, and plays out the power of appearance and beauty to her own benefit. Men cannot hide within the moral authority of mere witness to female vanity, because the model's gaze is cast upon her observer's eyes, making him aware that he looks at her: her body, not a moral abstraction. Women gain autonomy, even in a genre in which they had been most objectified: the nude.

As many advertisements in the *Uhu* suggest, women were aware of male surveillance and voyeurism. However, what men were given to look at was the self-produced version of the New Woman, an autonomous creation meant to be observed if



not thoroughly demanding and controlling the observation. After all, the very revealing fashion of the New Woman with its short skirts and sleeveless shirts made certain beautification treatments attractive to women as consumers who wanted to cultivate a certain appearance. In this context we can see why an ad for a depilatory crème “Taky” (Figure 1.16.) gained meaning and prominence in the illustrated magazine of the day. A drawing shows a New Woman stretched out in a club chair in a relaxed pose with her arms behind her head, exposing her hairless armpits and her flawless legs. In the front three men observe her with pleasure. The woman becomes the object of the male gaze again, and even the lengthy text that accompanies the ad speaks about the necessity to depilate nowadays, because men expect women to look flawless, i.e. hairless in this case, and the fashion requires woman to keep up her body image.

Die Herren sind schärfere Beobachter, als Sie es glauben, und sie beobachten besonders eine Dame in ihren leisesten Bewegungen. Bei der heutigen Mode wird eine Dame nur dann als vollkommen schön angesehen, wenn sie keine überflüssigen Haare auf Gesicht, Armen, Nacken und Beinen hat, die durch die feinen Strümpfe sichtbar sind, und eine weiße, zarte Haut besitzt.<sup>65</sup>

The advertisements that deal with a male-female relationship often have a sexual undertone, which stresses the women’s sexual liberation and awareness. The woman portrayed here signals in her body language – the hands behind her head and the stretched out legs – that she feels confident and comfortable in the company of men, revealing her body with insouciance. The torso is readily accessible and this pose implies that she might be open to finding a new love interest, which she actively seems to provoke by her appearance and body language. The new fashion of see-through nylon stockings and

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<sup>65</sup> *Uhu*, April 1928, issue 7.

sleeveless blouses allowed women to show more of their feminine attributes, and gave them the possibility of controlling the game of sexual attraction. At the same time, however, the product exposes the women to a greater threat from the male gaze, because men can observe women more closely and more openly than in the past (“schärfere Beobachter”, “leisesten Bewegungen”). This causes anxieties in women about measuring up to the new body standards, and puts pressure on them to bear up to the intensified male gaze. This over-exposure of the female body to the male gaze was also embodied in the film industry of the time. Women wanted to be seen on screen, and become part of this dream fabrication industry, while men tried to keep them out of the public eye and repress the New Woman’s emancipation attempts by forcing her into traditional gender roles through marriage. The photo stories by Yva deal with this interconnectedness of public visibility and emancipation, and the prevention of these efforts through male power.

### **Photo Stories**

While many advertisements in the early years of *Uhu* – the magazine had a lifespan of 10 years and was published from 1924 to 1934 – were often illustrated with drawings, in the early 1930s the photo stories gained more and more popularity. A photo story typically consisted of “four to seven photographs across a couple of pages to deliver a visual narrative in combination with supplementary texts. These stories resemble the story lines of movies and may have been attempts to compete against the visual attraction of film” (Hardt 73). The photographer Yva provides some of the most entertaining and visually stimulating photo stories in the *Uhu* magazine. One of them is “Kätchen Lampe,

Das Mädchen aus Braunschweig oder Eine Diva wird gemacht” which consists of 22 different photos, accompanied by text (Figures 1.17.-1.24.).<sup>66</sup> Yva’s pictures present a dream-fantasy of women who try to become what they see in these magazines – in this case, the wishful thinking of a small town girl who wants to become a movie star in the big city. After many attempts, she finally manages to make her dreams come true, becoming a star but settling in the end for the traditional role of a wife. She marries the director of her own movies who prohibits her from acting the future. Ironically, the director of Kätchen’s movies is also the director of her dreams, who becomes the dominant power as her husband and shatters her dreams of independent fortune and fame. This implies that the New Woman in the public realm of media and entertainment can have the illusion of freedom (being an actress gives her a certain amount of agency and control while still forced her to submit to the wishes of the director and more, generally, the demands of the film industry), but in the private realm of marriage she becomes powerless. The distinction of public and private is closely connected to the way women are perceived. In this regard, Yva’s choice of the photo format is telling. While all her images that show Kätchen’s rise as a film star are rectangular and connote the public’s observation of this woman’s development, the last image, which depicts the husband’s wishes for an end of Kätchen’s career, is an oval shape, which mimics the intimacy of a personal photo album picture. The discrepancy between what the public will see—the happy bride having achieved every little shop girl’s dream by marrying a director—and the sexually repressive closure of this happy occasion, is made explicit by the shape of the photographs themselves. Hence, Yva uses her tool for emancipation (the camera that

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<sup>66</sup> *Uhu*, November 1932, issue 2.

gives her financial independence from men) to reveal the truth behind the glamorous images of film stars to the women who emulate them. She ridicules both lifestyle options. By presenting the exact same portrait of the actress in supposedly four different films, Yva shows the exchangeability and monotony of the actress's movie roles and stresses the dangers of commodified dreams. Yet at the same time Yva criticizes women's withdrawal into old-fashioned stereotypical female roles. The dream of a happy, financially-secure marriage turns out to be an equally manufactured desire. The removal of Kätchen from the public eye robs her of any kind of agency. Yva's photographs become self-referential as they reflect on the medium's character of publicity, stressing the staging of photographs, and the staging of an actress's image. Yva presents the reader the bitter truth of manufactured dream lifestyles, a truth that is all too often hidden from the public eye but made explicit here in this photo series.

Contrary to the theme of male power domination in women's dream lifestyles, Yva shows in another photo story, entitled "Der Schnurrbart," how women can slowly gain control and power over their men. Reprising the Delilah idiom in one photograph a woman convinces her husband to shave off his archaic moustache (Figures 1.25.-1.31.).<sup>67</sup> The man hesitantly submits to the female wishes, and thus to her power. The loss of this patriarchal power symbol – the moustache – happens in stages until the entire moustache disappears and the wife concludes: "Ja, so gefälltst du mir am besten." While a fashion statement is made with his new look, Yva also makes the episode suggestive of a way for women to control their men. The shaved moustache is a metaphor for women's

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<sup>67</sup> *Uhu*, June 1931, issue 9.

empowerment and domination of their men.<sup>68</sup> It inverts the traditional trope of female as object of the male gaze, making the female the spectator whose desire commands the shape of the male-object. Women use what they have learned about their aesthetic projection to objectify and refashion the male spectator.

### Advertisements

While Yva's photo stories address the commodified status of housewives, most of the advertisements in the illustrated magazines concentrate on the New Woman and her desire for material objects to support and enable her commodified lifestyle. The exemplary advertising campaign of Elida (a manufacturer of beauty products) features full-page commercials in the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. The ad always shows a modern woman with a short haircut performing an action that would typically be associated with the New Woman. The advertisements drive home a simple message of: Be modern (Sei modern!) (Figure 1.32.), Be beautiful (Sei schön durch Sport und Elida) (Figure 1.33.), Be self-confident (Selbstbewusst) (Figure 1.34.). Women wanted to imitate these images; they wanted to adapt their own styles and their very lives to these images, which not only embodied the commercialization of their desires, but also promised to be an improvement of their lives.

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<sup>68</sup> Curiously, exactly this metaphor of the moustache becomes a significant image for the developing love relationship and power relations in Gina Kaus' novel *Die Verliebten*, discussed in chapter 4. At the train station when Gabriele is just about to leave for her theater journey, she suggests that Hartman could finally shave off his beard. After a couple of months apart and a lot of pondering about the status of their relationship Gabriele returns and notices to her surprise that Hartman really listened to her: he welcomes her home with a clean shaven face. Kaus suggests with this episode that Gabriele gained so much influence on Hartman that he would go out of his way to please her. The shaved face symbolizes that Hartmann is finally ready to engage in a serious relationship. Kaus stresses that the shaving made Hartmann immediately so much more attractive and younger looking, and implies that it is much easier for Gabriele to fall deeper in love with him because of his looks. Gabriele might also find him more attractive because he cared enough about her opinion to eliminate such a masculine symbol such as his moustache.

While advertisements for the traditional role of women as housewives and mothers can hardly be found, there is one exception: Rahma margarine. Rahma margarine appears with a full-page advertisement in almost every issue of the *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* during this period. Rahma tries to appeal to the traditional woman, whose primary occupation is to feed her family. But while Elida plays with the changing types of the New Woman (sometimes she is blond, and sometimes brown-haired) Rahma constructs a stereotype (Figure 1.35.). In every single ad we see the same round-faced, heavily built woman with a hairstyle that reminds us of idyllic mountain settings. The different representations of these two types of women suggest that they have varying roles in their lives. The Rahma mother figure is a traditional woman whose role in life is completely circumscribed by the domestic. She is constantly baking and cooking for Easter, for Pentecost (Figure 1.36.) and for her children (Figure 1.37.). She is also conscious of the costs of living and decides to buy Rahma margarine, which only costs 50 Pfennige for half a pound. The emphasis on home-making and thrift engages the political and economic crisis and depression that is completely ignored by the advertising companies who target the New Woman as the buyer. The New Woman, in contrast, is constantly changing in the advertisements. Her hair color and her activities are diversified, while she is always catering to the self rather than providing a service for others. She still has room to grow and for experimentation; this allows the female buyer to project a piece of individuality into the framework of the New Woman.

### **Female Authors**

Despite the persistence of the Rahma advertisements, the life of a housewife did not appeal to some women anymore as a biological or social calling; they longed for

equal recognition of labor both within and outside the home. Consider the article “Eine tüchtige Hausfrau muss 41 Berufe können!” by Dora Sophie in the 1925’s September issue of *Uhu*.<sup>69</sup> Here a housewife claims to have 41 jobs at once, spoofing housewives’ claims for equality or even superiority to men. A fictional woman (who appears in staged photographs by Sascha Stone) complains to her husband that the police did not recognize her activities as a housewife to be a meaningful profession. Her husband, Otto, agrees with the policeman: “Was willst du? Nennst du das einen Beruf? Das bisschen Wirtschaftführen?”<sup>70</sup> Of course, the narrator disagrees with her husband and sits down to write a list of the countless jobs she has to accomplish on a daily basis. This exact scene is staged in Sascha Stone’s first photograph for this story (Figure 1.38.). A woman in a striped dress casually sits in a chair in her kitchen. While her profession as a housewife is figuratively represented through the sewing machine on the left, a huge pot with the inscription “Suppe” on the right, and various kitchen utensils in the background, the viewer does not get the impression of a busy housewife. The woman playfully stretches out one of her legs on the sewing machine (while wearing fancy dress shoes), smokes a cigarette, and happily flips through a magazine. The proximity of Stone’s picture to the text would lead one to believe that it is supplementary, visually reinforcing the author’s argument; however, it is clear that the photo contradicts and ridicules the text. Further,

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<sup>69</sup> *Uhu*, September 1925, issue 12.

<sup>70</sup> Janice Winship explains that women’s work as housewives is not recognized because a) it is not paid work, and b) it is not seen by men who are themselves at the workplace. “The feminine activities of cooking, creating and looking after a home, and making oneself attractive have an uncertain status. In male terms these tasks do not constitute work because they are unpaid and done ‘for love’, and moreover are often done while men are at work. They are not work because they are about being a woman” (Winship 54).

At the same time, Michael Levine suggests, that the breakdown of tasks a woman has to fulfill in her housework shows an infiltration of the parcelization of the factory or office work. The organic structure of domestic life underlies the scrutiny of the woman here who measures and quantifies every single activity.

not only does the picture dismiss the argument of the text, it also discredits the housewife's efforts. It shows her attempts at self-determination, which would be better channeled into the striving of becoming a New Woman. Thus, the article exhibits an appropriation of the Hausfrau as a site for the emergence and dominance of the New Woman.

The dialogue established between text and image undermines the housewife's protest that her labor should be taken seriously by representing the labor itself as frivolous. For example: she decorates a hat despite the fact that she hates to wear it. "Den Hut für alle Tage – ich setze ihn allerdings nicht gern auf – habe ich selbst garniert... Putzmacherin." She forgets to bring her husband's best shirt to the dry-cleaner and therefore has to wash it herself. "Frack, wo ich Sauce draufgegossen habe, gereinigt... Reinigung" – her activities do not show accomplishments, but the correcting of her previous failures (Figures 1.39. - 1.41.). Many times, she is the cause of a problem that she has to make right again. For example, she puts rat poison in the basement, but instead of the rats the dog eats the poison and becomes sick, which forces her to cook medicine for the dog. This housewife's life is narrated as slapstick and farce. Her strenuous attempts to prove to her husband that she is right about having 41 professions are pitiful. This article is not a defense of the housewife after all, but a source of amusement to the reader. Yet it is also a radical undercutting of the ideal of the traditional housewife. The comic trivialization of the housewife becomes a way of negating its importance; one might even go so far as to say its sacredness.



In this respect, we can reconsider the first image both as a parody of the housewife and as a representation of the emancipated female reader who amuses herself and gloats over the pitiful qualities of this unjustifiably proud housewife. What also seems to be happening in this highly over determined story is the emancipatory image or spirit of the New Woman inverts the repressively gendered duties of the housewife, in which the compliant housewife takes pride, considering her activities as a legitimate profession. To sum up: the first impression we get from the photographs leads to the assumption that this article is about a serious and yet playful attempt to put the meaningful work of a housewife into a bright light. This reading is augmented by the content of the humorous images, in which the husband is usually portrayed as dominated and ridiculed. The aim of this article extends the ridiculing of the husband to the unsuccessful housewife and the chores of a housewife in general. The message here is clear: the housewife is not superior to the New Woman, and certainly not to men. Emancipation is achieved through the transition into being a New Woman, not by remaining in the traditional female role of housewife—and certainly not by trying to wrap the incarceration of marriage in the false dignity of honorable work.

For Vicki Baum the emancipation of women and the lifestyle of a New Woman seem to be the necessary advancement for women during the Weimar Republic. In her promotion of the New Woman in magazines she assumes that every woman wants to achieve or has already reached the status of a New Woman. The issues and problems Baum analyzes in her editorials therefore concern the nuances and fine-tuning of this image.

In the October 1930 issue of *Uhu*, Vicki Baum tries to answer the question: Who is the most desirable woman of the time (“Welche Frau ist am begehrtesten?”).<sup>71</sup> Unsurprisingly, she caters to the expectations of the *Uhu* readership, and celebrates the New Woman. The author begins by comparing the New Woman’s love life to the consumer culture. Interestingly, the consumption works in both directions. Women engage with numerous men as they might otherwise change their clothes according to the fashion of the day. “Frauen sind Großkonsumenten von Eroberungen [...] die unsichtbaren Skalps besiegtter Männer [...] sind Massenartikel.” However, at the same time women also have to reciprocate, marketing themselves like commodities to entice men into relationships. After all, the customer should know what he is buying—what he can expect from the woman whom he selects. Hence, Baum articulates love and sexuality in a commodity form wherein women *and* men are equally buyers and sellers. Moreover, Baum explains that a woman who wants to have a lot of relationships has to market herself as a commodity with a high market value: “Um begehrt zu werden, muß jede Frau eine Auslage arrangieren. Sie muß durch irgendein Schild anzuzeigen verstehen, daß dieses oder jenes bei ihr zu haben wäre.” The “Schild” translated as sign or tag, could be interpreted as a price tag, assuming that relationships do not rely on feelings anymore, but the exchange of a product. The lover in this context functions as another accessory to finish off an image. At the same time, the author suggests that the most exquisite stores have only one item in their shop window, suggesting that if a woman makes herself scarce she will exact a more highly valuable form of love. Baum tries to cater to various types of New Women: the vamp who devours men by the dozen, as well as “Die Dame,”

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<sup>71</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue 1.

who is pickier and preserves herself for the one true love. Still, her love life is also nothing more than a high-end product from a shop window. “Es geht damit der Liebe wie mit jedem andern Artikel. Die Warenhäuser legen helle Mengen davon in ihre Schaufenster. Aber in den Auslagen der erlesenen Geschäfte liegt nur ein Stück: ein Kleid, eine Flasche Parfüm, ein Hut, eine Perlenschnur. Ein Mann – eine Liebe....” Baum does not see commodification in this context as a critical comment on relationships between women and men during the Weimar Republic, but rather adjusts to the tone of the magazine and the concerns of the time. The consumer culture had a language that women of the time could easily understand, and because many women did not want to surrender their independence they didn’t pursue marriage; instead, they kept lovers because that is what was in fashion.<sup>72</sup>

Vicki Baum also distinguishes women from mothers and housewives, which implies that she specifically addresses the New Woman in this article.

Vollkommene Tugend ist wie eine Mauer, vollkommene Schönheit macht den Männern Angst, und vollkommener Verstand, wenn es einen solchen bei einer Frau gäbe, würde sie rettungslos in die Einsamkeit fallen lassen. Eine Frau, die mit Verlobung, Ehe und Zweikindersystem zufrieden ist, darf vielleicht vollkommen gutmütig sein. Aber die begehrte Frau, die als Frau Erfolg hat, muß – muß! – einen Schuß vom Bösen in sich tragen. Ohne diese kleine Schärfe schmeckt dem Mann jedes Liebeserlebnis langweilig.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Vicki Baum discusses in her autobiography the double moral/standards of Viennese society which on the one hand disapproved of her having a lover while being married, but on the other hand also approved because it was the standard of the time. “Langsam gingen mir die Geheimnistuerei und die Ausflüchte, die gestohlenen Stunden und die heimlichen Verabredungen auf die Nerven, alle die kleinen Würdelosigkeiten und das umfassende Unbehagen, die unweigerlich Teil und Last eines jeden Ehebruchs bedeuten. Um der Konvention die Ehre zu geben, mußten wir unseren allzu durchschaubaren Status der Sündhaftigkeit verstecken, der andererseits anerkannt und sogar gebilligt worden war, als wir selbst von unserem Glück noch gar nichts ahnten” (Baum 1987: 246).

<sup>73</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue 1.

In order to be successful with men, a woman may be neither *completely* virtuous nor beautiful nor intellectual, because these traits would drive men away. Women who want to become wives and mothers are allowed to be docile. However, women who want to be desirable have to feature a streak of wickedness in them to be interesting and exciting. Significantly, Baum separates the women, who want to be successful as women (“die begehrte Frau, die als Frau Erfolg hat”) from other women who want to perform roles successfully, particularly the traditional roles of mothers and housewives. This implies that the author sees the New Woman expressing herself exclusively in the category of womanhood. A return to old gender roles negates femininity, making the woman less sexually attractive or desirable.

Age complicates feminine desirability in the discourse of the New Woman’s sexual emancipation, placing limits on a woman’s entitlement to love and sex. In the following passage, Baum limits the New Woman’s existence to a life span of twenty years. The “New Woman-status” can be entered at age 20 and must be exited at age 40.

Was nun das Alter anbetrifft, so scheint es zwei kritische Kurven zu geben, an denen die Frau besonders gefährlich und gefährdet ist. Um die Zwanzig und um die Vierzig. Das Fieber des Anfangs, der Erwartung, des Aufschließens ist sehr ähnlich dem Fieber, das die Zeit des Aufhörens begleitet [...] <sup>74</sup>

Women’s sexual activity is here synonymous with their femininity because, as Baum further elaborates,

Seit man den Vierzigjährigen zugestanden hat, daß sie mit etwas Geschmack und Diskretion noch ein gewisses Recht hat, Frau zu sein, sind ihre Chancen im Wettkampf um den Mann sehr gestiegen, das ist nicht zu übersehen. <sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue1.

<sup>75</sup> *Uhu*, October 1930, issue1.

If women at the age of forty are discrete about their love relationships they are still allowed to have an affair, which means they can show their femininity (“ein gewisses Recht hat, Frau zu sein”), while hiding behind a de-eroticized image of mother and wife. Baum describes the life of a New Woman as a short but very desirable one, which allows women to live out their sexuality openly, however briefly, before they are compelled to engage in more “civilized” actions. These emancipated New Woman-years also allow her to actively pursue a man, which makes her the driving force of sexual encounters.<sup>76</sup>

Vicki Baum heavily promotes beauty in a vexed apposition to emancipation. In an issue of *Die Dame* of 1932 Baum sends advice from abroad. After having talked to a Ziegfeld Girl (comparable to the Tiller Girls) she writes that a woman should spend one day of the week only on her appearance (Figure 1.42.).<sup>77</sup> Baum gains the trust of her readers by giving them the impression that the following article is advice from woman to woman, and hence, her voice in this text takes on the form of authenticity. Moreover, because this advice comes first-hand from one of the Ziegfeld Girls, who are known to be very beautiful, her program seems to work, and will probably be imitated by many women.

Adhering to the image of the New Woman is again both a necessity and an opportunity, repression and emancipation. The Ziegfeld Girl mentions that a woman is only worth her looks, demonstrating that she is aware of her commodified status, but also

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<sup>76</sup> Vicki Baum explains that her early meaningless stories were published under Max Prels' name. She did not mind him using her stories. She just could not understand how an intelligent man like her husband could not come up with such simple stories by himself. “Nicht eine Zeile ist mir heute noch im Gedächtnis, und ich kann nur vermuten, daß er sich um die üblichen verschwommenen, verlogenen, sentimentalen Ergüsse handelte, die von den Familienblättern bevorzugt wurden und die, wenn man mehr Sex und Gewalttätigkeiten hineinschreibt, auch heute noch verlangt werden” (Baum 1987:235).

<sup>77</sup> *Die Dame*, issue 14, first April issue 1932.

takes charge of the opportunities she is offered thanks to her looks (a form of emancipation because women can navigate their own destinies inside the framework of their commodified status). “Sehen Sie”, sagte das Girl, “wir sind nicht einen Cent mehr wert, als wir aussehen, jede einzelne von uns; ich meine nicht nur von uns Girls, ich meine jede Frau. Sie bekommt so viel vom Leben, wie ihr Aussehen wert ist.” Two points stand out here: First, that beauty is not only a necessity for showgirls and actresses, but applies to all women no matter which profession they are in or the country they come from. Secondly, there is a strong belief that the work a woman puts into her appearance will pay (in the form of getting a job or finding a husband). However, what is lacking is the idea that a woman could accomplish something based on her knowledge and skills outside of the world of sexual desire and commodification. Here, she is confined to the narrow and superficial realm of her appearance.

On the other hand, beauty gets promoted as a tool to gain self-confidence.

Wissen Sie, ich habe einmal in einem Buch gelesen: “ihre Fußnägel glichen kleinen, rosigen Südseemuscheln.” Das hat mir Eindruck gemacht. Sie glauben nicht, wie gut gelaunt und selbstbewußt man wird, wenn man so hübschen roten Lack auf den Fußnägeln hat. Niemand sieht es, und man fühlt sich all right; man geht über die Straße, das Wetter ist miserabel – aber man hat heimlicherweise “rosige Südseemuscheln” in den Schuhen -- -- na, also ich erzähle Unsinn.<sup>78</sup>

The Ziegfeld Girl was inspired by a book to paint her toe nails red, just as other women might be influenced to follow the beauty advice from the illustrated magazine. The outside appearance leads at most times to a commodification of women—and this Ziegfeld Girl who believes that her value as a human being lies only in her looks—is clearly no exception. However, the polished toe nails are not visible to anyone else. She

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<sup>78</sup> *Die Dame*, First April issue 1932, issue 14.

does not manicure her toes to sell herself as a product to others—especially men—but thrives on the self-confidence she gains from doing something for herself, and reveling in the knowledge that she is beautiful, and enjoys secret very private little pleasures.

The fashion and lifestyle columnist Anita emphasizes the need to adhere to very strict guidelines in order to be considered beautiful in her article “Schönheitsideale in Zentimetern,” published in *Die Dame* (Figure 1.43.).<sup>79</sup> She reports on a beauty pageant in Massachusetts, listing the winner’s body measurements as the ideal beauty. While Anita reports in detail and predicts that many women will reach for a measuring tape after reading her article, she does not promote this beauty ideal as serious advice for self-improvement. Beauty is important for the women of the Weimar Republic, but discussions of body-consciousness happen with a wink of an eye, keeping the literature light and entertaining. Anita writes: “Man mißt sich selbst mit größter Genauigkeit, man mißt die Freundin (mit etwas gelockertem Zentimetermaß), man mißt die Großmutter, man mißt das Baby. ” The need to be beautiful, however, is not a new phenomenon of the Weimar Republic. Anita makes the case with historic examples that women have always cared about their appearance—and how they looked: “Kaiserin Elisabeth von Oesterreich war auf ihre 48 Zentimeter Taillenweite stolzer als auf die Habsburgische Krone.” She also observes that at specific points in time different body parts came into focus: the waist, the hair, the hips and most recently the legs. Anita reflects on the parcelization of the female body, a process by which she is made into a commodity that must emphasize its best quality in order to please. The author raises hopes that this circumstance could turn around because soon the face might become the target of fashion. Yet she undoes the

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<sup>79</sup> Anita. “Schönheitsideale in Zentimetern.” *Die Dame*. Issue 16. First May issue 1928.

aspiration with a sarcastic conclusion that women might begin to measure their noses, hoping that they will not be “eine Nasenlänge voraus.” This phrase has a double meaning because in German “eine Nasenlänge voraus sein” means to be ahead of others, or being better than others. However, as Anita presents it, women will take this literally and start measuring their noses. In her editorial, “Ein Mann muss nicht schön sein,” published in *Die Dame*, Gina Kaus takes a critical position on the concept of beauty in the Weimar Republic.<sup>80</sup> She begins her article with the observation that the aforementioned sentence silently implies that women *do* have to be beautiful in order to be successful, and further, that success for women *is* beauty. “Da ist vor allem der unbeleuchtete Geschwistersatz als selbstverständlich vorausgesetzt: eine Frau muß schön sein (um geliebt zu werden, um sich in der Welt behaupten zu können, um überhaupt eine richtige Daseinsberechtigung zu haben), ein Mann aber nicht.” Kaus criticizes this position by concluding that the rules for erotic attraction must have been set up by ugly men. “Das Reglement der erotischen Bedingungen steht unter der Diktatur des häßlichen Mannes.” Hence, she recognizes that women’s lifestyle is determined and limited by ugly men.

The blurring of gender roles makes it necessary to place the most desirable partners at the opposite ends of the beauty scale. Kaus explains that beauty is only associated with women in the Weimar Republic. The handsome man is not considered to be a manly man. Kaus hints at a feminization or “Verweiblichung” of men that opposes men’s outcries about the masculinization “Vermännlichung” of women and alludes to the male identity in crisis as a reason for this opposition.

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<sup>80</sup> *Die Dame*, issue 26, Second September issue 1926.



Als die Männerherrschaft noch auf festeren Beinen stand, galt die Wohlgeformtheit der Beine noch nicht als verdächtig. Heute ist Schönheit mit stupider Geläufigkeit an das weibliche Geschlecht gebunden, so daß der Knabe, der mit dieser zweideutigen Gabe beschenkt heranwächst, an seiner Männlichkeit irre wird. Er sieht sich in einer Welt, die ihm beides auf einmal: Mann und schön zu sein, nicht recht glauben will.<sup>81</sup>

A man in a world of such strong oppositions consequently needs to question his own masculinity (“irre wird”) if he is too beautiful. This implies that men have to strive to appear ugly, just as women have to work on being as beautiful as possible: they too are commodities who must labor to satisfy the demands of fashion.

Kaus explores the question of masculine aesthetic labor in her novel Die Verliebten, which I discuss in chapter 4. Gabriele’s love interest, Otto Hartmann, is rather unkempt and unsightly. After an unsuccessful relationship with the handsome, but effeminate Christian, Gabriele develops deep feelings for Hartmann who is not her type at all. However, before Gabriele and Hartmann can engage in a physical relationship, he gets a makeover, which rejuvenates and beautifies him. Kaus shows women do need handsomeness in men after all. In her magazine article she satirizes ugly men by describing them in every revolting detail.

Sieh ihn dir nicht an, den Schönen, er weiß nichts damit anzufangen. Er ist dir viel zu ähnlich, mit seiner rosigen Haut, seinen schimmernden Augen, seinen geschmeidigen Gliedern und schwellenden Muskeln. Ist er denn ein Mann? Mich sieh an, meine gelben, faltigen Wangen, meine beginnende Glatze, meinen vorgewölbten Bauch und meine mageren Arme – Ecce Homo!<sup>82</sup>

Beyond the amusing persiflage, this article exposes the gender anxieties surrounding masculinity during the Weimar Republic. In another article in the *Uhu* about “Unglückliche Liebe” Kaus describes how the New Objectivity allowed people to turn

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<sup>81</sup> *Die Dame*, issue 26, Second September issue 1926.

<sup>82</sup> *Die Dame*, issue 26, Second September issue 1926.

away from the sentimental thought of “living happily ever after” with one partner.<sup>83</sup>

People began to think about love differently. Marriage was not necessary anymore to engage in sexual relationships, and divorce became increasingly common and acceptable. Women could have several partners in a lifetime, so why would they ever settle for an ugly man? The ugly men Kaus accuses of presenting a negative and effeminate image of handsome men might have done so out of an unspoken anxiety about their ability to secure the attention of any women in a time of sexual liberation, a liberation and emancipation that men had observed, but not taken part in during the Weimar Republic. Men needed to adjust or react to the New Woman’s changes and progress.

The lifestyle and fashion columnist Anita, who for the most part wrote for *Die Dame*, engages in the discussion about relationships between men and women in her editorial “Die bevorstehende Männer – Emanzipation.”<sup>84</sup> She describes how women’s emancipation made it possible for the New Woman to lead a life of self-centered hedonism. “Der Erfolg war oft schwer errungen, und mutige Pionierrinnen haben viele Wege ebnen müssen, damit das junge Mädchen aus bürgerlichen Kreisen mit ihrem Freund in ein beliebiges Nachtlokal tanzen gehen kann.” By virtue of being self-centered, woman’s emancipation necessarily left men behind. Anita calls this fact “kleine Nebenwirkungen.” Men can only observe how the New Woman develops her lifestyle and fights for her freedom. They do not progress in this manner; in order to catch up, they need to become emancipated as well: “Der Mann sieht sich seit einer guten Weile alles mit an – belustigt, verärgert, erstaunt, ablehnend, bewundernd, achselzuckend oder mit

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<sup>83</sup> *Uhu*, May 1931, issue 8.

<sup>84</sup> *Die Dame*; issue 10, First February issue 1928.

Unbehagen. Während die Frau sich in vielen Dingen von Grund auf veränderte, ist er der gleiche geblieben. Und nun haben sie keine Verständigungssprache mehr.” While I agree with Anita that there is a breakdown in the communication between men and women—a concern that is clearly voiced in all the narratives that I consider in this dissertation — this is not merely a case of women freeing themselves from men; men react to this emancipation. For example, Pix, the love interest in Baum’s play Pariser Platz 13, becomes more effeminate himself through the interaction with the New Woman. The same applies to Christian, Gabriele’s lover in Gina Kaus’s novel Die Verliebten. Keun portrays in Gilgi, eine von uns a man, Martin, who starts to make do with his “niedlicher kleiner Junge”; yet, when that does not work out, he tries to dominate Gilgi once again by transforming her into a more feminine version of herself. On the fictional level the female writers already imagine how the newly defined togetherness between men and women could work by favoring an inversion of traditional gender roles, as well as an assimilation of gender roles towards a shared experience of equality by both men and women.

While Anita speaks of men’s passivity in terms of a standby position, she characterizes women as actively fighting for their rights and freedom. Nevertheless, outside of fiction, men are very much in control of the progress and form of woman’s emancipation expressed in this literature. For example, the Ullstein publishing house was led by men, who had the final say in what direction a magazine would take; thus, they also determined the freedom of speech of female writers such as Gina Kaus, Vicki Baum and Anita. While these women might have helped to create the image of the New Woman, they were in turn held to certain standards by men. Similarly, Kracauer

describes women who did not look the part of the New Woman, and who, as such, could not find work or were in danger of being let go if they did not adhere to this idealized image. In Vicki Baum's play Pariser Platz 13, Helen is the advertisement figure for beauty salons, but behind her stands her uncle Elias, who pulls the strings and determines what Helen has to do next. In this respect women only have the illusion of emancipation, performing the desires of their masculine puppet masters.

Anita's editorial stresses that women do need men in order to emancipate themselves and progress. "Man wollte und man erreichte immer mehr – bis man plötzlich auf einen toten Punkt gelangte. Es geht irgendwie nicht weiter. Gegnerisches Gebiet wird kampflos geräumt. Und mitten in ihrer Siegesstimmung wird die Frau stutzig und denkt: Was ist eigentlich geschehen? Warum ist kein Fortschritt mehr fühlbar? Weil der Mann nicht mitgegangen ist."<sup>85</sup> If men remain passive, women's progress will also stagnate, because they lack the necessary antagonisms and oppositions that drive their own development. Emancipation and liberation cannot be simply granted like a present, they need to be earned and fought for. This finds its expression in the allusions to war and the battlefield that Anita employs here ("Gegnerisches Gebiet wird kampflos geräumt.... Siegerstimmung"). Gina Kaus uses similar battle metaphors in her novel Die Verliebten, an observation I will elaborate on in chapter 4.

## Conclusion

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<sup>85</sup> Anita uses the German "mitgehen" as the idea of progress or development. She also uses in her editorial the metaphor of two dancers. While the woman is dancing and moving, her partner, the man does not move at all. "Dancing" i.e. emancipation and progress can only happen if women and men join in this form of dance together.

The illustrated magazine promoted the image of the New Woman in every respect. Of greatest concern to the female writers in these magazines were two major topics: woman's beauty as an image, and her relationship to men mediated through contested claims and interpretations of this image. While they accept some aspects already as a given, writers like Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus, and Anita reinforce this ideal image with their editorials. At times they engage critically with it, but it always happens with a wink. This allows female readers to reflect on their situation and lifestyle with an ironic distance, in which they can choose the depths of their engagement, varying from complex soul-searching to superficial entertainment.

The Ziegfeld Girl Baum interviewed shows the interconnectedness of these two issues of beauty and men.

“Ja,” sagte das Ziegfeldgirl, als ich Einwände murmelte, “wenn die Mädels sich lieber amüsieren wollen, statt sich zu pflegen, ja, was soll dann Großes aus ihnen werden? Ohne Opfer gibt es keine Schönheit. Und ohne Schönheit gibt's keine Karriere. Und wenn ich Karriere sage, dann meine ich nicht nur Geld, o nein, sondern das andere: Liebe, Heirat und so weiter. ”

Love and marriage become career goals that can only be achieved by aesthetic labor: work on oneself and one's self-presentation in the most material forms. The body, the hair, and the figure all need to comply with the beauty ideal of the time. And as Anita has shown, this image is unstable, changing from time to time, emphasizing the various body parts of the dismembered woman – a state of being which is reflected in the parcelization and commodification of the New Woman's body. The need to measure each body part separately is closely related to the division of labor and the new ways of seeing (via camera and film) in the Weimar Republic. Being beautiful thus becomes a tedious

enterprise, requiring maintenance and research—in a word, beauty becomes work. It transforms into a full-time job that allows women to hold a temporary job in the men's world as secretaries and shop girls. The parody of natural beauty these women create and men demand engenders a paradoxical liberation: a liberty that is contingent on the ability to materialize a fantasy. When beauty fades, women are discharged from their employment, an inversion which makes explicit the tacit dependence of emancipation on subordination. Very few women saw higher education as a form of liberation. Education could have given women the enduring knowledge and skills to rely on themselves for their entire lives. Instead, the New Woman was consigned to temporary islands of freedom, paradoxically granted by men, until they reached the natural "Abgangsalter" (Kracauer) from a pink-collar job.

Many women, such as the authors Vicki Baum, Gina Kaus and Anita, as well as the photographer Yva, were able to make a living from their contributions to illustrated magazines of the 1920s and, thereby, become free from dependence on their husbands. Moreover, the images of women cultivated in these magazines clearly aim for their emancipation. The call for being modern, being self-assured, and being beautiful pushed women to adapt to a new way of life, a life that was more concerned with self-fulfillment at the expense of the traditional, sacrificial role of mother and housewife. The numerous articles, photographs and advertisements in the illustrated magazine of the era sounded this call. The illustrated magazine of the Weimar Republic, therefore, must be seen as a tool of the emancipation and empowerment of women of the 1920s and early 1930s and as a means for the commodification of women.

## Chapter 2

### **“I want to be a New Woman!” Female Identity Formation through the Illustrated Press as Reflected in Irmgard Keun’s Novels Das kunstseidene Mädchen and Gilgi – eine von uns**

*Schlimm ist nur, daß man zur einen Hälfte verändert ist, zur anderen nicht, und jetzt besteht man aus zwei Hälften, die ganz und gar nicht zusammen passen, immer im Streit miteinander liegen, und keine will um Haaresbreite nachgeben.<sup>86</sup>*

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I will focus my discussion on Irmgard Keun’s Weimar Republic novels Das kunstseidene Mädchen (1931) and Gilgi – eine von uns (1932), paying specific attention to her depiction of the psychology of the New Woman *as woman*. Keun, who was presumably born in 1905, was herself a New Woman.<sup>87</sup> Living in the Weimar Republic between the ages of 12 and 28, Keun experienced and participated in the apogee of the Republic’s New Woman culture: her financial independence, achieved through her free-lance writing, contributed to this status, while her writing meditated on the conflicts that arose from it. Her descriptions of the Weimar Republic, as they come from a woman’s perspective, articulate a fuller and deeper model of the New Woman’s mindset. Her works portray the complex unfolding of events in the Republic; like a seismograph, she picks up on the culture, events, and images surrounding her, but registers them in a decidedly feminine idiom.

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<sup>86</sup> Keun, Irmgard. Gilgi-eine von uns. Hildesheim, Germany: Claasen. 1993. 101-2.

<sup>87</sup> Keun pretended to be five years younger, and declared her birth year to be 1910 instead of 1905. She began lying about her age just before her first novel was published, which made her into a “Wunderkind” to be so successful at the tender age of 21. For further information see: Haentzschel, Hiltrud. Irmgard Keun. Hamburg, Germany: Rowohlt, 2001.

As Devin Fore has argued in his discussion of Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz, Keun's novels *document* the time period with a woman's eye.<sup>88</sup> Keun's novels are not historical meditations; instead, they express the immediate impressions and sensations of the present moment. Reading almost like a collection of newspaper reports, her novels mimic a style of first person journalism. Keun picks up on this technique in her novels by describing at length the perceptions of her main female protagonists. The glittering lights, the shimmering dresses, the whores and the unemployed are vibrantly captured, in a photographic fashion. Keun does not have much time for deep, lyrical or stylistic verse. There is too much to see, too much to hear. Her protagonists' senses are overwhelmed with Berlin's sensuous cacophony. My aim is to show how the urgency of visual culture found eloquence through Keun's pen. Although Keun seldom wrote for any magazines, her writing is deeply influenced by the media of the period, while her status as an outsider allows for a deeper engagement with the recipient side of the New Woman's image. While Baum and Kaus create protagonists that promote the New Woman's image (as a beauty parlor proprietor or an actress), Keun's novels depict the interior struggles of women who attempt to mold themselves into the ideal this image promotes.

Keun represents the novel appeal of the illustrated magazine and its advertisements as so overpowering that Keun's main protagonists, Gilgi in Gilgi- eine von uns and Doris in Das kunstseidene Mädchen, cannot but succumb to them as temptations. The close relationship between the illustrated magazine and Keun's novels is reflected in the common characteristic of a steady flow of visual experiences. One might

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<sup>88</sup> Fore argues in his article "Döblin's Epic: Sense, Document, and the Verbal World Picture" that Alfred Döblin used his novel Berlin Alexanderplatz as a "diaristic montage" (184), in which the boundaries between fictional language and documentation of reality collapse into one written product.



be reminded of the Generation Golf literature of Florian Illis and Benjamin von Stuckrad Barre, who made it their agenda to draw a mundane image of their childhood and their everyday life.<sup>89</sup> This generation of authors who were mostly born in the 1970s had nothing to write about but their own nostalgic archivisation of an uneventful childhood in West Germany. The ritualistic bathing on Saturday evening, watching *Wetten dass...?* with the entire family and eating Nutella sandwiches are recorded in these books. They describe a quiet and boring life, which mostly speaks to the generation who lived through it. Keun's narratives go beyond this archivisation. She writes from a firsthand perspective—what she writes happens in the here and now, not in the past. She stresses the changes in the lives of women during the Weimar Republic, which may have been driven by a shallow consumer culture, but which nevertheless represent a decisive change from the former conservative woman. The countless occurrences of the naming of specific products show that this change is closely linked to the new visual media. Every generation wants to evolve and distinguish itself from the parent generation. Thus, becoming a New Woman is closely linked to the consumption of “in- fashion” products as one tries to belong to a new group and generation of women who would indulge and invest in themselves rather than sacrifice one's own needs for husband and children.

The former generations of women—especially in the upper classes—were mostly dependent figures who were expected to remain in the shadow of their husbands, subsisting on their favors and gifts. Women from the lower classes, however, had to

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<sup>89</sup> I draw a comparison between this group of current pop culture authors and Keun due to their similar book contents. The media and especially brand name products play a great role in Illis' and Stuckrad Barre's novels. Examples of these works are Florian Illies' *Generation Golf* and Benjamin von Stuckrad-Barre's *Soloalbum*.

make ends meet: their greatest virtues were to save money and be as handy as possible, performing as many tasks themselves to sustain their families. If they worked, their job was typically menial or blue-collar. With the New Woman, who is most often defined as a pink-collar worker, a new generation of women as consumers was born who had money to spare and could decide how to spend it. And although these women did not earn much money, they still had some left to treat themselves to a luxurious soap, perfume, or dress. This treat was not only intended for pleasure, but was a necessity to stay in the new, highly competitive job market. Only young and beautiful women kept their jobs as secretaries, shop girls, and stenotypists.

Although Keun's works are not part of the German literary canon, much work has been done to analyze her novels, especially the two Weimar Republic novels. For instance, Katharina von Ankum has investigated the consumer culture represented in both novels; Monika Shafi's work revolves around the identity formation of the main protagonists; and Rita Jo Horsley has written a very important and interesting article about the language of Das kunstseidene Mädchen. Where I see a gap in the research thus far that needs to be addressed is in the direct connection between the illustrated magazines of the period and Keun's novels. Many scholars take it as a given that Irmgard Keun drew inspiration for her books from the media (i.e. the movies, illustrated magazines) and the general visual culture of the time.<sup>90</sup> J.M. Ritchie, for example, explains that Keun uses newspapers and magazines in her novels to inform the reader of the socio-political background without ever having any of her protagonists engage with

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<sup>90</sup> "Ursula Krechel etwa attestierte den Romanen der Irmgard Keun eine ‚filmische Schreibweise‘“ (Kaminski 151).

these problems.<sup>91</sup> My approach differs because I suggest that the language and the tone of the novels draw very much from the illustrated press of the time, which has an overpowering presence in Keun's novels and cannot be seen simply as a prop in the background of her writing. I will show in explicit examples where Keun's novels and the contents of the illustrated magazines meet, which includes references to specific photographs and advertisements, and also Keun's writing style, which is greatly influenced by the visual world that surrounded her and found expression through these magazines. Moreover, there are many key scenes that center on the illustrated magazine, and suggest that Keun's characters develop their identities through the images of the New Woman presented in these magazines.

## **Gilgi –eine von uns**

### **Introduction**

Irmgard Keun's debut novel, entitled Gilgi-eine von uns, was published in 1931. The author was praised as a "Wunderkind" as she claimed to be only 26 years old at the time of the book's publication. Keun earned some promising praise for her book by her fellow writer, Kurt Tucholsky. "A female writer with humor," he writes, "what a surprise!", before going on to scold her "for the 'complications' (pregnancy) and lack of 'good feelings' with which she portrayed the love story in the second half of the novel" (Tucholsky ctd. in Horsley, 204).<sup>92</sup> Tucholsky's remarks imply that Keun could have had

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<sup>91</sup> "Her father, for example, reads the paper at breakfast, and alongside headlines about personal tragedies [...] there are reports of Polish troops on German soil [...] This, as will emerge, is a typical Keun device -- she makes the reader of the novel aware of the significant social and political forces of the time, without ever having her characters engage in abstract intellectual discussions" (Ritchie 70).

<sup>92</sup> "'Warum habe ich keine Worte? ... Kein Wort trifft zutiefst hinein.' the Problematics of Language in the Early Novels of Irmgard Keun." *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik (CollG)* 23.3-4 (1990): 297-313.

a successful career as a writer in Germany. However, her books were “denounced as undesirable ‘asphalt’ literature” (Ritchie 67) under the Nazi regime. Moreover, the system of literature criticism has been dominated by men until the 70s as Wittman argues, and therefore Keun had been forgotten after WWII.<sup>93</sup>

Keun’s story revolves around the main character Gisela, who calls herself Gilgi, a name she believes more fitting for a New Woman.<sup>94</sup> Gilgi leads the life of a typical New Woman: She works as a steno typist, tries to improve her financial situation by studying three foreign languages, keeps her body and wardrobe up to date, and engages in the occasional flirtation. She lives with her bourgeois parents, and everything seems to go her way until she finds out that she is an adopted child.<sup>95</sup> The loss of bourgeois ties results in Gilgi’s questioning of her accomplishments as a New Woman based on this class background. This uncertainty lets Gilgi venture out on a quest to find her biological mother, which leads her to both the proletariat and the upper class. Her striving for a new identity while her old one is shaken by her foster mother’s confession is one of the main story lines. The identity she has created for herself based on the illustrated magazine’s

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<sup>93</sup> “Die feuilletonistische Literaturkritik der dreißiger Jahre sowie die Literaturwissenschaft und – Geschichtsschreibung bis Anfang der siebziger Jahre haben die herrschenden gesellschaftspolitischen Verhältnisse des Patriarchats verinnerlicht. Signalisiert wurde das durch eine patriarchalische Perspektive der Literaturkritik, die den Mythos von einer geschlechtsneutralen oder allgemein – menschlichen Kultur vertrat und nur die von männlichen Autoren kreierten Präsentationsformen der Weiblichkeit gelten ließ” (Wittman 1990:78). See also J.M. Ritchie on this point. “Various reasons have been advanced for her failure to find a firm place in the literary canon: first and foremost, for example, that she is a woman and that the protagonists of her novels are generally women. In some eyes this alone disqualifies her as far as the allegedly still patriarchal people who write literary histories are concerned” (Ritchie 63).

<sup>94</sup> Compare Gilgi’s name change to Gina Kaus, who was actually named Regina and Vicki Baum, whose name is Hedwig.

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Boa explains that the uncovering of Gilgi’s adoption is the “heroine’s emancipation from traditional maternal ties when she discovers that she was adopted” (Boa 128). I would like to argue against this point because Gilgi already lives the emancipated life of a New Woman before her mother gives away this secret. What is more, Gilgi’s emancipatory status is questioned once she loses her ties in a bourgeois setting. Gilgi asks herself if she would still be same and would have accomplished as much if she had not grown up in a bourgeois household.

image of the New Woman is questioned once she becomes unsure of her bourgeois background. A different hereditary background might require her to rebel against another form of traditional woman, which leads to adjustments in the creation of the New Woman type.

Gilgi's life becomes even more complicated when she falls in love with Martin Bruck, an intellectual who does not like to work, and consequently cannot understand Gilgi's strict work philosophy. Hence, Gilgi temporarily gives up her ethics and discipline in order to be with Martin. His lifestyle rubs off on her so she leaves her New Woman principles behind and stays home with him. Only when two of her friends and their children die due to Gilgi's carelessness as Martin's seductive qualities hold her back from helping them; and when in addition she becomes pregnant, Gilgi realizes that she has to leave Martin to regain her autonomy. The novel ends with Gilgi entering the train to Berlin to flee from her current situation and to start a new life, which includes raising her child alone.

Between these two major story lines, the quest for identity and autonomy, which are the goals of the New Woman, the novel takes up the concerns and culture that the New Woman of the Weimar Republic had to face in various contexts. In the following, I will analyze the influence and pressure that the illustrated magazine imposed on Gilgi in various aspects that determine and transform her life. These factors are the pressure to conform to a certain body image, which causes gender confusion in her relationship with Martin; her consumer behavior, which distinguishes her from her mother's generation and, lastly, a visual narrative that Keun employs to mirror the visual culture of the period.

### The New Body Image

The agenda of the advertisement culture of the time was not only to sell products, but to instill a new body image in women. Consequently, a sports culture for women became fashionable. The athletic New Woman is but one image that Elida hair shampoos use for their products. The new, shorter and more comfortable fashion of the day (shorter skirts, the introduction of Rayon textiles) gave women the freedom to move unhindered but it also pressured them to exercise and watch their weight in order to pull off this image of the New Woman.

Gilgi enthusiastically absorbs and adheres to this new body ideology. Just as popular magazines suggest, she follows an exercise routine in the mornings and tortures herself with ice-cold showers.

Das Mädchen Gilgi ist aufgestanden. Steht im winterkalten Zimmer, reckt sich, dehnt sich, reibt sich den Schlaf aus den blanken Augen. Turnt vor dem weitgeöffneten Fenster. Rumpfbeuge: auf – nieder, auf – nieder. Die Fingerspitzen berühren den Boden, die Knie bleiben gestreckt. So ist es richtig. Auf –nieder, auf – nieder (Keun, Gilgi 5).

One of the magazines that Gilgi consults about the correct exercises is the *Uhu*. *Uhu*, an illustrated magazine mentioned by name in the novel, gives advice on how to gain the desired body image in the article “Rhythmische Gymnastik-Wie man seine körperlichen und geistigen Anlagen am besten entwickelt und frisch erhält” by Hertha Feist. Lili Baruch provides six documentary photographs that explain and illustrate various exercises to achieve what Hertha Feist puts into words.<sup>96</sup> Although this article was created through the cooperative work of two women, Hertha Feist’s advice and Lili

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<sup>96</sup> *Uhu*, issue 1, October 1925.

Baruch's photographs on achieving a healthy body and mind through the means of rhythmic gymnastics were not written with only women in mind. Men are also supposed to improve their bodies. Feist finds her models for this kind of exercise in "old times in Athens and Sparta." Her appeal to the audience to find a higher or complete understanding of the self resembles literary precursors such as Schiller's "On the aesthetic education of men." Herta Feist writes:

Die Antwort ist die, dass nach der Zeit, die den Körper durch allzu intellektuelle – also körperlose- Arbeitsweise sozusagen abgetötet hatte, in einzelnen wieder der Instinkt wach wurde, den Körper nicht zu vernachlässigen, sondern ihm das Leben zu lassen, dessen der Mensch bedarf, wenn er aus ganzer Kraft wirken und zur vollen Entfaltung seiner Anlagen gelangen will.

This sounds very much like Schiller's concerns about the specialization of man, which caused his loss of a wholeness of body and soul – a loss that can only be regained through art.<sup>97</sup> A similar split between emotional feelings and rational thoughts is Gilgi's problem; this problem cannot be solved through art but requires instead the complete financial independence from men (as Gilgi's friend Hanna suggests). This fiscal autonomy, while a separation from the traditional gender relationship, marks a reintegration of the female with her whole identity: she is no longer part person, part dependent, but an autonomous, entire being in all things. Therefore, only when the New Woman is no longer dependent in this traditional way will she be able to face man as an equal partner and whole being, instead of as a collection of fragments.

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<sup>97</sup> This comparison seems to be fitting, because Herta Feist finds her models in "Athens and Sparta". Schiller as well propagates in his letters "On the aesthetic education of men" the Greeks as the role model. They were leading a life of balance between body and mind.

On this view, our understanding of the rhythmic gymnastics of the 1920's can be enlarged beyond mere strategies for personal improvement or even feminine sex appeal, and reconceived as a means for bettering the whole nation. The appeal is national, not personal. Herta Feist closes with a remark that eerily anticipates Nazi propaganda: "Wird die rhythmische Gymnastik in diesem Sinne geübt, dann hat unsere Zeit nicht vergeblich zu diesen Mitteln körperlicher Betätigung gegriffen, um ein verlorengegangenes Reich wieder zu erschliessen und an Leib und Seele zu gesunden." On the one hand, we can assume that Herta Feist seems to stress a monarchist, right wing approach, which bemoans the physical weakness of the ailing Republic; on the other hand, the explicit depiction of exercising women in her photographs leads to the conclusion that Herta Feist believes women to be as capable and strong as men—so much so that they become interchangeable bodies. This desired interchangeability, however, insofar as it implies parity, also suggests that women have to lose their femininity, deny their feminine physique, and work on muscle toning that is not only androgynous, but in some cases also masculine. In other words, women become equals by adopting the form of that to which they would be equal: men.

Gilgi's appearance and body image is very much shaped by the magazine culture of the period. She tries to keep her slender, boyish body shape as advertised in the magazines of the day by a rigorous exercise regime, dieting, smoking, and using the advertised beauty products. She also establishes herself as a New Woman through her haircut and clothing. Gilgi's strict exercise routine derives from the wish to conform to the ideal body of the 1920's for women and also goes hand in hand with Gilgi's general approach to life. She wants her life to be an arithmetic problem that has an easy solution.



A structured and focused daily schedule with clear plans for the future makes Gilgi a rational working woman, who is self-reliant and intends to stay this way. She lives her life like a well-oiled machine until Martin enters it and causes failure and malfunction (“Betriebsstörung”) in this machinery.<sup>98</sup> Gilgi gives up her job to be with Martin. Her entire schedule changes and her exercise routine is eliminated, which shows that Gilgi’s relationship robs her of her status as a New Woman and forces her into a traditional housewife role.

### **The Consumer**

Illustrated magazines emphasized visual, and, especially, consumer culture through advertisements. They promised that women could become New Women through the consumption of certain goods. As Barbara Kosta argues, “The path that promised a new life course started in the 1920’s with the advent of modernity, a consumer culture and a sophisticated visual culture” (Kosta, 137).<sup>99</sup> Like other New Women, Gilgi vigorously consumes products that were heavily advertised in the *Uhu*, *Die Dame* and the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* while Keun was writing her novels. Gilgi uses, for example, Nivea Crème in the mornings (Keun, Gilgi 6), Kalodermaseife (Figure 2.1.) and Pebecozahnpasta and Lux- Seifenflocken (Keun, Gilgi 8) (Figure 2.2. – 2.3.).

Kaloderma soap uses the image of the New Woman in its advertisements, presenting a woman with a short haircut who sports the desired slender body type. She holds a parasol and wears many bracelets, which evoke an oriental image and add a

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<sup>98</sup> The most powerful visualization of the city as a monstrous machine, as well as a symbol of its time is the Moloch machine in Fritz Lang’s movie *Metropolis*.

<sup>99</sup> Kosta, Barbara. “Cigarettes, Advertising, and the Weimar Republic’s Modern Woman.” Gail Finney (ed.). *Visual Culture in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany*. Indiana UP. 2006: 134-153.

cosmopolitan autonomy to the New Woman sensibility. During the Weimar Republic, there was a great interest in other cultures, as prominent articles from correspondents of foreign countries in the magazines show. Barbara Kosta, who analyses the representation of women in cigarette advertisements, makes the point that many illustrations showed women in oriental clothes or in an oriental setting on a divan. “With tobacco being imported, for the most part, from Turkey, it was common for advertisers to employ ‘oriental’ stereotypes to lend an air of exoticism to their product” (Kosta 146).<sup>100</sup> Showing interest in foreign countries and their culture and art was considered chic, and even the ambitious Gilgi has dreams of visiting foreign countries.

Gigli’s desire for the exotic and the foreign intensifies, as we can see in her attempt to learn foreign languages and shift toward wearing exotic clothes; however, this exoticism is nevertheless a provincial simulation of the styles from the magazines. The admiration for the delicate female craftsmanship of foreigners is expressed in an article from *Uhu*: a woman describes in great detail the beautiful butterflies on her bathrobe.<sup>101</sup> Gilgi does not possess a robe that is as exotic, but Keun alludes to this fashion by dressing Gilgi in pajamas with stitched swallows, and when she goes to answer the door she wears a dressing gown with large sunflowers. While Keun’s imagery remains embedded in a German setting, it nevertheless suggests flourishes of the exotic, reflecting a fashion trend that Keun must have seen in the illustrated magazine and perhaps even participated in herself.

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<sup>100</sup> Kosta, Barbara. “Cigarettes, Advertising, and the Weimar Republic’s Modern Woman.” Gail Finney (ed.). *Visual Culture in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Germany*. Indiana UP. 2006: 134-153.

<sup>101</sup> *Uhu* issue 1, October 1925. “Die Schmetterlinge auf meinem Schlafrock.” By Lela Dangl.

Keun furnishes the lives of her protagonists with the accessories modeled in the advertisements of the day. They show signs of a product-oriented, and consumer culture consciousness that was essential for the New Woman. What we consider to be hidden advertisements today seem to have been an essential tool for the author to shape the image of the New Woman. These ads were made for women (and *sometimes by* women in the case of the photographer Yva, who shot commercial photographs for pantyhose ads (Figure 2.4.)).<sup>102</sup> Thereby, they showed a contemporary, ideal New Woman with whom consumers like Gilgi could identify and emulate by using the advertised products.

### **Gender Confusion**

Due to her active lifestyle, and the focus on keeping fit, Gilgi is very muscular (Keun Gilgi 6); and as I will argue, this muscularity provokes new, unsettling gender confusion between her and Martin that complicates the already vexed generational differences between the two. Gilgi has the boyish, Garçonne look that had become fashionable at the time. Katharina von Ankum points out that Gilgi's body shape was the period's *sine qua non* of femininity of the New Woman: "The belief in the necessity and feasibility of controlling the natural process of aging, adjusting their bodies to the cultural norm through exercise and cosmetics was thus a central part of the 'New Woman's' identity" (von Ankum 1995:181). Interestingly, Martin describes Gilgi very often as a child or a boy in their relationship. "Martin nimmt Gilgi den Mantel ab: ein schlanker Junge, ein lebendig gewordenes Gainsborough – Bild steht vor ihm. 'Mädelchen, du gefällst mir'" (Keun, Gilgi 94). Martin is twenty years older than Gilgi, a nuance that does much to explain his paternalistic mannerism towards her. Yet this paternalism

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<sup>102</sup> Please refer to chapter 1 for a detailed discussion of photography and advertisements for women.

exceeds a merely sexual condescension insofar as he also takes on a mentoring role with respect to his “niedlicher Junge.” “Auch sonst – in anderen- Dingen – hast du die Augen noch zu wie’n neugeborener Säugling, aber ich werde dich schon sehen lehren” (Keun, Gilgi 118). He never seems to recognize her as a woman. Many times, she is either belittled or boyish in his eyes. “Lacht dumm und sinnlos, als er sie hochhebt – das magere kleine Ding! Wetten, dass es nicht mehr wiegt als 50 Kilo!” (Keun, Gilgi 100). In this passage, Gilgi is denied any gender at all as Martin addresses her in his thoughts as “it.” This “it” characterization transforms Gilgi into a thing, a toy in Martin’s hands, and prevents their relationship from becoming serious and from being well grounded in equality between the partners. “Schon besänftigt kommt Martin näher. Wundert sich selbst, dass er das drollige, dumme kleine Ding so ernst nimmt. Er hebt sie aufs Fensterbrett, es macht ihm Spass, mit ihr zu hantieren wie mit einer Puppe” (Keun, Gilgi 128). As a gendered, sexual creature, Gigli had autonomy and identity, which is to say, independent meaning in Martin’s social imaginary; however, as a doll Martin can play with her according to his whims and wishes, rendering her character lifeless. She is not a partner, nor a human being to be taken seriously, but an “it”—a linguistic reference to an ideal object divested of specific, autonomous identity.

In the following scene, Gilgi gets even more fragmented and almost statuesque in Martin’s eyes as he admires her legs.

Na, wenn er ihr nicht ins Gesicht sehen soll, sieht er sich eben ihre Beine an. So schön und vollkommen ist die sanfte, weiche Linie der Waden, so klar gemeisselt das Knie, dass man Freude daran haben kann, ohne begehrtlich zu werden. So eingehend freut sich der Martin an den hübschen lebendigen Kunstwerken, so dumm und kindisch spricht er von seiner Freude, dass Gilgi eifersüchtig wird auf ihre eigenen Beine. Sind doch keine selbständigen Lebewesen, sind doch ein Teil von ihr, der tut gerade

als wär's anders. "Ich wünscht, du hättest mich lieb, Martin – verstehst du – mich!" (Keun, Gilgi 128-9).

Martin's appreciation of her as art makes her existence mere artifice; she is made artificial and unnatural, and thus, evacuated of any inherent meaning. She is only what he bestows upon her by his gaze. Her legs are detached from her body under his gaze, and rendered particular *objects d'art*—carved like the legs of a statue to be enjoyed by the well-read and educated aesthete, which Martin typifies. Gilgi's rigorous exercises sculpted a muscular, boyish statue that fails to register as a woman in Martin's mind. Dispassionately, he studies her legs without sexual desire. This is an obvious criticism of the new body image of the New Woman. Men seem not to understand what to do with these boyish looking girls, who have evolved so far away from traditional women. Moreover, Gilgi regrets that Martin does not seem to love her personality, but rather concentrates on certain body parts that the New Woman tries to emphasize with the fashion of the day. This parcelization of the woman's body is caused by the overwhelming amount of visual stimuli that modernity had to offer. In turn the gaze became like a camera's recording of its surroundings, registering parts instead of the organic whole. Martin cannot love her; he only shows interest in the image Gilgi projects, a desexualized interest at that. Helga Karrenbrock explains the changing image at the emancipation of the New Woman as more of an "Entweiblichung" than a "Vermännlichung" (Fähnders 30). Gilgi is degraded to a boy, a child, and a thing by Martin: his equal neither in age, gender, or claim to interiority.

A woman stripped of femininity becomes an "it," a blank slate for men to re-form into a new type of woman that give them an aesthetic pleasure. Martin puts in

considerable effort to make Gilgi into his dream woman. First, he pressures Gilgi to give up her job and become a stay-at-home housewife. Then, he asks her to wear beautiful dresses and to put on make-up. “Und viel, viel verliebter wär’ er in die Kleine, wenn er ihr schöne Kleider schenken könnte und Brillanten und weiche Pelze... ist nun mal so: je strahlender und eindrucksvoller man jemandem gegenübertritt, um so lieber hat man ihn” (132). “Geh‘, zieh‘ dein rotes Kleid an, schmink‘ dir die Lippen” (Keun, Gilgi 134). Martin molds her so he can love her more. Unlike the protagonists of Baum’s and Kaus’s texts who have a hard time engaging with the masculine sex due to their status as New Women, Keun’s women are not yet completely rooted in their status as New Women. They can still decide between love and the domination that comes along with it or alienation from men and independence.

Gilgi realizes that the changes Martin wants to make to her personality will alienate her from what she had tried to establish as her identity. A look into the mirror makes it hard for Gilgi to recognize herself.

Weisses Gesicht mit dunklen Augen, sehr rotem Mund – ich bin sehr hübsch heute – jetzt – ich darf das sagen, ich gehöre mir ja nicht mehr. Das, was ich im Spiegel seh‘, hat ein anderer aus mir gemacht, ich kann nicht stolz darauf sein. – Ich sollte so nicht aussehen (Keun, Gilgi 134-5).

In opposition to Keun’s character, Doris, from Das kunstseidene Mädchen, who dresses for success —dressing up for men to admire her— Gilgi always follows a path of independent success. She does indeed dress according to the fashion of the day, and also comes to the realization that she has better chances of getting a job than other girls due to her appearance, but her intention is never to attract men. “Liebe ist nett und vergnüglich, aber man darf sie nicht ernst nehmen” (Keun, Gilgi 93). Falling in love with Martin was

not planned; it simply happened. And because Gilgi loves Martin so much, she allows him to change her; however, she is not happy with the dominance that Martin achieves. She feels that she does not belong to herself anymore because her appearance is not self-determined but guided by a man's wants and needs. Martin's intervention goes against Gilgi's motto of: "Gepflegt ist mehr als hübsch, es ist eignes Verdienst" (Gilgi 7), and takes away the New Woman's power of self-management.<sup>103</sup> Two ugly pointing fingers— her working fingers— are all that is left of the old straightforward Gilgi.

Sie hebt ihre Hände – langsam – meine Hände sind mir untreu geworden, waren mir einmal vertraut – und jetzt? Weiche, müde Haut, spitzgefeilte Nägel, glänzend von rosigem Lack. Vier zärtliche, verliebte Luxusfinger an jeder Hand – daneben die Zeigefinger mit den hartgetippten Kuppen – gewöhnliche, robuste Arbeitsinstrumente – man darf sie nicht auch glänzend machen, darf ihnen das nicht antun. Acht vornehme, elegante Finger, zwei ordinäre – ihr hässlichen, stumpfnägelligen, von allen meinen zehn Fingern seid ihr beiden mir immer noch die liebsten (Keun, Gilgi135).

Although Gilgi realizes that Martin molds her as he wishes, and although she expresses that she is clearly not happy with this, she does not manage to give him up entirely. When she is pregnant, she decides to leave Martin because she fears his rejection when he finds out that he is going to be a father. It is important to consider the way body control works at this moment; as an aspiring New Woman, her focus is on the discipline and shaping of her body, as her lover, Martin has enjoyed sculpting her appearance to his tastes. Now, however, in pregnancy, her body is re-materialized, naturalized, and de-aestheticized; and

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<sup>103</sup> Livia Z. Wittman argues that Keun's protagonist is not ready to fulfill men's dreams for a woman trapped in either the stereotype of Madonna or whore. She rather holds on to her own identity and leaves the beloved man. "Denn selbst wenn die Frau die vom Mann geschaffene Dichotomie der Weiblichkeitsvorstellung, Mutter oder Hure, verinnerlicht, bleibt immer noch ein Rest übrig. [...] Keun und Fleißer aber statten ihre Frauengestalten mit so viel Willen zum Festhalten an ihrer eigenen Identität aus, daß sie, da sie sich vom geliebten Mann nicht vereinnahmen lassen wollen, ihn lieber verlassen" (Wittman 1982:75).

in this condition, the condition of the maternal body, she fears her relationship cannot hold. This suggests that the female body has become a mediating ground for the sexes, a space in which gendered wills could be worked out in an aesthetic context. Re-grounded in the context of pregnancy, though, Gigli, develops a new relationship to her body that transcends the mere aestheticisation Martin enjoyed. Nevertheless, even then she still has the hope that he will follow her, and they will be reunited some day. It seems that the New Woman is incompatible with a relationship, because men do not change or adapt to the new awareness that women have gained for themselves.<sup>104</sup>

## Mothers

Another way for Gilgi to establish and define herself as a New Woman is to distinguish herself from her parents' generation and in particular from her various mother figures. As I would like to show, this definition of the New Woman and the rejection of the traditional female role model are always inextricably linked to the illustrated magazine. Here the magazine guides a new generation to stay on track and not to fall back into old-fashioned patterns. This causes a disconnect with the mother's generation, just as the image of the New Woman ruptures the possibility of a stable relationship between a man and a woman.

First, Gilgi clearly distances herself from the mother she grew up with – Mrs. Kron. She catches Mrs. Kron for her own contemplation at a moment when her mother is reading an illustrated magazine, in search of the latest sales.

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<sup>104</sup> The fashion columnist Anita wrote an article "Die Emanzipation der Männer" for *Die Dame*, which I discuss in chapter 1 where she puts the same claim forth. She says that men only stood by patiently while the New Woman invented herself, which caused a disconnect between the sexes and led to misunderstandings.



Frau Kron liest. Sie ist breit und zerflossen. Das Fleisch ihrer Arme und Brüste ist ehrbar schlaff und müde. Sie ist grau und reizlos und hat nicht den Wunsch, anders zu sein. Sie kann es sich leisten zu altern. Ihr dunkelblaues Wollkleid hat hellgrauen Kragen- und Manschettenaufputz. Oben am Halsausschnitt steckt eine elfenbeinerne Brosche – Rudimente der Eitelkeit (Keun, Gilgi 12).

Mrs. Kron does not wish to be different from what she is. However, as Keun points out, she does not need to be—she is old and married. Moreover, with her “Hausfrauenhände” (Keun, Gilgi 29), she represents the typical traditional housewife who never desired to be anything else. Gilgi, however, is still young and has to keep up her market value (von Ankum 1995:181). Gilgi needs to watch her weight, because she realizes that just learning three foreign languages will not guarantee her a job forever. When she applies for a position typing the memoirs of an officer, she begins to understand that she got the job because she was prettier than the pale girl.

Die hat ja die gleiche Chance gehabt. So? Hat sie? Mit dem krunkligen, alten Gesicht, der latschigen Haltung, mit den matten, blicklosen Augen und den häßlichen Kleidern??? Wer nimmt die denn noch? Die hat ihr Leben verpfuscht, früher wenigstens hat sie doch mal die gleiche Chance gehabt. Oder etwa nicht? Gilgi wird unsicher. Die Tatsache, daß die Menschen mit höchst ungleichen Chancen ins Leben starten, wackelt erst ein bißchen – dann steht sie fest. Eine ganz gemeine Ungerechtigkeit, findet Gilgi (Keun, Gilgi 84-5).

This acknowledgement makes Gilgi realize that she is in a privileged position. Not only has nature given her a prettier face, but she also has a better chance to live up to the standards of the New Woman because of her status as a bourgeois girl. This contradicts

the common belief in the New Objectivity that it is not one's social background that would determine one's life but the individual's effort.<sup>105</sup>

When Gilgi learns on her twenty-first birthday that she was adopted by the Krons, and, therefore, that she was not born into her current class and position in life, she is forced to recognize the contingency of class:

Nur nicht die Nase so hoch tragen, nur nicht immer denken, es wäre so ganz und gar eigenes Verdienst, wenn man was besseres ist. Wenn die Krons sie nun nicht adoptiert hätten, wenn sie von der Täschler aufgezogen worden wäre, hinten in der Thieboldgasse, wenn sie – man lieber gar nicht dran denken --- (Keun, Gilgi 57).

Gilgi is impelled to visit her real mother, Mrs. Täschler, who is a seamstress. Their first encounter reveals the gap between social classes during the Weimar Republic. On her way, dressed in a trench coat and a fashionable beret, Gilgi makes a stop in front of the glamorous Savoy Hotel before she drifts into the red light district where the homes of the less fortunate are located. "Gott sei Dank, jetzt steht sie vorm Savoy-Hotel, hier ist es weniger stürmisch. Sie streicht sich den Trenchcoat glatt und die Haare, gibt der kleinen Baskenmütze wieder den richtigen Sitz. [...] An der Passage stehen ein paar trübselige Nutten" (Keun, Gilgi 38). Gilgi is clearly marked as a fashionable New Woman who enters the wrong environment or context for her.

Mrs. Täschler is also participating in the construction of the New Woman by providing the means, the latest fashion trends, for the New Woman to dress herself. Gilgi camouflages her visit by ordering a new dress and jacket from the seamstress. However,

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<sup>105</sup> "Nicht Herkunft und Charakter wurden als ausschlaggebende Momente für das soziale Fortkommen angesehen, sondern einzig und allein die individuelle Leistung. 'Wer will, der kann!' war die Devise, und der Traum vom Tellerwäscher zum Millionär schien realisierbar" (Falk 166).

the glamour of the fashion magazines that Mrs. Täschler uses as inspiration for the clothing she makes is in stark contrast to herself and her own living conditions.

Das ist sie. Sie ist mager und vertrocknet, und ein Gesicht hat sie gar nicht, das hat sie verloren. Sie hat eine Bademütze auf dem Kopf, graugelbe Haarstähnen hängen drunter vor. "Dae Moetz han ich auf wejen der Kopfschmerzen, do han ich ne kalte Umschlag drunger. " Und Gilgi empfiehlt Aspirintabletten und besieht sich die Modejournale, die die Hexenfinger vor ihr ausbreiten. Man kann doch nicht aufgucken, man kann doch keine ansehen, die kein Gesicht hat! Pfanne mit klebrigen Bratkartoffeln, Dame ohne Unterleib, schmutziges Bett, Gestank nach ranziger Magarine, feuchte Wände und morscher Fußboden. "Elegante Welt." Schönheitsnummer: die schöne Grossmama schreibt ihrer Enkelin: Karneval, ach, der war zu unserer Zeit noch toll und köstlich, trotz der Maske war ich immer umschwärmt, denn man sah genug von meinem schönen Teint (dessen ganzes Geheimnis die Pfeilringplege war)...Miss Germany 1931..."das hättense auch werden können, Froellein! " Und der Kopf mit der Bademütze lacht, das ist aber nicht wahr, das ist gelogen, das Lachen. Und der Kopf beugt sich und ist jetzt dicht neben Gilgis... (Keun, Gilgi 41-2)

Apart from the repulsive filth that surrounds Mrs. Täschler in her living quarters, it is perhaps most striking that in Gilgi's perception she does not have a face, just a bathing cap and her silk robe. This fact can be interpreted in many ways. First, Mrs. Täschler is part of the faceless proletarian masses, and is similarly stripped of interiority as Gilgi was by Martin. Gilgi, as a woman from the pink-collar, working class, who has hopes and dreams for the future, sets herself apart from the faceless working class that her mother is part of through her individualistic dreams. Mrs. Täschler serves Gilgi's need to become this ideal New Woman by sewing stylish clothing for her. Secondly, Gilgi thinks she has found her biological mother. Their twenty-one year-long separation disconnected the two, so that Mrs. Täschler is but a blank slate, a *tabula rasa*. Gilgi is supposed to know this woman, but she does not; she does not even have the desire to be associated with this sad

creature. She repeatedly tells herself that all of this is just a bad dream. Therefore, Mrs. Täschler's face is wiped out for Gilgi. She cannot connect with a blank face.

Usually a face provides human beings with first points of connection as they gaze into each other's eyes, a smile, etc.; yet, here, the connection fails to be achieved and a substitution is made with the artificial, beautiful "Grossmama" (Keun, Gilgi 41) popularized in the magazine. The comparison of Gilgi's presumed mother, Mrs. Täschler, with a grandmother might stress the differences between the two women based on changes occurring over time. In the triangle of "Grossmama," mother Täschler, and the daughter Gilgi there are three different generations of women who might not have the same life experience, a fact emphasized by the grandmother's nostalgic reminiscences about the time when she was young: "Karneval, ach, der war zu unserer Zeit noch toll und köstlich." Interestingly, in her letter the grandmother writes about Karneval, which reconnects Gilgi with her foster parents, the Krons, because her father is a member of a Karneval club. Gilgi's disappointment with her biological mother is compounded by the text from the magazine. She does not seem to find the right words or feelings for this woman, and employs the artificial voice of a magazine article to gather her thoughts.

Und weil sie [Frau Täschler] jetzt neugierig ist und was erwartet, bekommt sie langsam so was, das wie ein Gesicht aussieht. Ein graues Gesicht mit klobiger Nase, entzündeten Lidern, lippenlosem Mund und faulen Zähnen. Die schöne Grossmama schreibt ihrer Enkelin... So ein Gesicht zu bekommen! Warum hast du dir das gefallen lassen? Man kann dich nicht gern haben mit dem Gesicht, man kann noch so sehr wollen, es ist unmöglich. [...] Und Gilgi fühlt, wie ihr Gesicht weißer wird und ihre Augen tief in die Höhlen kriechen (Keun, Gilgi 44).

Mediating her thoughts through the idiom of magazine culture suggests that her quest to be a New Woman is not merely physical; rather, the superficial and professional aspects

of the New Woman idiom she pursues are related to a psychology and language all their own. Gilgi begins to accept the truth, hard though it may be for her to recognize, that this woman is her mother. At last she can make out Mrs. Täschler's facial features, and feels that her own face ages and begins to resemble her mother's. Logically, if Mrs. Täschler is her mother, she must also resemble parts of her features.

However, Mrs. Täschler explains to Gilgi that she was actually born into an upper class setting, but her real mother, Mrs. Greif, had to give her up because Gilgi's father was a poor fit for Mrs. Greif's rank. Gilgi decides to meet this woman out of despair. She needs money for her friends—Hans and Hertha—and Mrs. Greif seems to be the only one who can provide her with the needed cash. Mrs. Greif reflects the shallow artificiality of magazine cover heroines. Gilgi compares her with a protagonist of a mediocre magazine novella. She also calls her a “fesches Americangirl” (Keun, *Gilgi* 228). Furthermore, Gilgi refers to her as “die Magazindame,” because she seems to have stepped right out of the pages of a magazine. Mrs. Greif is entangled in a loveless marriage and difficulties with her current lover. After her disappointing discovery that her mother is a seamstress, the reversal which makes her the daughter of the living image of a cover girl should legitimate her claim to becoming a New Woman in her own right. However, seeing the compromises her ‘mother’ has made proves unacceptable: Gilgi neither wants to belong to the poor proletarian seamstress, Mrs. Täschler, nor to her biological mother, the embodiment of the illustrated magazine. Gilgi sees herself as a hardworking girl who will make her own way on her own terms, which ironically embodies the spirit or ethos of being a New Woman, while rejecting the formal requirements as its primary hallmark. Renny Harrigan, who analyzes the work situation of New Women in the novels of the

Weimar Republic, argues: “Work cannot in and of itself create emancipation, but emancipation surely will not occur without it” (Harrigan 100). Work seems to be a determining factor for the New Woman, which explains why Gilgi rejects her “Magazindame”-mother. This woman does not have to work for anything, yet leads a very unhappy life with a husband who cheats on her all the time. For this kind of life she gave up her daughter, Gilgi, instead of being determined and self-reliant. She did not try to raise Gilgi alone, a big step in the way of emancipation that Gilgi will take in the end. Gilgi is determined, but at the end of the novel still has no roots. Gilgi passes through all three levels of society, beginning with her adoptive family—the Krons—who brought her up in a bourgeois setting, then a member of the proletarian class which she finds faceless, and concluding with her true biological mother, a lady from the upper-class whom she finds repulsively magazine-like.

It is significant that Gilgi’s attitude toward all three mothers is shaped through the magazine. She focuses on her foster mother Mrs. Kron while she is reading the newspaper, looking for the newest advertisements to satisfy the consumer in her. Mrs. Täschler is only bearable to Gilgi, because she offers her some fashion magazines from which to choose a piece of clothing. Gilgi uses the magazines to distract herself from the faceless mother. Gilgi’s encounter with Frau Greif, the biological mother, is marked by Gilgi’s comparisons of this female figure with the mannequins from the fashion

magazines. We can presume that Frau Greif was an avid reader of *Die Dame*, a magazine for the more affluent woman of the high society.<sup>106</sup>

Although these mothers use various magazines in different ways—Mrs. Kron tries to save money with the information she gets from the magazine, Mrs. Täschler wants to make money with the fashion magazines that she hands to her clients as examples of what she can sew for them, and Mrs. Greif uses magazines to keep up with the latest fashion trends, and therefore appears to Gilgi like a “Magazindame”—it is undeniable that all three mothers are linked through the illustrated magazine. Gilgi at the same time gets in touch with these various women through the illustrated magazine. The magazine becomes a conversation starter, offers a reason to approach someone, and helps to find words where they are missing. It is media- made social mediation.

### **Other Women**

Gilgi establishes herself as the New Woman against the backdrop of her family and relatives. This is especially underlined by Gerda and Irene, the daughters of her aunt, who visit the Krons. These two girls are as far from the ideal of the modern women and Gilgi’s personality as can be. Gerda and Irene are aspiring to be traditional housewives; they cannot wait to be married—something that Gilgi detests as laziness. However, the girls’ mother picks and chooses whatever elements of the New Woman she thinks would benefit her two daughters without changing their character. Irene is already 30 and Gerda

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<sup>106</sup> A distinction must be made between the type of the New Woman who is a white-collar worker and tries to aspire to the images from the magazines and the affluent New Woman who just buys whatever she wants. The difference lies in self-management and self-accomplishment versus just borrowing an image from a magazine.

26 years old, but for the New Woman and her lifestyle this is not an advanced age at all (Keun, Gilgi 62). Gilgi's disgust with the cousins' unemployment and old-fashioned lifestyle even promotes her promiscuous co-worker into better standing in her estimations—after all, that co-worker also works as a secretary (Keun, Gilgi 66). These examples show that the definition of the New Woman is in constant flux, and every woman seems to pick some characteristics and trademarks for herself, fitting to her life situation, in order to keep up with the latest trends.

Keun employs another type of New Woman to flesh out Gilgi's particularities: I would like to argue that Gilgi and her best friend Olga represent different extremes of the New Woman. While Gilgi is economical, goal-oriented, and works according to a set schedule, Olga is spontaneous, flamboyant, and works whenever she feels like it. Gilgi belongs to the realm of language. She is a secretary and types letters at work. At night she visits the Berlitz school to study English, French, and Spanish. She also translates Jerome K. Jerome's Three Men in a Boat into German to improve her language skills. She believes that her knowledge will guarantee her a workplace for a longer time; even beyond the natural retirement point. In his sociological study Die Angestellten, Siegfried Kracauer argues that women had to be sexually attractive and mostly young in order to be employed, and "naturally" were not fit for the job beyond the age of thirty.

Bei den lochenden Mädchen rechnet man im allgemeinen mit dem "natürlichen Abgang"; das heisst, man erwartet, dass sie von selber den Betrieb verlassen, wenn sie das Alter herannahen fühlen. Obwohl die Gekündigten schon über dreißig zählten, wankten und wichen sie nicht. [...] Man hat ihnen eine



grosszügige Abfindung gewährt, aber sie werden in ihrem Alter kaum wieder unterkommen (Kracauer 45).<sup>107</sup>

Gilgi's friend, Olga, overcomes this hurdle for women by being a freelance artist instead of a pink-collar worker.

Olga is the artist in this friendship. Her way of creating images is therefore traditional. Nevertheless, she is linked to modern times by painting posters for the movies. Visually, Olga is also the more interesting, the more flamboyant of the two. Gilgi does not care that she is outshone ("überblenden": in German, which also means overexposed, as with film) by Olga. "Überblenden," in the photographic sense, (Keun, Gilgi, 28) is used to describe Gilgi's and Olga's different appearances and attests to Keun's mindset in the illustrated magazine. Olga, as the fashionable blonde outshines Gilgi. She stands for the cover girl that attracts male as well as female readers.

Gilgi's evaluation of women's appearances is always mediated by the illustrated magazine images or their content. When Gilgi goes to see her "proletarian" mother, Mrs. Täschler, she finds a seamstress. Her first impressions of this woman are intertwined with the beautiful images of fashion magazines. Gilgi recognizes the great contrast that exists between the magazine's subjects and her presumed real-life mother. While the grandmother of the fictional article talks about her beautiful complexion, Gilgi's mother does not even have a face to look at. The illustrated magazine seems to be the measuring stick for all things. If someone falls too far off the scale of the typical New Woman in terms of aesthetic surface and context, she becomes faceless and unrecognizable.

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<sup>107</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. Die Angestellten. Suhrkamp. Frankfurt. 1971.

## Visual Narrative

The close connection between the magazine culture and Keun's novels is also reflected in her writing style. The novel Gilgi-eine von uns starts as a third-person narrative, but then switches to an interior monologue. The main protagonist, Gilgi, does not give her own thoughts away; instead, she adjusts her way of seeing the world to accord with that of public, contemporary media-driven perception. She garners this perspective from the illustrated magazine understood as a collective voice of the masses.

Instead of referring in her thoughts to "I," Gilgi uses the unspecific pronoun "one" (man). Her ideas and concerns are shaped by the disembodied, collective thoughts of society. She tries to behave as one *ought*. In this manner she approaches her mother, Mrs. Täschler. There is a conscious switch from Gilgi's personal needs to see this woman to a common norm. "One" has to seek out one's biological mother. "Fräulein Margarethe Täschler, Damenschneiderin, zweimal schellen – man muss sie ansehen, Gilgi – man ist hergekommen, um sie anzusehen" (Gilgi 40). Gilgi even admits that her thinking is influenced by the press when she tells someone she reads the *Uhu* (one of the magazines analyzed in this thesis). "Ob ich lese? – Jaaa—ich les' Zeitungen, am liebsten die dicken Sonntagsausgaben und den 'Uhu'" (Keun, Gilgi 102). Gilgi's perception is tightly linked to the visual character of the magazines, which is reflected in her narrative voice.

The way Keun facilitates the description of her surroundings is also linked to a reading knowledge of visual culture. She lets Gilgi scan her surroundings, creating camera snapshots in her narration. One example is Gilgi's depiction of her parents' living

room in every old-fashioned detail, while at the same time implying that she distances herself from that generation.

Eine Viertelstunde später sitzt Gilgi im Wohnzimmer. Urweltmöblierung. Imposantes Büffet, hergestellt um Neunzehnhundert. Tischdecke mit Spachtelstickerei und Kreuzstichblümchen. Grünbleicher Lampenschirm mit Fransen aus Glasperlen. Grünes Plüschsofa. Darüber ein tuchenes Rechteck: Trautes Heim-Glück allein. Epileptisch verkrampfte Stickbuchstaben, um die sich weitstänzerische Kornblumen ranken. Können auch Winden sein. So was ist mal geschenkt worden. Für so was wurde mal "danke" gesagt. Über dem tuchenen Rechteck ein Monumentalbild: Washington. ... America for ever. Germany wants to see you (Keun, Gilgi 8).

Her style in this passage becomes very visual: image-by-image, she scans all the details of this living room. Keun uses enumerations that are not divided by commas but rather periods, which lends itself to the idea of snapshots. A photograph can only hold the contents that the lens captures at the moment of taking the picture, the moment of exposure. The human eye moves all the time, and the brain fills in the information which it fails to capture. Keun's snapshot style metaphorically freezes Gilgi's stare and takes a snapshot that is put into language, more precisely into a cluster of main clauses.

Although the recognition of the separate items happens rapidly, the snapshot technique nevertheless prolongs the examination of every single object. Just as a photograph offers a moment frozen in time for endless contemplation, Gilgi passes over in her short snapshot sentences the everyday items in her parents' living room in visual terms that go beyond their everyday use or any emotional attachment. And as in many aged photographs, the observer comes to the conclusion that the content has long withered or changed its meaning. Gilgi's photographic contemplation recognizes the

changing of times.<sup>108</sup> “Epileptisch verkrampfte Stickbuchstaben, um die sich weitstänzerische Kornblumen ranken. Können auch Winden sein. So was ist mal geschenkt worden. Für so was wurde mal ‘danke’ gesagt. ” Gilgi’s thoughts about this cloth on the parents’ sofa express her aversion to this style of decoration, but also perform a rejection of the aesthetic idiom of her parents’ way of living. Gilgi’s room outside her parents’ house, which she rents with her own money, articulates, on the contrary, a Spartan workspace that contains only the bare necessities.

## Conclusion

Keun’s novel Gilgi-eine von uns is in every way embedded in the new media that surrounds not only the main protagonist, but the author as well. In her novel Keun processes the impressions she is exposed to on an everyday basis. Not only does she weave popular products, modern fashion trends, and the illustrated magazine (*Uhu*) into her narration, but the narrative style itself also becomes a manifestation of the visual culture of the time. Keun describes in words what she has seen in articles and photo captions in the illustrated magazine. Clearly, there are subtexts of particular advertisements that can be spotted, but at the same time, Keun tries to stay true to photographic and visual models she transforms into the written word.

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<sup>108</sup> Although the snapshot style of taking pictures leads to a visual experience that just collects impressions without contemplation, I argue that in this particular passage, Gilgi collects images to think about her and her family’s differences. The act of taking mental photographs leads to a recognition of everyday items that surround her. Here, she does not just pass things by but processes her thoughts about the implications of the items in her parents’ living –room. For the aspect that I am discussing here I would like to refer the reader to Siegfried Kracauer’s essay about “Die Photographie,” in which the photograph of a grandmother depicting her as a young woman becomes the impulse for reflecting on that woman’s history and the spectator’s view on photographs. (I thank M. Levine for a stimulating discussion about this point.)

## Das kunstseidene Mädchen

### Introduction

Turning now to Irmgard Keun's second novel, Das kunstseidene Mädchen from 1932, we find many similarities to Gilgi – eine von uns in terms of how the novels engage with the visual and respond to the visual culture of the contemporary illustrated magazine. Das kunstseidene Mädchen is a portrait of the life of a New Woman named Doris. Doris is a secretary at the tender age of eighteen, exemplifying the typical New Woman as a pink-collar worker. As Ute Frevert argues, the New Woman only worked between the time she finished school and the time she got married (Frevert 185).<sup>109</sup> The workplace for her was often seen as an opportunity for finding the right husband; it was not a real career option. Doris does quit her job—but not to get married. Instead, she quits in order to escape the sexual advances of her boss—a move that both makes explicit and rejects the heady culture of sexuality and power in the workplace. The stealing of a fur coat is but one reason for her to flee to Berlin—the city of modernity and visual culture. Doris has several love affairs in Berlin with various men who maintain her within a certain privileged lifestyle. These relationships, however, are only temporary; soon enough, Doris finds herself destitute and close to the point of prostitution. A graphic designer, Ernst, picks her up from the streets and offers her shelter in his apartment without asking for sexual favors in return. Gradually, Doris falls in love with this man, but realizes that she will never be able to make him forget his one true love, his wife who left him to live her life to the fullest. Doris therefore decides to leave Ernst, and even

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<sup>109</sup> “But there was also no doubt that a woman's occupation functioned merely as a temporary place of safe-keeping before marriage. A married woman was neither to serve behind a counter nor sit in an office; she was to look after her husband, children and home” (Frevert 179).

convinces his wife to return to him. At the end of the novel, Doris is left alone with very few prospects.

In many ways, Keun's second novel is similar to Gilgi-eine von uns. Again, we read a story of a young woman—a New Woman—who wants autonomy, who wants to break out of old-fashioned gender roles. Yet in contrast to Gilgi, Doris does not represent a rational, hardworking woman who knows she can make it on her own. Doris relies much more on her good looks, which she believes will help her become a movie star one day. When she makes it to the top of glitter, fashion, and fame she believes she will be autonomous. It is important to realize that Doris's story starts in a class setting lower than that of Gilgi. Her mother works as a coat check girl in a theater and the father has left the family. Doris is younger than Gilgi, and also less educated, which allows her to be naively transported into a dream world of movie glamour and the glossy illustrated magazines. She is dedicated to becoming a part of the glittering dream world that surrounds her. The content of Das kunstseidene Mädchen is therefore even more intensively focused on the visual itself; —for Doris is easily captivated and impressed by everything she sees.<sup>110</sup> As Hanno Hardt suggests, the illustrated magazine was easier to digest for audiences like Doris because the images promised to supply true and easy

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<sup>110</sup> Gerhard Bauer analyzes the sensual aspects in Keun's novel Das kunstseidene Mädchen. He argues that Doris loses her idea of self to a certain extent because the impressions from the outside move her deeply and demand from her to engage with her surroundings and the people in her environment. "Doris, diese kleine bekennende Egoistin, denkt gleichwohl stärker an andere oder an die Dinge um sich herum als an ihr eigenes liebes Ich. Sie tut es nur nicht aus Gutherzigkeit oder Mitleid, sondern weil sie fasziniert ist von allem, was sie sieht" (Bauer 188). Although I see this great fascination with everything that glitters in Doris, I would like to allude to some exceptions to this general rule and claim that Doris does have the capacity to empathize. Doris's interactions with the blind war veteran Brenner entail a form of kind-heartedness. Moreover, Doris's selfless act of leaving Ernst and getting his wife to come back to him cannot be overlooked in this regard.

access to information.<sup>111</sup> I argue that Keun's protagonist, Doris, participates in the visual culture as both a consumer and producer. While she derives pleasure from the visual spectacle that consumer society offers, she also creates her own visuals, which speak for a self-determinacy on Doris's side.

### **The Filmic Narrative**

Although Doris emphasizes that her writing is supposed to reflect the glamorous life she sees in the movies and not that of a teenage girl who writes a diary, it nevertheless evolves into the latter—a diary. The diary-like style of Doris's writing becomes evident not only in the abrupt endings and beginnings of her fragmented entries, but also through the visual effect of the “doves.” Just as a teenage girl might, she decorates her notebook with a so-called “Glanzbild” (Figure 2.5.). “Glanzbilder” have existed since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and became a trading object among friends.<sup>112</sup> It is important to note that many of these images were embellished with silver glitter, which is the symbol of Doris's dream: to become a “Glanz.” Therefore, Doris's accounts of her adventures are always connected to her striving to become a “Glanz.” When she lets go of this dream to become a happy traditional housewife for Ernst, she claims that everything is so wonderful that there is not much left to write in her notebook (Keun, DkM 193). Finally, she ends the book with the defeated consideration that perhaps “Glanz” is not all that important. The actual ending of Keun's novel also ends Doris's diary, which dramatizes how significantly she has distanced herself from the notebook decorated with the “Glanzbild”—the visual materialization of her dreams of a glamorous

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<sup>111</sup> Hardt, Hanno. In the Company of Media. Cultural Constructions of Communication, 1920s-1930s. Westview Press. 2000.

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.glanzbilder-traum.de/index.php?go=history> (accessed 03-17-2010).

rise to a “Glanz.” Thus the mere writing of the diary is made into a visual image. For the author, Keun, the writing about writing technique becomes a self-reflexive agenda, but this does not hold true for the protagonist, Doris. The unselective collection of various episodes in her life and the appropriation of advertisement slogans (as Boa argues) make a coherent reflective thought process impossible. However, the image is a childish one and needs to be replaced with a new vision after Doris’s experiences. Keun leaves the novel open ended, but still we get the sense that Doris has grown up, and has to move away from her naïve adolescent fantasies.

The novel’s first-person narrative begins with Doris’s explanation that she would like to write her life “just like the movies.” According to Winfried Kaminiski, Keun’s narrative style is closely tied to the visual mass media of the day. “Da Irmgard Keun sich bewußt am Illustriertenroman und am Film orientierte, an den populären Medien ihrer Zeit. Ursula Krechel etwa attestierte den Romanen der Irmgard Keun eine ,filmische Schreibweise’”(Kaminski, 151). This affinity with movies is already apparent in the opening pages of the book when Doris compares herself to the American silent film actress Colleen Moore. By writing down her experiences and feelings, she assumes that she will be able to see her life in images when she reads over her diary. Hence, she becomes a spectator of her own life rather than an autonomous agent. Therefore, her narrative style often lacks a natural flow; instead, it contains image frames that she builds upon.<sup>113</sup> Many passages consist of an enumeration of things she sees. To be more specific

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<sup>113</sup> Elizabeth Boa describes Doris’ writing as artificial silk. Just like this textile is artificially manufactured Doris constructs her writing from her surrounding images and advertisement slogans. “Like artificial silk, her language is neither organic nor authentic, but manufactured from bits and pieces circulating in the marketplace of popular entertainment and intellectual exchange” (Boa 132). I agree with Boa’s point but



in her visual input, she begins many sentences with the connecting conjunction “and,” adding another item to the big picture. Her lack of technical sophistication is also reflected in her inability to write proper business letters. She misses many commas and has to compensate for this flaw with her looks. Her visual appeal manipulates her boss into forgiving his secretary’s shortcomings.

Und hatte auch sonst Fehler in den Briefen und dunkle Ahnungen  
daraufhin. Und guck schon gleich beim Reinbringen wie Marlene Dietrich  
so mit Klapperaugen Marke: husch ins Bett. Und das Pickelgesicht sagt,  
alle könnten gehen, nur ich sollt noch bleiben und Briefe neu schreiben  
(Keun, DkM 23).

Her aim in writing this diary clearly does not lie in creating a beautiful flowing narration, but in amassing a series of detailed descriptions that can be assembled visually as pictures in the reader’s mind. The constant reference to movie stars such as Colleen Moore and Marlene Dietrich helps Doris to create these images in her mind, as well as in the reader’s mind, because we share a common awareness of the looks of these actresses from photographs and movies. I agree with Katharina von Ankum in saying that Doris’s writing results in an immediate visual impact.

Doris hat “Kino im Kopf.” “Der Telegrammstil” ihrer Tagebucheintragungen reflektiert das haltlose Tempo der Großstadt. Wie eine Kamera speichert sie Bildmaterial, das sie dann vor den Augen des Lesers absputzt. Am deutlichsten wird der visuelle Erzählstil Keuns in den Szenen, in denen Doris für den blinden Ehemann ihrer Wirtin “Sehen sammelt.” [...] Film und Werbung sind die kulturelle Sphäre, in der Doris sich auskennt. Im sprachlichen Ausdruck offensichtlich begrenzt, benutzt sie “Popkultur” als Kommunikationsmittel. Indem sie eine Filmsituation evoziert, oder eine bekannte Filmpersönlichkeit erwähnt, will sie

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would also like to argue that Doris at least tries to become a creator of visuals and her surroundings although she might not be all that successful at it.

sicherstellen, daß vor dem Auge des zeitgenössischen Lesers das gewünschte Bild entsteht (von Ankum 376).<sup>114</sup>

Nevertheless, I take issue with von Ankum when she declares that Doris's stylistic expression is limited. As Ritta Jo Horsley argues, Keun basically invents a new language for her female characters in order to separate the female voice from the dominant masculine literature canon.

Her [Doris'] grammatical errors, malapropisms, liberal use of outrageous metaphor and exaggerated metonymy; her fragmented, paratactic syntax and excessively nominal style; her joining of disparate elements and associate leaps from topic to topic, may thus be read as deconstructive or deterritorializing maneuvers aimed at the dominant culture and its discourse.<sup>115</sup>

Her writing technique establishes not only a feminine perspective on the culture of the Weimar Republic, but also a very creative and visual language, which connects women even closer to the visual media. What is more, Doris's paratactic syntax reflects the snapshot impressions that she gets from the overwhelming visual stimuli around her. The problem of processing this amount of information intensifies when Doris arrives in Berlin and takes part in a political demonstration.

Aber mir wurde benommen, und ich trieb weiter – es war spannende Luft. Und welche rasten und zogen mich mit – und wir standen vor einem vornehmen Hotel, das Adlon heißt – und war alles bedeckt mit Menschen und Schupos, die drängten. [...] Und ich gehörte gleich zu den Berlinern so mitten rein – das machte mir eine Freude (DkM 72).

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<sup>114</sup> Von Ankum, Katharina. "Ich liebe Berlin mit einer Angst in den Knien": Weibliche Stadterfahrung in Irmgard Keuns *Das kunstseidene Mädchen*." *The German Quarterly* 67.3 (1994): 369-388.

<sup>115</sup> Horsley, Ritta Jo. "Warum habe Ich keine Worte? ... Kein Wort trifft zutiefst hinein." *the Problematics of Language in the Early Novels of Irmgard Keun*. *Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik (CollG)* 23.3-4 (1990): 297-313.

Here the stimuli occur in such a rapid fashion that Doris's language breaks into even smaller pieces. The short paratactic sentences split into phrases that are separated by dashes. Paradoxically, the dash translates to a "Gedankenstrich" in German, which implies a processing of thoughts before the author can write the next words. In Doris's narration, however, the dashes simulate the shutting of a camera lens after the exposure. In that moment the camera, as well as Doris, get prepared for the next visual impact that needs to be recorded. The breakdown of coherent sentences here stresses the overwhelming input of visuals that cannot be recorded and processed properly.<sup>116</sup>

### **Seeing, Being Seen, Seeing What's Out There and Creating What's Not**

Doris's arrival in Berlin is described as a visual spectacle. The overpowering visual impressions lead to new and unheard-of metaphors, which Doris employs to put her perceptions into words. "Berlin senkte sich auf mich wie eine Steppdecke mit feurigen Blumen" (Keun, DkM 67), she writes. She absorbs all that Berlin has to offer, porously passive to its aesthetic charms. Her first diary entry about Berlin incorporates the lights and glamour of this metropolis: huge neon signs, the glossy black hair of women walking on the streets and the subway that she describes as a "lighted coffin" surround her (Keun, DkM 67). Shops, lights and clubs ("Läden, Licht und Lokale" [Keun, DkM 94]) invite her to enter and just stop and stare. She wants to fit into this pool of light and glamour. Her initiation rite into the Berlin society is to go to a political demonstration—whose aims are unknown—and protest with the masses. But soon

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<sup>116</sup> I thank Michael Levine for the idea to investigate these "dashes" further.

enough, Doris experiences the hardships of being alone and unemployed in a big city like Berlin.<sup>117</sup>

A World War I veteran, Brenner, first introduces Doris to the other side of the shiny glamorous Berlin. The first impression of Brenner that Doris notes down is that he is blind and cannot see any shops, lights, or modern advertisements. He is not part of the sight-oriented culture that Doris admires. Brenner's emasculation through the war creates a space for her to become his eyes, much like other women found a space in the workforce that men had vacated.<sup>118</sup> However, instead of simply telling Brenner what she sees, Doris modifies her own visuals to accommodate the way Brenner imagines reality to be.<sup>119</sup> For example, he asks Doris if his wife has got long yellow teeth. Doris understands that the image of long yellow teeth is not an appealing one, and therefore alters reality for Brenner's benefit. She answers: "No, she has got little, white teeth" (Keun, DkM 96), a lie that makes both of them happy. Brenner is happy that his wife is not as ugly as he imagines her to be, and Doris is happy just to be of use to someone.

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<sup>117</sup> For further information on the motive of the big city refer to Winfried Kaminski "Großstadterfahrung männlich/weiblich? Die Darstellung Berlins in den Werken Irmgard Keuns und Erich Kästners."

<sup>118</sup> This space opens up not only because Brenner is blind but also because his wife (a traditional housewife in spirit) sometimes leaves the house, which makes it possible for Doris, the New Woman, to move into this vacant position. Brenner's wife is a would-be housewife, who has to work due to his disability. She is not happy with this lifestyle and makes Brenner sense her disappointment. When she is at home, his thoughts have no room in the kitchen (DkM 96). The domination that his wife exudes oppresses Brenner. He therefore welcomes Doris into his kitchen because although she also takes on a leading role by determining his ideas of the appearance of things, she acts in his best interest. For that matter, Brenner has a much better relationship with the emancipated New Woman than with his traditional housewife.

<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth Boa describes Doris's act of seeing as "being the camera-eye," which is a valid point. However, as I would like to argue, even with a recording device such as a camera, the photographer can choose the detail that she wants to convey and therefore becomes an active part in creating a vision and an image (Boa 131).

Doris becomes a creator of the visual, which is apparent in her relationship to Brenner. On another occasion they take a tour together through Berlin at night. Brenner's wishful thinking is for a sky covered with stars. Although there is not even one star to be seen due to the big city reflected glare—its "Glanz"—Doris lies to Brenner to make him happy (Keun, DkM 114). She not only alters reality for him, but also brings the visual appeal of Berlin into his world. Doris comments on this enfolding of Berlin's nightlife with: "I collect seeing for him" (Keun, DkM 96). "Ich habe gesehen – Männer an Ecken, die verkaufen ein Parfüm, und keinen Mantel und kesses Gesicht und graue Mütze – und Plakate mit nackten rosa Mädchen. Keiner guckt hin" (Keun, DkM 101). Although Doris is not selective in the collecting process of seeing – her narration is fragmented, rushed, and eager to encompass all that is out there to see – her interaction with Brenner is a selective act of passing on visuals in words. In this way, Doris creates a visual world for Brenner that allows her to spare him the negative details, as we have seen in her lie about his wife's teeth.

While Doris brings the hustle-bustle of Berlin, especially its nightlife, into Brenner's kitchen, she experiences quite a different side of Berlin when she stays with Ernst, the graphic designer. Ernst picks her up from the streets at her lowest point, when she is virtually ready to prostitute herself for money just to survive. Oddly enough, Ernst lets her stay in his apartment for weeks without taking advantage of her. Doris blames her unappealing body on weight loss, which seems to make her a visual eyesore. Slowly she recovers from the cruel life on the streets, puts on some weight, and tries to repay Ernst's favors by keeping his household clean. She also starts to cook for him and while doing grocery shopping she witnesses the daily activities of Berlin in the mornings. "Und

mache dann meine Gänge auf der Strasse für einzukaufen. Das ist sehr schön. Es sind kleine Eisbahnen mit Kindern und eine warme Kälte, die mein Herz froh macht, und Schienen und viele Geschäfte, und die Sonne scheint” (Keun, DkM 198). And “also so eine Straße hat doch was an sich, daß man sich schwanger fühlt” (Keun, DkM 200).

Running errands in the mornings allows Doris to see the non-artificial side of Berlin. This visual side is only available in the mornings, and with its natural light, it creates a feeling of happiness in Doris. To a greater extent, Doris mentions the metaphor of being pregnant with happiness, which is the essential symbol of creation.<sup>120</sup> Being in the streets in the mornings and interacting with people makes Doris a partial creator of an idyllic and nurturing visual.

On several occasions Doris is portrayed as a painter who becomes part of creating an artificial world. When she arranges for a romantic dinner with Ernst, she paints a few candleholders to set the mood. “Ich habe eine Überraschung erdacht und somit lauter Kerzenhalter gemalt in ockerem Gelb. So ganz sanft mit gedämpften, rötlichen Mustern von angedeuteten Blumen – dazu Kerzen aus gedämpfter Farbe und sehr viele” (Keun, DkM 203). It does not become clear if Doris actually paints on candleholders, or if we have to imagine that she creates a stage backdrop painting, which would emphasize her need to become part of the visual culture that is the mainstream culture of Berlin. The artifice and simulation of painting is also spelled out in the way Doris prepares for the

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<sup>120</sup> Being pregnant is essentially a contradiction to the existence of the New Woman, because having a baby would make her lifestyle impossible. This metaphor could hint at Doris’s willingness to give up her dreams of becoming a “Glanz” and a New Woman in favor of taking care of Ernst and becoming a traditional housewife and mother. I thank Martha Helfer for pointing me toward this contradiction.

romantic dinner with Ernst. Instead of saying that Doris puts on make-up, Keun uses the words “she paints her lips,” stressing the involvement in creating an artificial reality.<sup>121</sup>

Doris influences her surrounding through her aesthetic re-appropriation.<sup>122</sup> She maintains that women become objectified under the male gaze. I would like to suggest that Doris is a participant in this staring game, and derives pleasure from looking at pretty things. She seeks out handsome men because she likes sleeping with them. Therefore, she is not just a feminine sex object, but also explores her sexual liberation. Also, she is not unfamiliar with the male gaze’s counterpart, a female stare that categorizes men. This finds its outlet in another scene, where Doris sits in a café and observes the men around her. One special subject seems to stare at her “mit Stielaugen” (Keun, DkM 14), but Doris is confident that she could maintain the upper hand in this game of watching. Not only is she able to look at men, but can see through (“durchschauen”) their actions, wishes, and thoughts. “Und sie [die Männer] haben keine Ahnung, wie man sie mehr durchschaut als sie sich selber” (Keun, DkM14). Actually, as Doris claims, women have the upper hand in the staring game: they can manipulate a man’s stare by dressing or moving a certain way, and at the same time have the knowledge of what men are looking for and how they react, which makes women the superior masters of visual culture.

### **Seeing the World through the Illustrated Magazine**

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<sup>121</sup> While “painting one’s lips” is not an unusual phrase in English, the German “sich die Lippen anmalen” (which Keun uses in her text is rather uncommon. In German the phrase “sich die Lippen schminken” is more likely. Therefore, I see in Keun’s choice of words an accentuation of the act of painting and creating a new reality. I thank Martha Helfer for pointing me toward this linguistic difference.

<sup>122</sup> She is also a very active observer, which speaks against Laura Mulvey’s discussion of the male gaze in film.

Women's affinity to visual culture and especially the illustrated magazine is shown in Doris's visual targets at the café. At another table Doris spots a man that she compares to the silent film actor Conrad Veidt. "Und vom Tisch drüben guckt immer einer mit fabelhaft markantem Gesicht und tollem Brillanten am kleinen Finger. Ein Gesicht wie Conrad Veidt, wie er noch mehr auf der Höhe war" (Keun, DkM 15). Doris's knowledge about film stars makes this man attractive to her because he resembles a handsome successful movie star. However, when Doris finds out that his actual name is Armin she is repulsed, because she puts him into a new category of laxative advertisements. The metonymic linkage reveals the structural underpinnings of Doris's perceptions and understanding: "Die Schachtel ist von dem Conrad Veidt – Armin heißt er – eigentlich hasse ich diesen Namen, weil er in der Illustrierten mal als Reklame für ein Abführmittel gebraucht wurde" (Keun, DkM 15). Her orientation in the world is structurally responsive to the influence of media such as movies and the illustrated magazine, dramatized through the instant connections between her surroundings and these visual cues.

This connection between artificial media and Doris's reality also finds an outlet when she compares her first great love—Hubert—to Albert Einstein. The connection here is that they both studied physics. Instead of concentrating on the current conversation with Hubert, Doris's mind wanders to the photographs of Einstein in the magazines.

Aber dann hatte er [Hubert] seinen Doktor und war fertig studiert – Physik und so was. Und ging nach München, wo seine Eltern wohnten, da wollte er heiraten – eine aus seinen Kreisen und Tochter von einem Professor – sehr berühmt, aber nicht so wie Einstein, von dem man ja Photographien sieht in furchtbar viel Zeitungen und sich nicht viel darunter vorstellen kann. Und ich denke immer, wenn ich sein Bild sehe mit den vergnügen



Augen und den Staubwedelhaaren, wenn ich ihn im Kaffee sehen würde und hätte gerade den Mantel mit Fuchs an und todschick von vorn bis hinten, dann würde er mir auch vielleicht erzählen, er wäre beim Film und hätte unerhörte Beziehungen (Keun, DkM 19).

Obviously, Doris's main source of information is images. She knows Einstein from photographs, yet seems never to have read any of the articles which might have accompanied the pictures. Doris lives in this media world—where the hard, uncompromising discourse of sciences such as physics has no place. Einstein is transformed in her mind into a “man of the media” who might have connections to the movie scene. By being represented in pictures he is associated with the life of the image—movie stars and actors—not the life of the mind. Moreover, Doris is confident that she could infatuate or at least interest Einstein in herself if she showed up in her best visual outfit. Words do not play a great role for Doris—the image is the only thing that counts; this might help her to find a rich husband, but it does not help her feeling of self-worth. This is particularly the case in her relationship with Ernst as she learns that he is much more educated and, because she is intellectually inferior, they can never be happy together. Similar to her failed relationship with Hubert, who wanted to marry somebody from his own social class (“aus seinen Kreisen”), the connection with Ernst might break up for the same reason.

### **Fashion or Identity Formation**

As Monika Shafi argues, Doris's written journey resembles the process of identity formation.<sup>123</sup> The young protagonist of only eighteen years still has to find her own way,

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<sup>123</sup> Shafi, Monika. “Aber das ist es ja eben, ich habe ja keine Meinesgleichen” Identitätsprozess und Zeitgeschichte in dem Roman *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* von Irmgard Keun. Colloquia Germanica: Internationale Zeitschrift für Germanistik (CollG) 21.4 (1988): 314-325.

and is therefore vulnerably inclined to all of the visuals that the society of the 1920's had to offer. One aspect that promises happiness and instant gratification is the apogee of material culture: fashion. Fashion is a major turn-on for Doris, who spends her meager income as soon as she earns it on a dark green hat with a feather, as the fashion of the time dictates (Keun, DkM 10). She also prostitutes herself to get her hands on these otherwise unattainable items. Doris does not consider this prostitution, because she does it to obtain luxury items and not to survive. She does not view it as prostitution because she does not *have* to do it – it is just a means to gain certain objects. The dark green coat that is described in detail and goes beautifully with her new green hat is a parting gift from a man she used to date. However, when he proposes to her, she ends the relationship abruptly. She only wanted the coat, not the relationship: her longing for fashion is a necessity—as she believes—for becoming a star (Keun, DkM 11).

Naturally Doris's obsession with fashion is the tool for projecting her own visual appeal. Appearance is in Doris's mind a necessity to look desirable in another person's eyes, specifically men's. This is not a case of willing submission to a male gaze that turns women into helpless objects of male visual pleasure – as discussed by Laura Mulvey in the case of the movie Metropolis. The opposite is true. She uses her appearance to get what she wants: to make men victims of their own gaze. On one occasion, dressed in a stolen fur coat, she pretends to be a lady from the upper class to con a salesman out of a pair of shoes. The man in the shoe store falls for her story of forgetting her money at home, because she looks the part that she is playing.

The fur coat, which Doris had stolen from a theater coat-check to impress one of her boyfriends with her stylish appearance, has been the topic of various critical discussions. Volker Klotz sees it as a symbol of the material addictions of the New Objectivity society. Monika Shafi maintains that the fur coat is a psychological and emotional object used by Doris to find security in society (Shafi 317). I essentially agree with these readings, but would emphasize the key role the fur coat plays in Doris's leap into the big city, Berlin. Doris's obsession with this fashion object as a symbol resembling the Glanz she strives to attain and emulate forces her to leave her family and hometown, to flee without papers to a place where nobody knows her. The rushed departure mirrors an elopement with a lover. Doris even mentions that she loves the coat and it loves her. Society persecutes theft as a crime, and also prevents Doris as the little middle-class girl from making enough money to buy her own fur coat. By metaphorical extension, society is therefore *also* against the relationship between Doris and her fur coat. Thus she flees to Berlin, a place where this relationship can exist; a place where nobody knows her so she can pretend to be something she is not. Only when she falls in love with Ernst, a graphic designer who creates magazine advertisements, does she want someone (him) to know the real Doris and she offers him her diary to read. Doris also wants to send the fur coat back to its real owner. This sacrifice, as she calls it, is necessary to make Ernst love her. Giving up the fur coat means to give up all pretence as well as giving up a lover. She needs to make room for a relationship with a human being, which was not possible before.

Clothes are not a means to an end for Doris. She uses them to attract men by switching into a different class or identity. At other times Doris wears clothes to

accentuate her own beauty for herself in a curious display of narcissistic spectatorship. In these cases, no desiring male gaze falls on Doris, and the only reward is the pleasurable imagining of how her body and a piece of clothing collide in the most beautiful image. In one scene, she puts her beauty above comfort when she declines to wear a coat although she feels cold, just to keep up a certain image.

Und jetzt sitze ich in meinem Zimmer im Nachthemd, das mir über meine anerkannte Schulter gerutscht ist, und alles ist erstklassig an mir. [...] Es ist sehr kalt, aber im Nachthemd ist schöner –sonst würde ich den Mantel anziehen (Keun, DkM 8-9).

This passage shows the importance of the visual for Doris. She values the aesthetics of her looks much more than her own comfort.

Doris's single-minded focus on her appearance and hence her clothes goes beyond every other human emotion and need. For instance, she saves money for a polka-dot dress that she wants to wear on her birthday in order to please Hubert. However, Hubert simply vanishes just three days before her birthday, and although Doris is very upset with his human failure, she is even more concerned that her dress might suffer from the tears she spilled on it.

Und heulte Tränen auf das neue Kleid – und hätte nur noch gefehlt, dass die Tupfen nicht waschecht waren und ausgingen und zu allem andern mein lachsfarbenes Kombination mit verfärbte. Aber das ist wenigstens nicht passiert (Keun, DkM 21).

Doris's concentration on her clothes instead of her lost boyfriend seems to be out of proportion at first. However, keeping in mind that Doris had to save for this dress shows its material value and implies that a new dress is not readily available, and that the financial investment is mirrored by an emotional investment. It seems that a new

boyfriend is easier to obtain than a new dress—as long as Doris possesses the right outfits, suggesting a reconfiguration of the object-oriented prostitution discussed above. Woman’s appearance is not only crucial for a new relationship, but as we have seen in Gilgi, also for finding a new job. Therefore, Doris’s ridiculous concerns about her clothes go beyond mere vanity.

### **Photographic Writing**

Doris becomes both the object and artist of aestheticized visual culture, so much so that the importance of appearance is inscribed in her most fundamental perceptions of the world. The visual is much more natural to her than language is. Written words have to become images, and writing should be “just like the movies” (Keun, DkM 8). Thus, Doris experiences her recording of her own life “in images” much more naturally than the grammatically correct German she has to use in the office to write her business letters. “Und es wird mir eine Wohltat sein, mal für mich ohne Kommas zu schreiben und richtiges Deutsch – nicht alles so unnatürlich wie im Büro“ (Keun, DkM 9).

Although Doris has an aversion to commas, she uses them very often. Moreover, she shows a strong tendency towards using nouns in her diary, which Ritta Jo Horsley and Volker Klotz have already documented.

Here her incorrect use of the substantive “Rasse” once again calls attention both to her own limited verbal repertoire and to the absurdity of fascism and racism. According to Klotz, the inappropriate reliance on substantives and substantivized verbs that is typical for Doris’s language – “und möchte, wir hätten...ein Denken zueinander wie so Menschen.” – shows in particular her desire to communicate inner processes or feelings for which the superficial, externally oriented language and her culture is inadequate (Klotz ctd. in Horsley 307).

Unlike Klotz' assumption that Doris uses nouns in order to express feelings for which she has no other language, I would like to suggest that her use of nouns, as well as commas, stems from the fact that she wishes to express her life in images—more to the point, images of discrete objects of consumption. Thinking about the possibilities of still (or magazine) photographs, we must recognize that they are restricted to the freezing of a moment, and are not able to capture motion. The concept of motion is characterized by verbs, which are minimized in Doris's narration. The only possibility for images to show motion is by recording a succession of photographs, each capturing a slight change from the previous photograph. Running these images in order very quickly in front of a human eye creates the illusion of motion in the brain, which is the basic idea of film (which, unsurprisingly, was originally characterized as motion pictures).

Doris's writing style aims to be photographic and filmic but fails to accomplish this goal in the end. Although her commas seem to mimic the meticulous depiction of details in a photograph, their rigid structure prevents the reader from a real photographic impression in her writing. Reading a photograph demands a lot of attention and patience from the spectator if he or she is to make out every single detail a photograph has to offer. The nature of a photograph is to show more than the human eye can see at a glance. It freezes a moment in time and therefore invites the spectator to take enough time to spot every single detail, which is impossible in real life because views change constantly. Doris tries to incorporate the detailed character of a photograph into her writing, which leads to a lot of commas, because there is always another piece of information to add. Nothing can be left out—which ironically creates confusion for the reader, rather than the clarity that we might expect from photographic abundance. Commas create relations of

subordination between the various parts of a compound sentence. While the same could be said for photographs, where their contents stand in relation to each other, there is an essential difference between an image and language. The photograph invites the viewer to make his/her own connections and interpretations. In Doris's attempt to write in images however, she determines by the lengths of her sentences and the order in which she gives us the information the relationship between the various parts of a sentence. The reader does not have the flexibility to decide for himself/herself how a sentence comes together. Doris already lays out the connections and interpretations, and leaves very little room to interpret her visual language in any other way than she originally intended it to be read.

### **Relationships**

Doris's relationships with men are defined by material gain. Ever since her first love, Hubert, rejected her because he wanted to marry a virgin rather than someone who had already given herself up to him, her love life is tainted. It has the quality of a job, one that earns her the material things she desires and needs in order to make it to the top of society. This is exemplified in one affair she has in Berlin with an old man whom she calls "der weisse Onyx." He does not appeal to her at all, but she forces herself to think only of the presents she will get in order to overcome her hesitations.

Nevertheless, Doris is not immune to pure sexual appeal. She spends a night with the younger, handsome friend of Onyx, and describes the pleasure she derives from his beauty.

Ich ging mit dem Schönen... und der Schöne leuchtete. Ich habe ihn dankbar geküsst, weil ich mich nicht schämen brauchte, ihn nackt zu sehen. Ich habe Dank in meine Hände getan, weil ich keine Stimmung ins Kopfkissen lügen brauchte, wie er sich auszog – meine Haut war warm vor Dank, weil ich bei hellem Licht mit offenen Augen keine Hässlichkeiten an ihm vergessen musste – oh, ich war ein dankbares lachendes Weinen, weil er mir so gefiel (Keun, DkM 87).

The specified sexual pleasure described in these lines does not originate in love, but is strictly visual in nature. Love does not exist in Doris's eyes, "und Liebe ist zufällig zusammen betrunken sein und aufeinander Lust haben und sonst Quatsch" (Keun, DkM 110), and therefore, visual 'eye-candy' is the greatest pleasure she can derive from a man.

This is what makes Doris's relationship with Ernst so unique in this novel. She tries hard to make him love her. Eventually, she succeeds and the two of them make love. Yet unfortunately, Doris's happiness does not last. In a tender moment Ernst declares his love, but he calls her "Hanne" (his wife's name), instead of Doris. Doris realizes that she will never remove the vision of Hanne from Ernst's mind, and decides to leave him.<sup>124</sup> Broken hearted, she seeks Hanne out in a dance club and asks her to return to Ernst, which she gladly does, because "es ist nämlich so schwer draußen" (Keun, DkM 213). Doris sees Hanne's new boyfriend, who had taken her out of the secure existence of a housewife and remarks: "Der Mann ist sehr elegant und hat schwarzes geöltes Haar, mit dem man nie glücklich werden kann, denn das glänzt immer für andere" (Keun, DkM 212). This observation shows a disenchantment with everything that glitters. It is no

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<sup>124</sup> Livia Wittmann explains that underprivileged girls may not allow themselves to develop feelings for a man. They have to use their bodies and attention strategically in order to establish a balance between women and men. Therefore, love is a luxury, and not for women from lower classes. "Das falsche Bewußtsein besteht nicht nur darin, daß der vorgegaukelte soziale Erfolg durch Schönheit in einer patriarchalischen Gesellschaft, wo die potentiellen Machthaber schlecht bei Kasse sind, seinen illusionären Charakter sehr bald verrät, sondern auch darin, daß sich das unterprivilegierte ‚kunstseidene Mädchen‘ Gefühle erlaubt, die sich nur Privilegierte leisten können" (Wittmann 46-47).



longer worthwhile for Doris to strive towards becoming a “Glanz.” “Auf den Glanz kommt es nämlich vielleicht gar nicht so furchtbar an” (Keun, DkM 219), is the last sentence of the book. Karl, a man from her own class whom she meets at a club, suggests the possibility of marriage to her. Although Doris does not expect to be happy with him, she nonetheless seriously considers the offer. Neither the artificial glamour of Berlin, nor the idyllic promise of happiness in a traditional role as housewife works for Doris. She leaves us with an open-ended story that does not allow any room for an optimistic horizon for the future.

## Conclusion

In Keun’s second novel, Das kunstseidene Mädchen, the author goes beyond the initial interweaving of visual contexts that she brought out in Gilgi-eine von uns. Gilgi is placed into the visual culture of the Weimar Republic, and has to deal with the many factors that determine the New Woman’s lifestyle, but at the same time she concentrates on identity issues (her adoption) which are not particularly related to the time period. In Das kunstseidene Mädchen Keun concentrates on the visual aspects even more. Her main protagonist is so overpowered by the visual influences that she has to invent her own language—quirky, strange metaphors that are completely new. While Ritta Jo Horseley sees this invention of a new language as an accomplished attempt to find a female voice, I argue that Keun tries to move away from language into a pure visual narrative. If Doris ever read the articles that come with the photographs in the illustrated magazines, she would have a better grasp of reality, improve her powers of expression, and use common words and metaphors. Hence, Keun created a novel that is strictly based on the visual and, especially, photographic input by which her main character was Doris.

The visual plays a formative role in Irmgard Keun's novels Gilgi – eine von uns and Das kunstseidene Mädchen. Not only does Keun confront and seduce the main protagonist, Doris, with all the visual pleasures the Weimar Republic had to offer (movies, magazines, advertisements, fashion), but she also shows Gilgi and Doris as creators and participants in this visual narrative. Doris was more gullible than Gilgi and steeped in the visual culture to the exclusion of all else. Gilgi resists the seduction of the glamorous world and retains a cool, calculating attitude. In the end, however, Gilgi nonetheless becomes a victim of the time and finds herself, just like Doris, alone at a train station ready to depart into an unknown future. The content of Keun's novels makes significant use of the illustrated press of the time; they breathe the essence of media in the written word. Her novels are typical social studies that reflect the overwhelming visual stimuli that formed the image of the New Woman during the Weimar Republic.

## Chapter 3

### Gender Trouble in Vicki Baum's

#### Pariser Platz 13. Eine Komödie aus dem Schönheitssalon

*“Nur wenn sie sich verstellte und sein ‚Spiel‘ mitmachte, konnte sie sich kleine Inseln der Freiheit schaffen.”<sup>125</sup>*

#### Introduction:

Vicki Baum is one of the most prominent examples of a successful female writer of the Weimar Republic. She produced various articles for the Ullstein magazines *Die Dame*, the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* and *Uhu*, and established herself as one of the bestselling authors of the time. I will focus my discussion on Pariser Platz 13, which demonstrates Baum's critical attitude towards the superficiality of the New Woman, while at the same time showing approval of the possibilities this new lifestyle opened up to women of the Weimar Republic.<sup>126</sup> This unusual fictional format for Vicki Baum—a play—was published in 1930 and was also performed during the Weimar Republic. The text, which was recently re-discovered and edited by Julia Bertschik in 2006, deals with the life of the New Woman in a media-centered society, and points out the shortcomings of this life. Julia Bertschik argues that the full potential of this seemingly trivial text can only be understood with Baum's magazine articles in mind. Intertextuality is both the

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<sup>125</sup> Nottelmann, Nicole. Die Karrieren der Vicki Baum. Kiwi. 2007. 27.

<sup>126</sup> Bertschik sees the play as Baum's critical answer to the stereotyping of women during the Weimar Republic, and against the beauty regime women had to surrender to in order to be accepted in this new lifestyle. “Exemplarisch kann hier ein zugleich demonstrativer wie untergründig kritischer Umgang mit typischen Frauenthemen wie Kleidung, Kosmetik und Schönheit aufgezeigt werden. Damit reagiert Baum auf die übliche Ghettoisierung von Frauen innerhalb der Redaktionen ebenso wie auf die Strukturen einer visuellurbanen Populärkultur, deren Oberflächen Baum sowohl perpetuiert wie dekonstruiert“ (Bertschik 2005: 198).

focus of the play and the principle of composition; that is, Baum creates her play by citing passages from articles she wrote for the aforementioned magazines, doing so in a way that undermines and ridicules her previous statements. In this chapter I argue that Baum takes issue with her previous statements about beauty, lifestyle and appearance by revealing that the beauty concept of the Weimar Republic is an oppressive system that women have to adjust to in order to be considered “emancipated.” She also creates a text about gender role reversals, and plays with the common masculine fear that women would gain the upper hand. Although the play takes place almost entirely in a feminized space—the beauty parlor – the women take on masculine identities, while the men assume feminine traits.

Because the text is relatively unknown, it may be helpful to provide a short summary before proceeding. Pariser Platz 13 is a comedy in three acts and two images. The title of the play refers to its setting: a beauty parlor at Pariser Platz 13 in Berlin. I would like to stress that Baum creates with the beauty parlor an artificial setting, in which artificiality is produced. The play does not take place in Weimar culture per se but offers a microcosm of the New Woman’s lifestyle. The parlor belongs to a beauty chain: the Helen Bross Institute. Bertschik claims that the chain is modeled on the real beauty parlor chain of Elizabeth Arden.<sup>127</sup> The first act introduces the main protagonists of the play. The everyday business at the beauty parlor involves the staff, the female customers, and

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<sup>127</sup> Bertschik, Julia. *Die Ironie hinter der Fassade. Vicki Baums neusachliche Komödie aus dem Schönheitssalon Pariser Platz 13*. In: Pariser Platz 13. Aviva. 2006. 196. “Bei letzterer [Elizabeth Arden] ist Baum während ihres Amerika-Aufenthalts ein Jahr später selbst zu Gast, um sich nach amerikanischem Vorbild, wie sie sagt, in eine ebenfalls Diät haltende, augenbrauenlose Platinblonde verwandeln zu lassen” (Bertschik 2005: 198).

the various treatments they receive. Three characters in particular, Katja (Frau von Oncken), a 51-year old society lady, and Alix Matthieu, a 35-year old interior architect, and her 28-year old lover, Pix (Peter) von Gaverns are fleshed out in detail. The business runs smoothly until the proprietor of the beauty salon chain, Helen Bross, shows up in her Berlin salon. Helen not only functions as commercial advertisement and commodified woman to draw in more costumers with her magazine-like beauty, but is also portrayed as a natural woman, who falls in love with Pix. The conflict between these two functions is developed in the course of the play.

In the second act we see Helen torn between her need to represent her institute as a 42-year old woman, with a flawless appearance leading an ad-poster-like existence, and her desire to play the role of a young 24-year old girl, one who falls in love with Pix and wants to elope with him. Thus Act Two unmasks the deception of the Helen-Bross-method. A 24-year old woman plays a 42-year old in order to pretend that her patented method can make every woman look younger. Helen gives in to her human needs and the act culminates in her seduction of Pix, which leads to tensions with her customer Alix.

Act Three unravels the relationship constellations and ends with a seemingly happyend. Helen, who spent a night with Pix and revealed her secret to him, experiences the disillusionment that Pix would never leave his rich, dominating girlfriend Alix for the young little girl Helen. Helen's disappointment does not last long and she slips back into her business persona. However, the betrayal of her age secret leads to the possible destruction of the Helen-Bross-chain. All her patented treatments are in danger of being revealed as fake. Luckily, the secret does not spill out too far, and the institute is rescued

by an extreme makeover of an ugly actress, who is presented to the raging customers in a before/after manner. The method works, Helen's business empire is saved, and she even befriends Alix. The two women conclude that there is no point in giving up the New Women's solidarity for "das bisschen Mann" (158). In the following I will discuss the various characters of the play to show how the ideal of the New Woman questions the female self-identity and changes her interaction with men.

## Helen

Helen is both the proprietor of the Helen Bross method and the institute with beauty parlors around the world (e.g. New York, London, Paris, and Berlin), and also the embodiment of advertising glitz. Julia Bertschik argues convincingly that Helen's existence consists mainly in her visual status as the face of the Helen Bross institute in magazine advertisements.

Dass in Baums Komödie so ausserdem lediglich eine Reklamefigur unter anderen agiert, wird in einem Gespräch mit Gigolo Pix deutlich, dem Begleiter der neuen Kundin Alix. Seiner Meinung nach sind Helen und er sich bereits begegnet, und zwar auf virtueller Ebene: auf gemeinsamen, der zeitgenössischen Reklamepraxis entsprechenden Werbeplakaten nämlich. Im oberen Teil wirbt sie für die "Helen-Bross-Methode," darunter ist Pix zu sehen mit dem Reklameslogan "Der gut angezogene Herr trägt Hülsens halbsteifen Onyxkragen"- eine Anspielung auf Werbung für die tatsächlich existierende Kragenmarke von Heusen. (Bertschik 2005, 199)<sup>128</sup>

Indeed, were one to consult the ad pages of the magazine *Uhu* one might find many laid out in just this way; that is the page is often shared by two different companies advertising for opposite sexes. Pointedly alluding to this ad layout Baum creates images

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<sup>128</sup> Bertschik, Julia. "'Kolportageliteratur mit Hintergründen'. Zur Problematik literarischer Wertung am Beispiel von Vicki Baum (1888-1960)". In: Im Schatten der Literaturgeschichte; Autoren, die keiner mehr kennt? Plädoyer gegen das Vergessen. 2005. 193-208.

in which Helen appears virtually on top of Pix, with her face being portrayed at the top of the page, while Pix is positioned at the bottom. The visual language clearly suggests that women are on top (and seen first), literally standing over the men positioned below. This metaphor alludes to a change in power relationships between genders.

Baum's choice for naming her main protagonist "Helen" might derive from the 1927 movie Metropolis by Fritz Lang.<sup>129</sup> Two of the main figures in Metropolis are Maria, the human, and Maria, the robot. The inventor Rotwang creates Maria, the robot, as the substitute for Hel, the woman whom he truly loved and lost. As Hel seems to be a short form of Helen, it is worth looking at the characters' similarities to trace certain themes that Baum might have adapted from the movie in her play.<sup>130</sup> Thomas Elsässer explains that one of the manifold interpretations of the movie looks for answers to the question: "Would modern technology enslave mankind or bring progress and prosperity to all?"<sup>131</sup> Lang clearly fleshes out the progress of technology as a threat to mankind. The enslaved workers perform 10-hour shifts to keep Metropolis running. The danger technology entails gets a human face in the robot Maria, who is supposed to replace the

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<sup>129</sup> In fact, Vicki Baum and Fritz Lang were good friends, and he would come visit her often in her house in Hollywood as part of the German Emigrant group. "Statt jeweils die einflussreichsten Magnaten und Stars des Tages zu den üblichen Stehparties einzuladen, traf man sich zum gemütlichen Beisammensein im engsten Freundeskreis. Dazu gehörten der Schauspieler Peter Lorre, der Regisseur Fritz Lang, der Kameramann Karl Freund, und manchmal liess sich auch der von Vicki Baum so sehr verehrte Thomas Mann im Lertschen Hause blicken" (von Ankum 1998: 31).

<sup>130</sup> The comparison of technology and women during the Weimar Republic is based on the rising fear for these two rising powers. Janet Lungstrum argues that the male frustration with the feelings of alienation in the growing cities found its release in the mysterious female body with its dark sexuality. "No matter how much programming goes on, woman and machine refuse to be man's perfect creations. Indeed, one could say that, in late nineteenth- and particularly early twentieth century Europe, the more the worker and capitalist alike felt alienated through the mechanization and bureaucratization of their city lives, the greater the need to depict and avenge this frustration in the body of women" (Lungstrum 130).

<sup>131</sup> Elsaesser Thomas. Metropolis. Bfi Publishing. (2000:42).

mad scientist's love "Hel" and is a reproduction of the living person Maria. Instead of soothing a wounded heart, the robot runs amok and causes the underground city to collapse. The fear here is that technological progress has its drawbacks and the machine could become independent of its creator's control. The artificial copy, the humanoid pretends to be human. This fear is transferable to the Helen-Bross Institute. The institute tries to make women into better versions of themselves, not only through make-up powder but also electronic massages and treatments.<sup>132</sup> Women carry a façade on their faces and pretend to be something they are not. Helen pretends to be 42, and while her deception does not cause a world to collapse, she creates fears in women that they are not good enough for their jobs, their partners, and society if they do not undergo these treatments. Similarly, the rationalization of work through machines, which took a lot of manual labor from workers, threatens to make people obsolete if they do not adjust to the spirit and speed of the time. Comparably, the businesswoman Alix has to work on her façade (her face) in order to remain successful as an architect. Social critic, Siegfried Kracauer, reports that only young and beautiful women would stay employed.<sup>133</sup> There is an oppressive imperative to work with the newest technology to fit the type of the New Woman. Furthermore, the use of make-up and the beauty treatments at large made it difficult for men to recognize the age or natural attractiveness of the women in front of them. Just as the robot Maria can entice men with her sensual dance, Helen can make everyone believe that she is 42 and not 24. The beauty movement brings about

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<sup>132</sup> Indeed Bertschik mentions that these treatments worked with electricity, for example the newly invented Diathemie. "'Helen-Bross-Methode', die von Make-up und Haarkoloration über spezielle Diäten, Massagen, Packungen und kleinere Schönheitsoperationen bis zur sogenannten Diathermie (einer damals modischen Wechselstrombehandlung) reichen" (Bertschik 2005:200).

<sup>133</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. *The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*. Trans. Quintin Hoare. Verso. London and New York. (1998: 39).



insecurities and a form of world collapse, because men feared the strengths women developed and expressed in part through their looks.

On a mythological level, the search for “Hel,” which is a shorter form of Helen, renders a figure of double principles. In Norse mythology, Hel is a being that presides over a realm of the same name, where she receives the dead. In the Poetic Edda, Prose Edda, and Heimskringla, Hel is referred to as a daughter of Loki, and to ‘go to Hel’ is to die. Her appearance is described as half-black and half-flesh colored and as having a gloomy, down-cast appearance.<sup>134</sup> We see that Fritz Lang used this myth of Hel to create a figure in his film that splits into two halves: a light good one (“half-flesh colored”), the good Maria from the underground world, and a dark morbid one (“half-black”), the rebellious robot Maria. Baum’s Helen is also split into two identities: the robot-like (“magazintitelblattartige”) poster figure, and the human being, who wants to love and be loved. This split personality forces Helen to have to choose between a life of private bliss, and the powerful New Woman’s position of fortune and fame. Being a New Woman comes at a cost. Most often it reflects a lonely lifestyle, because the woman has to remain unmarried to be truly successful. We see this conflict reflected in Baum’s own life. She had to undergo a make-over and leave her husband to be effectively marketed by the Ullstein publishing house as the perfect image of the New Woman.

This personal hell a woman has to go through is also ironically reflected in Helen Bross’s institute and her treatments, which are described as hell-like experiences. Starting with her first stage direction, Baum creates Helen’s beauty parlor as a gloomy path into

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<sup>134</sup> Simek, Rudolf. Dictionary of Northern Mythology. Trans. Angela Hall. D.S. Brewer. Cambridge. 1993. 137-138. and Lindow, John. Handbook of Norse Mythology. ABC Clío. Santa Barbara, California; Denver, Colorado; Oxford, England. 2001. 172.

torture chambers “Und, Pix, liebenswürdig sogar in der Folterkammer” (15). The clients are chased like cattle into the hallway that leads to the cabins, where the torture treatments are performed. “Hinter diesen Kabinen führt ein Gang in das Innere des Instituts. In diesen Gang werden von Zeit zu Zeit KUNDINNEN getrieben” (7). Katja’s account of these treatments alludes to a hell-like experience. “Kommen Sie, los, Helen Bross! Machen Sie mich schön. Machen Sie mir eine Moorpackung (Moor- a spooky dark place, where people get lost), braten Sie mich auf jeder Seite (image of the purgatory fire), reiben Sie mich mit Schmirgelpapier ab –aber schnell” (85). These hellish beautification methods allow women to achieve positive outcomes. They are successful. However, becoming a New Woman resembles a quest. Only the ones who have the strength to go through these treatments can claim a victory in the patriarchic society. Becoming a New Woman is a strenuous process, and women have to fight for this status, instead of getting comfortable in a lifestyle that was supposed to be established at that point in time.<sup>135</sup> Therefore, the beauty parlor is indeed a positive place, because undergoing these treatments is a form of toughening up for the world outside. Nevertheless, the figure of Helen and her institute do have a dark undertone. Her clients figuratively go to hel(l) (Helen) and go through hell (the Helen-Bross-method), to reinvent themselves as the New Woman.

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<sup>135</sup> Petra Bock describes the New Woman as a concept that was established in the 1920s because the women’s movement around the turn of the century and the collapse of Wilhelmenian society happened beforehand. The generation of New Women no longer had to fight for its position in society. “Auch die Ideen der radikalen Frauenbewegung, die immerhin ein Frauenbild vertrat, das mit traditionellen Konventionen brach, wurde von den Jungen der Weimarer Republic als altmodisch und unzeitgemäß abgelehnt. Das Frauen- und Gesellschaftsbild der radikalen wie der bürgerlichen Frauenbewegung, aber auch der politischen Parteien, hatte sich in Auseinandersetzung mit der Wilhelminischen Gesellschaft entwickelt. Für die jungen Frauen in den zwanziger Jahren, die in Bereiche drängten, die erst mit Zerfall der Wilhelminischen Gesellschaft entstanden waren, schienen diese etablierten Organisationen jedoch keine angemessenen Deutungsangebote zu bieten” (Bock: 19-20).

To show the positive side of Helen and her institute's quest for beauty Baum alludes to the context of antiquity. In Greek mythology, Helen is the daughter of Zeus and Leda, hence a goddess. Her breathtaking beauty caused the Trojan War, because Paris abducted her from Sparta and her husband Menelaus. Just like Paris, Pix (Peter) is smitten by Helen's untouchable, "magazintitelblattartige" beauty. He 'abducts' her for one night, and Helen is all too willing to follow him. She has no problem leaving her business (Menelaus, Sparta) behind forever. Apart from this narrative similarity, the intertextuality with Greek mythology is played out in Pariser Platz 13 through Helen's artificial beauty. Helen of Troy is a goddess with non-human beauty, whom Helen in the play resembles. After the above mentioned night with Pix, Helen returns to being a non-approachable "Neutrum." Helen is unlike any woman Pix ever met, and because she is physically not a man, he has to attribute a new gender to her. Linguistically, in the German language only objects usually have a neutral gender with the exception of "das Mädchen," whose biological gender is feminine.

PIX: Pardon – ich habe Dich nur einen Augenblick verwechselt. Dich mit Dir.  
Du verwandelst Dich zu oft. Gestern Nachmittag warst du eine mondäne, grosse Frau –  
HELEN: Leider zu alt für deinen Geschmack.-  
PIX: Heute Nacht warst Du ein kleines, sehr schüchternes Mädchen –  
HELEN: Leider zu jung für deinen Geschmack.-  
PIX: Heute morgen bist du wieder etwas Anderes –  
HELEN: Was denn?  
PIX: Ich weiss nicht. So etwas Kühles, Klares – ein Neutrum, das achtmal an die Bettkante klopft und um Punkt acht aufwacht (121).

Pix locates Helen somewhere between a girl and a woman and concludes that she must be a "Neutrum" – which means genderless in many modern languages. We could infer from this observation that Helen has lost her female gender as a New Woman. In the Weimar

Republic the ascribed gender roles changed, and hence it might be difficult for Pix to identify with whom he spent the night. For Pix, Helen transforms into an object, something cool and clear -- this refers to the modern female statue that stands in the Helen-Bross-Institute's salon.

In the play it becomes clear that Helen is a mirror figure to the feminine statue in the institute's salon. Baum puts a lot of emphasis on this statue in her stage directions. The statue is a beautiful, modern, naked woman in a wall recess, which also lets natural light into the room (57). In the first scene the sun sets and MADAME turns on the artificial light, which takes the focus away from the statue's presence. With the shifting of the light sources the object of interest in the scene goes from the statue to Helen. Interestingly, the "beautiful, naked" statue is connected to the natural light, while Helen who hides behind a mask of make-up and age is seen in the artificial light. I would like to suggest that Baum approves of the quest for beauty in a natural way, referring with the statue to the Greeks, who are since the period of Classicism the role model for a balanced lifestyle of body and soul. Helen's beauty, respectively, is artificial and leads other women to seek the same façade.

Just as Helen becomes a figure to the female statue, Adonis, who interacts with the statue, becomes a parallel figure to Pix. Helen sits on a couch, when ADONIS (the boy for the door and operating the gramophone) enters the room. Adonis whose real name is Schwemcke, represents the image of the pretty boy. Linking him to antiquity seems unavoidable. Adonis is just like Helen unearthly beautiful. "He grew up to become an exceptionally handsome young man," and was worshipped as a god by young women.

<sup>136</sup> As a young-pretty boy Schwemke resembles the Helen-Bross' office Adonis, who functions as a figure for Pix (another handsome young man). Schwemke never becomes the female clients' favorite as was the god Adonis to Persephone and Aphrodite, and Pix to Alix, Katja and Helen. He interacts with the statue in the salon, and thus parallels the relationship Helen and Pix have.

*ADONIS steht in einem merkwürdigen Verhältnis zu der nackten Skulptur auf der anderen Seite. Er versäumt keine Gelegenheit, um sich die Skulptur anzuschauen, kann aber sein Missfallen – vielleicht gegen die Immoralität der Darstellung – niemals überwinden. Das Resultat dieses ständigen und niemals endenden Kampfes zwischen ADONIS und der Skulptur ist immer ein leises missbilligendes Kopfschütteln seitens des jungen Mannes (58).*

Baum does not specify the terms of Adonis' relationship to this statue, or why he is so disapproving of her. I would suggest that either the beautiful naked female statue represents the beauty craze that he experiences in the parlor on a daily basis and with which he disagrees, or on the meta level of Greek mythology, he might be frustrated that the only woman (a statue, reminding us of the Greek statues) who is worthy of him is unapproachable. Pix does not disagree with the activities in the beauty parlor, but he has trouble identifying who Helen truly is when he finally gets together with her. A relationship with Helen becomes impossible, because she has to remain a New Woman. She cannot give up her business of the façade of her old age, and this bothers Pix very much. Figuratively speaking, Helen turns into an unreachable statue on a podium (which in the case of the New Woman could be the illustrated magazine).

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<sup>136</sup> Robin Hard explains that in the legend of Adonis "we can see the outlines of an oriental myth of the Great Mother and of her lover who dies as the vegetation dies, but always comes to life again. This is most obvious in the story in which he spends part of the year – evidently the dead season – with Persephone, queen of the Underworld, but returns for the rest of the year to the arms of Aphrodite" (Hard 200). Hard, Robin. The Routledge Handbook of Greek Mythology. Routledge. London; New York. 2004.

The relationship between Adonis and the statue is mirrored in Helen's relationship to Pix. In the next scene, they meet in the salon in front of the statue, and Pix tries to explain his attraction to the untouchable Helen Bross. Pix shows frustrations with Helen similar to those Adonis has with the statue. On the one hand, they disapprove of the "women" they admire; on the other hand, they cannot resist the temptation to look at them. This resembles the men's feelings of the Weimar Republic – who, on the one hand, found the New Woman erotic and appealing, but too strong and scary to function as a wife. Pix explains: "Wenn man Sie nämlich zum ersten Mal sieht, denkt man, dass Ihr Gesicht bald langweilig wird, weil es zu schön ist; aber es wird nicht langweilig, absolut nicht. Komisch... Es hat so einen merkwürdigen Reiz" (61). Furthermore, the age difference that exists between the 14-year old Adonis and the female statue (if she ever was a real woman) is also emphasized in Helen's and Pix's conversation.

HELEN: *Sie setzt sich, ganz HELEN BROSS.* Also Ihre moralische Rettung. Sie unverschämter kleiner Junge?

PIX: Bitte nicht so überlegen sein! Ich weiss, Sie sind viel klüger und erfahrener und...*und er schluckt das Wort herunter*

HELEN: *ohne jede Spitze, rasch und mit Klang in der Stimme* ...älter...?

PIX: *mit einer Spur Verlegenheit* Bitte, nicht immer daran erinnern" (60-61).

Although Pix urges Helen not to remind him of their age difference (14 years), he still comes back to this point that greatly disturbs him. Pix describes the distance in age by talking about Helen's presumed long life, which would allow her to already write her memoirs.

PIX: Eine Frau wie Sie müsste eigentlich ihre Memoiren schreiben.

HELEN: Eine Frau wie ich –

PIX: Eine Frau, die soviel erlebt hat – man hat sie geliebt, man hat sich für sie ruiniert, man hat sich ihrethaben totgeschossen – (61).

The problems that arise between Pix and Helen refer to the mythological love life of Adonis and the random statue. Telling in this regard is the way Helen and Pix's conversation is interrupted by Adonis, who enters the room to announce the executive's arrival. Of course, Adonis cannot leave without another look at the statue. Thus, Adonis' interaction with the lifeless statue frames Helen's and Pix's conversation. Framing the conversation in this way, Adonis' (young boy or mythological god) hopeless interaction with the statue suggests that Helen and Pix's attraction for each other is doomed from the start.

Beyond the connections to antiquity, there are striking parallels between Baum's Pariser Platz 13 and her own life story. Like her fictional protagonist, Helen, Baum plays the role of a successful, emancipated business woman. In Pariser Platz 13, forced into the role of a 42-year old entrepreneur, Helen has to sell her services and products on an international market, going into this profession because she is not fit for any other typical "New Woman's" profession. Her uncle Elias, an executive of the Berlin parlor, explains:

[...] was soll ich mit Dir anfangen in dem grossen New-York? Ich, Elias Salomon Grünwasser aus Lundenburg in Mähren. Sommersprossen hast Du gehabt und schüchtern warst Du – Was hätte ich mit Dir anfangen sollen? Schreibmaschine? Jeden Tag zehn Stunden krumm sitzen? Für fünf Dollars die Woche? Zur Revue? – No – passt denn jemand aus unserer Familie zur Revue? – Da habe ich in der Zeitung gelesen einen Artikel über Schönheit (72).

Elias, and by extension Baum, criticizes how most secretaries and steno typists are exploited for very little money, a problem that many New Women had to face. But Helen

was also not fitting for the Revue, because a bourgeois Jewish family would never let its daughter dance in a rather frivolous profession. Vicki Baum, who spent her childhood and early adulthood in Vienna, was taught to play the harp, and actually became a successful harpist for a while. Thus, she joined the high-culture art scene instead of participating in the more popular Revues. Baum willingly joined the mass media market of magazines, but at the same time was pushed into a stereotypical “New Woman” image by the Ullstein Verlag. In order to promote Baum’s book Stud. chem. Helene Willfüer and to add authenticity to her reports about beauty, the Ullstein house gave Baum a complete makeover. Baum became a creature of the publishing house, and with her change in outfit and style, her stories became marketable. Lynda King describes her transformation in remarkable detail:

Ullstein’s campaign to make Baum’s name a household word had several facets, each fashioned to reinforce the other. First, Baum’s physical appearance had to be adjusted to suit the image of the New Woman. On 24 April 1926, shortly after she joined the company, a small, dark photo of Baum printed in the *Berliner Illustrierte* (sic), Ullstein’s mass circulation weekly, reveals her look before the campaign. This Vicki Baum is attractive, but soft and old-fashioned: her dark-brown hair is parted in the middle and coiffure with little attention to style, she smiles slightly, her soft dark eyes predominate, and she wears a high-collared, lacy blouse. A year later she has been transformed. One Ullstein photo portrays a glamorous Baum in profile, her chin high in the air, with blond, stylish hair and perfect makeup, long jeweled earrings, pearl necklace, and an elegant, low-cut evening gown (154).<sup>137</sup>

It seems that Vicki Baum uses her own stunning transformation from a common pretty girl into a glamorous New Woman in Pariser Platz 13.<sup>138</sup> Helen resembles the same split

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<sup>137</sup> King, Lynda. “Vicki Baum and the ‘Making’ of Popular Success: ‘Mass’ Culture or ‘Popular’ Culture”. In: *Women in German Yearbook*. (1995: 11). 151-69.

<sup>138</sup> Bertschik also considers Baum’s transformation to fit the ideal of the New Woman perfectly. „Initiiert durch eine zeittypische Imagekampagne des Ullstein-Verlags verkörpert sie [Baum] ab 1927 in geradezu idealtypischer Weise den temporeichen Lebensstil der ‚Neuen Frau‘ in der Grossstadtmétropole Berlin zur Zeit der Weimarer Republik. Dieses Idealbild der berufstätigen Frau und Mutter lässt sich kennzeichnen



personality. On the one hand, she wants to be herself but, on the other, she has to put on her plastic make-up mask in order to sell her products. Not only Helen, but also DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN – another interesting figure that I will investigate later in detail – reflects the transformation from an ugly duckling into a beautiful swan. Baum takes issue with the superficiality of the perfect New Woman image creation during the Weimar Republic. Of course, Baum also played a part in the same game, but she used her transformation in order to make more money in contrast to many clients of the Helen-Bross-institute who just follow their idols and undergo costly, painful transformations just for the sake of their appearance. One of these clients is Katja (Frau von Oncken), who does not work because she is a high-society lady getting these treatments done, because she is desperately trying to achieve the look of the New Woman.

Baum gives her character depth by fitting Helen with her own life-story. In doing so Helen becomes a way for the author to take issue with her own life's shortcomings. Just like Baum's mother, Helen's mother died early on and left her daughter alone.<sup>139</sup> Elias exposes the family secrets in a dispute with Helen. ELIAS: "Weisst Du noch, wieviel Geld bei uns im Hause war an dem Tage, an dem meine selige Schwester, Deine Mutter, gestorben ist? Ein halber Dollar war im Hause – und 37 Dollar hat Deine Mutter Schulden gehabt. *Er streckt die Hand aus über dem Tisch, zieht sie aber wieder zurück*" (72). Elias is not only Helen's uncle, but also an important executive in Helen's

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durch finanzielle Unabhängigkeit vom Mann, gleichberechtigte Kameradschaft in der Liebe, Sexualität und Ehe, Befreiung aus einengender und unrationaler Mode durch kurze Haare und kniekurze Röcke, sportlich (Vicki Baum erhält Boxtraining) und weiblich zugleich" (Bertschik 2005:195).

<sup>139</sup> Nicole Nottelmann writes in her biography about Vicki Baum that Mathilde Baum, Vicki's mother, was mentally unstable and lived a life of sickness and ailments. She died on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1908 from cancer, when Vicki Baum was just 20 years old, left alone by her father and relieved of the task of taking care of her mother. Compare Nottelmann 2007: 23-28 and 38-40.

company. He resembles Baum's father with whom she had a very strained relationship that is expressed by Elias' reaching out to Helen, but then withdrawing his hand.<sup>140</sup> The life story to make Helen's pretended age of 42 more plausible is spun together from Baum's own biographical background. Pix recapitulates the information about Helen that has been released to the public together with her image. PIX: "Verzeihen Sie; doch ausgenommen jene drei Gentlemen, die die Ehre hatten mit Helen Bross verheiratet zu sein. Und jene zwei jungen Herren, die das Glück haben, in ihr die Mutter lieben zu dürfen. Das sind schon fünf. Und außerdem..."(48). Indeed, Vicki Baum was married twice and had two sons with her second husband. As for the "außerdem..." like any public figure, there were rumors that Vicki Baum had various affairs in her life. Moreover, it is a fact that Vicki Baum abandoned her husband, the conductor Richard Lert, and along with him their two children in Hannover when she left for Berlin to seek fortune and fame as a writer for the Ullstein Verlag.

Nach einem Streit mit Richard Ende 1925 oder Anfang 1926 beschloss Vicki, sich auch von ihm zu trennen ... Da es ihrer Natur widersprach, sich von irgendjemandem abhängig zu machen, besann sie sich nun wieder auf das, was sie für das einzig Verlässliche auf der Welt hielt: auf sich selbst und auf ihre innere Unabhängigkeit. ... [Sie schickte] nach dem großen Streit mit Richard eine

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<sup>140</sup> Katharina von Ankum describes in a short biography about Vicki Baum that her father left his wife and daughter early on, because he could not handle his wife's ailing condition anymore. "Der Vater, der das Leiden seiner Frau nicht ertragen konnte, zog aus der gemeinsamen Wohnung aus und überließ die Pflege seiner einzigen Tochter. Das junge Mädchen lernte schnell, auf eigenen Füßen zu stehen" (von Ankum 1998: 9-10).

Nottelmann says that Hermann Baum tried to toughen Vicki up, and basically make her into the boy he never had. "Hermann verstärkte seine Anstrengungen, aus dem kränklichen, dünnen Mädchen einen 'Jungen' zu machen, 'vielleicht damit ich nicht auch überschnappe', meinte Baum später gegenüber einer Freundin. Selbst ein Hypochonder von hohen Graden, verordnete Hermann seiner Tochter ein rigoroses Gesundheitsprogramm mit Kneippbädern und verbot ihr bestimmte Speisen und Getränke wie Süßigkeiten, Obst und Limonade. Wenn sie seine Anweisungen missachtete, kürzte er ihr das Taschengeld oder strich ihren heißgeliebten Nachtsch" (Nottelmann 2007: 26).

Bewerbung an ihren Gewährsmann Paul Wiegeler, in der sie ihn um eine feste Stelle im Ullstein- Haus Berlin bat.<sup>141</sup>

This mirrors Helen's dilemma of being split into two personas: the plastic public face of the Helen-Bross-Institut and the private person Helen, who would like to be happily married. For her part Vicki Baum was promoted by the Ullstein Verlag as the perfect New Woman, at once a successful career woman and a devoted mother. Lynda King stresses this point by analyzing a photograph that was published by Ullstein together with the last installment of Baum's novel Stud.chem. Helene Willfüer; a strategy to link the author to the protagonist of her story, which appeared shortly after the publication of the photo in book form, and earned Baum and the publisher even more money.

Another feature of her new image is disclosed in the photograph that appeared with a short biography accompanying the last installment of Helene on 3 January 1929, when the release in book form was also announced. In the center sits Baum, with blond, bobbed hair, playing with her sons – but no husband in sight. This is Baum the New Woman as mother, taking time out from her busy career for her children. The photo thus meshed the “real” New Woman Baum with the fictional Helene, the single mother and successful career woman who finally has time to play with her son.<sup>142</sup>

In fact, Richard Lert often had to leave his family to take on engagements as a conductor in various cities throughout Germany. Baum stayed behind – alone – with the children. The divorced Helen is also supposed to be a single mother. Her imagined children stay behind in New York, while Helen tends to her beauty parlors in Europe.

The most astonishing parallel between the fictive Helen and the author is by far the age similarity. Baum published her play in 1930, when she was 42 – the same age

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<sup>141</sup> Nottelmann, Nicole. Die Karrieren der Vicki Baum. Eine Biographie. Kiepenheuer und Witsch. 2007. 103-104.

<sup>142</sup> King, Lynda. “‘Vicki Baum and the ‘Making’ of Popular Success: ‘Mass’ Culture or ‘Popular’ Culture?’” Women in German Yearbook 11 (1995: 154).

Helen pretends to be. Based on this and other parallels between Baum and her protagonist, I would argue that Pariser Platz 13 is a self- reflexive play in a double sense: first, the author comes to terms with the theatricality of her own life by showing readers that her status as a New Woman comes at the cost of giving up her own identity in public, second, the play reflects on its own theatricality, a claim that I will lay out in detail later on.<sup>143</sup> Helen pretends to be 42, but tries to look younger with the help of her beauty parlor methods. She succeeds, of course, because in reality the protagonist is only 24 (which is by far the more appropriate age for the New Woman). It has been documented that Vicki Baum also made herself 8 years younger after her transformation into the all too perfect New Woman. The behavior was itself surprisingly widespread during the Weimar Republic. It is uncertain, for example, whether Irmgard Keun was actually born in 1905 or 1910.<sup>144</sup> With her novels about strong, emancipated women Baum tried to target an audience of young New Women between the ages of 18 and 30. In order to remain an identifiable figure and a bestselling author, Baum had to maintain the flawless image of a New Woman herself. Cosmetics, jewelry and clothing made this possible. But even Vicki Baum could not stop time from passing. Pariser Platz 13 seems to be the

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<sup>143</sup> Bertschik argues that although the ideal image of the New Woman in the Weimar Republic was for the most part more a media creation than a reality, Vicki Baum is the proof that these successful power women actually existed. "Dieses Idealbild der berufstätigen Frau und Mutter läßt sich kennzeichnen durch finanzielle Unabhängigkeit vom Mann, gleichberechtigte Kameradschaft in Liebe, Sexualität und Ehe, Befreiung aus einengender und unrationeller Mode durch Dekollete, kurze Haare und kurze Röcke, sportlich und weiblich zugleich. [...] Während sich für die Situation der meisten weiblichen Angestellten der Zwischenkriegszeit diese Vorstellung von weiblicher Modernität allerdings eher als Wunschbild denn als Realität darstellte, existierte mit Vicki Baum tatsächlich eine der wenigen, von der deutschsprachigen Forschung hartnäckig vernachlässigten Karrierefrauen dieser Zeit" (Bertschik 2000: 67).

<sup>144</sup> "Die Geburt des Bruders Gerd 1910 scheint dem fünfjährigen Mädchen in der Tat zu schaffen gemacht zu haben [...] Immerhin hat die junge Schauspielerin Irmgard Keun, als sie in den zwanziger Jahren beschloss, für immer ihr Alter nach unten zu retouchieren, das Geburtsjahr des Bruders zu dem ihren gemacht" (Häntzschel, Hiltrud. Irmgard Keun. Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag. Hamburg. 2001. 12-13).

realization of this fact. How long could Baum still adhere to the ideal New Woman image of the time? This problem is a central theme in her play, and the subject of much irony.

The similarities between the lives of these two women, makes it clear that the phenomenon of the New Woman and her emancipation is dictated by men. Baum shows that the change in appearance is a symbol of the New Woman's emancipation – after all she has the courage and the money to go through these hellish beautification treatments. However, by taking a closer look at Helen's existence we see that her status as a successful business woman was fostered by her uncle Elias. He is the wire puller in this scheme to get to the money of her clients. He determined that Helen should not become a secretary or dancer but an advertisement figure of the Helen Bross Institute. "Was hätte ich mit Dir anfangen sollen? Schreibmaschine? Jeden Tag zehn Stunden krumm sitzen? Für fünf Dollars die Woche? Zur Revue? – No – passt denn jemand aus unserer Familie zur Revue? – Da habe ich in der Zeitung gelesen einen Artikel über Schönheit" (72). While Helen's space for emancipation is fleshed out and limited by a man, her uncle Elias, the Ullstein publishing house led by the brothers Ullstein encouraged Vicki Baum to get a make-over to better promote her books and the image of the New Woman.<sup>145</sup>

### **Die hässliche Schauspielerin**

DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN is another reflection of Helen. She represents her profession. At the same she is the key character through whom Baum exposes the self-reflexivity of the play. DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN is

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<sup>145</sup> The Ullstein publishing house was led by the five brothers Hans, Louis, Franz, Rudolf and Hermann Ullstein. Baumann herself had the most contact with Hermann Ullstein, the head of the Ullstein books (Freyburg, W. Joachim and Wallenberg, Hans (eds.): Hundert Jahre Ullstein 1877-1977 in vier Bänden. Verlag Ullstein GmbH. Frankfurt am Main. Berlin. Wien. 1977. Vol 1: 39 and 300).

marked as the figure who unveils the theatrical mask of the New Woman's need to be beautiful in public, and thus puts on a show instead of being natural. She takes on a role that effectively opens or gives place to a play within the play. In her first stage appearance, she seeks help in the Helen-Bross-Institute.<sup>146</sup> Elias, whose main concern is to create beauty, evaluates the ugliness of DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN. A treatment would cost her 1.000 Marks, which she cannot afford, because she is not only ugly but also poor. DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN is yet another way Baum defines the demands of "beautification" during the capital-driven Weimar Republic. Only the rich can be beautiful because they can afford the proper upkeep of their image. As Kracauer explains in "The Salaried Masses," only the beautiful girls had a chance to be hired as shop girls and secretaries and stay employed.<sup>147</sup> We can assume that a woman already has to be naturally beautiful to get a chance to enter this vicious circle of artificial beauty. Without beauty there is no job, and without a job there is no money and finally without money there are no beauty treatments to keep up the artificial beauty promoted by the Helen Bross institute. Clearly, this also applies to the figure of DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN (as it does for actresses today). Toward the end of the play, she returns with 100 Marks to get her treatments done, explaining that she never gets past the waiting room of a casting agency. SCHAUSPIELERIN: "Ich muss gut aussehen, muss. Ich habe Talent. Glauben Sie mir, ich habe Talent, mehr als die anderen. Aber ich komme

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<sup>146</sup> Baum introduces her in the stage directions as "armer Kerl" (18), which determines her gender as masculine.

<sup>147</sup> "Employees most join in, whether they want to or not. The rush to the numerous beauty salons springs partly from existential concerns, and the use of cosmetic products is not always a luxury. For fear of being withdrawn from use as obsolete, ladies and [emphasis in the original] gentlemen dye their hair, while forty-year-olds take up sports to keep slim" (39). Kracauer, Siegfried. The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany. Trans. Quintin Hoare. Verso. London and New York. 1998.

nicht über die Vorzimmer hinaus. Kein Agent, kein Direktor will. Ich... wenn ich schön wäre...Helen Bross muss mich schön machen...Mein Leben hängt davon ab” (136). Thus, there is already a parallel between the actress and Helen. Each needs to look her part to survive in her respective profession. Indeed, the actress emphasizes that she does not want the treatments out of vanity, but out of necessity. SCHAUSPIELERIN: “Ich komme nicht aus Eitelkeit, mein Beruf verlangt Schönheit” (19). It boggles the mind (and accentuates the bitter irony of the situation), to think that she calls herself an actress even though she has never actually had a part in a show.

The introduction of DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN in the first act just before Helen arrives in her institute in Berlin, heightens the difference in appearance between these two women. Helen functions as an ideal to which the actress needs to aspire, and at the same time, the ugly actress reflects Helen’s ability to swindle and act. The figure of DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN does not only imply that Helen acts out a role as the 42- year old advertising figure of the Helen Bross Institute. Simultaneously, looking at the connection of reality and play, we see that Baum wants a beautiful actress to play an ugly one. The swindle is inherent in the very role of DIE HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN, because it is here where acting and reality merge and furnish Baum’s play with an ironic layer. To act basically means to pretend that you are someone else, which Helen has mastered beautifully. We even see her at one point studying new beauty recipes and phrases from her Helen-Bross-catalogue as if she were an actress studying her script. “HELEN: Blasse Lippen bei einer jungen Frau bedeuten Resignation. Warum aber resignieren? Besser als jeder Lippenstift ist Lebensmut und...” (70). During her consultations with her clients she would always make sure to intersperse

some of the phrases she learned by heart. Julia Bertschik mentions this observation in a different context, one in which she stresses the similarities between Helen's catalogue phrases and Vicki Baum's reportages for the monthly magazine *Uhu*.

Doch nicht nur Helens Aussehen entspricht 'so magazinblattmässig kitschig schön' den eigenen Werbeplakaten, auch ihr theatralisches Auftreten mit **perfekt einstudierten** (emphasized by J.F.) Schönheitstips lassen sie als wandelnden „Helen Bross Prospekt“ erscheinen. [...] Es sind nichts weiter als Formulierungen aus Vicki Baums eigenen Schönheitstips anpreisenden Artikeln des Ullstein-Magazins *Uhu*. So finden sich die im Komödienrahmen jetzt ironisch als Phrasen ausgestellten Verhaltensregeln wie "Erstens ist die Liebe die kostbarste Medizin für die Schönheit"; "Eine Frau mit Verstand muss soviel Verstand haben, dass man den Verstand nicht bemerkt" oder "Die müde Frau war eine Erscheinung des überwundenen neunzehnten Jahrhunderts" in Baums [...] Ratgeberartikel *Welche Frau ist am begehrtesten?*, der im selben Jahr wie *Pariser Platz 13* erscheint, sowie in ihrem Generationenvergleich *Die Mütter von morgen – die Backfische von heute ein Jahr zuvor* (Bertschik, 79).<sup>148</sup>

For my argument, the recitation of her catalogue formulas clearly marks Helen as an actress herself, who puts on a show for her clientele, and gives a greater performance than the ugly actress whose profession it is to perform. This also implies that Baum tries to lay bare the status of the New Woman, as the work of an actress. To be a New Woman means to act out that persona as it is presented in the media of the day.

However, Baum also reserves a great performance for the actress at the end of Pariser Platz 13, where she plays an important role. The Helen Bross Institute is about to close down because with Helen's revelation that she is only 24 years old instead of 42 her female clients are about to lose their trust in her methods. As the actress appears, a mob of 40 rebellious clients goes berserk, having learned of Elias' decision to close the beauty salon without further notice. At that moment the ugly actress is a gift from heaven. As

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<sup>148</sup> Bertschik, Julia. "Vicki Baum; Gelebter und inszenierter Typ der 'Neuen Frau' in der Weimarer Republik". In: Nora verlässt ihr Puppenheim: Autorinnen des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts und ihr Beitrag zur ästhetischen Innovation. J.B. Metzlar. Stuttgart. 2000. 66-87.



she receives a total makeover on the spot, the female customers see with their own eyes that Elias and the Helen Bross Institute really have the ability to create beauty. The actress is presented in a Cinderella-like ending as a beautiful young woman.

*Die HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN bleibt starr lächelnd auf der Treppe, Mitte hinten, stehen; hinter ihr treten zwei ASSISTENTINNEN auf, die mit kleinen Fächern die Nägelpolitur ihrer graziös gespreizten Finger trocken fächeln.*

ALLE: *schauen überrascht hin* Ah!

KATJA: Ist das die ---?

ELIAS: *triumphierend* Können wir? Sie sehen: wir schwindeln nicht – wir können!

KATJA: Das ist wirklich die --?

ELIAS: Unsere Methode – die Helen-Bross-Methode.

KATJA: Ich gratuliere!

PIX: *unwillkürlich auf die SCHAUSPIELERIN zu* Die ist ja bezaubernd (157).

However, as we all know, Cinderella was by nature a beauty and just needed to be cleaned up and dressed nicely to enhance her natural gifts. The same applies here. Vicki Baum emphasizes in the stage directions that the HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN needs to be played by a beautiful girl whose clothes are just disheveled and her hair messy. Baum's logic is that it is much easier to transform a beautiful girl in rags into a beauty in minutes than having to make an ugly woman beautiful.

Für die Verwandlung stehen ihr gut acht Minuten zur Verfügung, das genügt, wie die Praxis zeigte, wenn alles gut vorbereitet ist. [...] Ihre Schönheit muss auch etwas übertrieben mannequinhaftes haben. Nochmals sei davor gewarnt, die Rolle mit einer andern als einer sehr schönen Schauspielerin zu besetzen. Die Verwandlung einer schönen Schauspielerin in ein unscheinbares Wesen ist leicht. Aber die Verwandlung einer reizlosen Schauspielerin in eine überzeugende Schönheit ist technisch unmöglich (156-157).

Baum contradicts herself, by assuming that an ugly actress would even be considered for the part of an ugly actress. Baum's actress in the play makes clear that it is impossible for her to get beyond the waiting room to an agent or director due to her appearance. This

way the play reflects upon itself. A beautiful actress has to play an ugly one, because an ugly actress would not have gotten the job to play what she is. Therefore, in the play and on stage, we are taken behind the scenes of the entertainment culture, which tries to eliminate or suppress anything that does not adhere to its standards. More important, however, is Baum's statement that it is impossible to make a beauty out of an unattractive woman. Thus the proof for the effectiveness of the Helen-Bross-method is worthless because the woman was beautiful from the start. She just needed the superficial ("Ihre Schönheit muss auch etwas mannequinhaftes haben.") transformation of the Helen-Bross-method to be perceived as beautiful by a shallow society that is driven by visual representations of an ideal beauty. In the actress's transformation I see a parallel to Helen, who also has to put on make-up to gain the "magazintitelblattmässige" (52) beauty that her clients expect from her. However, Helen is already a beautiful young woman whose appearance can only be "improved" by make-up. Her female clients do not possess the real quality at stake here: natural beauty and youth. Youth cannot be attained although the Helen-Bross-method promises to make customers look younger, and natural beauty is not desirable. Helen has a plastic-like poster quality, and the actress looks like a mannequin – the new artificial ideals that were declared to be the new understanding of beauty.

It is significant that the natural beauties, Helen and the HÄSSLICHE SCHAUSPIELERIN are young women whose beauty is enhanced by the treatments in the beauty parlor. They could go without make-up and still be beautiful. The main function of the parlor is to make the older costumers believe that they can look just as good as the young women through the artificial beauty that the Helen-Bross Institute

provides. The solidarization of the New Women lies here in the creation of an artificial beauty image that can blur the lines between young and old women, and beautiful and less attractive women. The image of the New Woman gives hope to those who can afford the treatments at the parlor that they might be attractive and successful for a little bit longer in a world that is driven by visual impressions.

Bertschik criticizes Baum for putting these crucial lines, which turn her entire play upside down, into the stage directions, because during a performance these sentences get lost.<sup>149</sup> A major part of Baum's bitter irony towards the culture of the Weimar Republic is taken away from the audience which enjoys this story as a theater play. They will never know that the ugly actress was in reality beautiful from the start. This unfortunate move by Baum as a writer leads to a negative perception of her play. Without her stage directions the ending does look like a sappy happy-ending for the Helen-Bross-method, and the entire artificial world of the beauty parlor is re-affirmed. Therefore, Bertschik maintains that Baum's comedy can only be fully enjoyed and understood as an ironic look on Baum's glamour world by reading it. The play is basically a "Lesedrama."

While I agree with Bertschik that Baum's play achieves its fully ironic potential only as a "Lesedrama," hiding key sentences in the stage directions, I do not agree with her claim that the irony in Baum's play can only be decoded by knowing the articles she

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<sup>149</sup> "Mit einer solch vollständigen Desillusionierung, die allerdings nur dem lesenden Publikum zuteil wird, spitzt Baum auf der Metaebene das zu, was sie ihre Figuren auf der Handlungsebene zwischen Vorder- und Hinterbühne, zwischen ,parfümierte(r)' Rokoko-Atmosphäre des Schönheitssalons und sachlich-geschäftsmäßigem Ambiente des ,gewissermaßen hinter den Kulissen' liegenden Bürotrakts bereits erahnen läßt: daß ,sogar der Schwindel nur ein Schwindel' sein kann, daß aber das geraubte Vertrauen in einen Schwindel am allerschlimmsten ist. Daß genau diese Art der Destruktion gängiger Zuschauererwartungen von Baum intendiert war, konnte bei der Premiere des Stücks 1931 an den Berliner Kammerspielen allerdings insofern nicht deutlich werden, als sich die ironischen Kommentare zum Bühnengeschehen nur über die nicht inszenierten Regieanweisungen bzw. im intertextuellen Bezug zu Baums eigenen Ullstein – Artikeln erschließen lassen. Die Komödie erweist ihre eigentliche Brisanz also erst als Lesedrama" (Bertschik 2000: 82).

wrote for the illustrated magazines.<sup>150</sup> The irony is apparent to anyone familiar with Weimar society and culture and can already be spotted in the first scene of the play where a slim and a full-figured lady are shown discussing the Helen Bross diet. While promising that one can eat anything one wishes, the diet turns out to require nothing less than self starvation.

SCHLANKE DAME: Und man kann alles essen, sagen Sie?

VOLLSCHLANKE DAME: Bei der Helen-Bross-Diät alles! Und dabei nimmt man 300 Gramm in der Woche ab.

SCHLANKE DAME: Nicht mehr?

VOLLSCHLANKE DAME: Mehr macht Falten. Um acht Uhr eine halbe Zitrone, um 10 Uhr eine Tasse schwarzen Kaffee.

SCHLANKE DAME: *hoffnungsvoll* Mit Zucker?

VOLLSCHLANKE DAME: Ohne! Um 12 Uhr eine Scheibe Roggenbrot.

SCHLANKE DAME: *wie oben* Mit Butter?

VOLLSCHLANKE DAME: Ohne! Um zwei Uhr einen halben sauren Apfel wenn Sie dann noch hungrig sind, ein Glas Zitronensaft. Das saettigt und macht den Magen klein.

SCHLANKE DAME: *langsam überzeugt* Da isst man ja eigentlich ununterbrochen (8-9).

The slim lady's observation "Da isst man ja eigentlich ununterbrochen," is true to the extent that something is consumed every two hours. However, most of the food is actually liquids with very little nutritional value, and the actual food allowance is way below a healthy calorie count. Yes, "eigentlich" you do eat without end, it is just the minimalistic dimension that makes this diet, which allows the consumption of everything, into an ironic farce. The readership of the Weimar Republic was well aware of the

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<sup>150</sup> Bertschik, Julia. „Die Ironie hinter der Fassade. Vicki Baums neusachliche Komödie aus dem Schönheitssalon ‚Pariser Platz 13‘“. In: *Pariser Platz 13*. Aviva. 2006. 203-4. "Dass genau diese Art der Destruktion gängiger Zuschauererwartungen von Baum intendiert war, konnte bei der Premiere des Stücks 1931 an den Berliner Kammerspielen allerdings nicht deutlich werden, als sich die ironischen Kommentare zum Bühnengeschehen nur über die nicht inszenierten Regieanweisungen bzw. im intertextuellen Bezug zu Baums eigenen Ullstein-Artikeln erschliessen lassen. Die Komödie erweist ihre eigentliche Brisanz also erst als Lesedrama" (Bertschik 2005:203).

malpractices and lunacy that came along with dieting, as a cartoon from the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* shows. A lady refuses to take sugar with her coffee because she had already consumed 541 ½ calories that same day.<sup>151</sup> While there is no doubt that Baum's play refers to various articles and images from illustrated magazines, it is not necessary to read or see them in order to understand Pariser Platz 13 as an ironic reflection on the media-hyped craze of the perfect New Woman. Moreover, one should keep in mind that the original readership at the beginning of the 1930s survived the hardships of the First World War, and lived in the middle of an economic depression. Clearly, such an audience could distinguish a starvation diet from bountiful food consumption. The irony that Baum employs to illustrate the shortcomings of the New Woman's image also extends to the interaction between men and women. The author transforms Helen's love interest into a figure with dog-like characteristics and exemplifies in Pix the subordinated status of men to the presumably strong and independent New Woman.

### **Pix is a dog**

Baum shows through the self-reflexivity of the play that life for the New Woman is an image of theatricality and make-belief. This also affects the portrayal of men in Pariser Platz 13. The New Woman's concern with her image and her looks overshadows the relationship with the other sex. I would like to argue that the New Woman is so absorbed with her agenda that men turn into attachments to this image. Baum turns the masculine love object in her play, Pix, into a toy-dog that is following and entertaining the New Woman, but has lost all power of authority. Baum created in Pix (Peter von

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<sup>151</sup> *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*. issue 6, 1926.

Garvens) the stereotypical man who embodies all the effeminate characteristics men of the Weimar Republic feared, and is very much dominated by the ladies in the beauty salon. His character is shaped by the visual culture and media of the time, as well as by the demands the women he is with place on him. He is a prime example of the collapsed patriarchal system of which the men of the Weimar Republic were afraid.<sup>152</sup>

Alix marks Pix as a dog by establishing a relationship with him that is not based on equality but bears the marks of a dominant female owner and a submissive masculine toy-dog. Alix, as the owner of Pix, has the right to rename him based on her own name. “PIX: Pix ist so eine Art – so – eine Schutzmarke. Meine Freundin heißt Lix, da bin ich Pix genannt worden; eigentlich heiße ich Peter” (65). Pix himself calls his name a “Schutzmarke,” which means that he was branded with a certain name by his owner. He accepts his renaming without a fight, because Alix is the one who provides him with food and shelter, and other amenities. She covers his telephone bill after the company already disconnected his service. Furthermore, Pix describes his relationship with Alix based on inequality. She is the one who is smarter and gets to pet him. He is never the one who can pet her back, which makes him into a little dominated toy-dog.

PIX: Wenn ich mich verliebe, ist sie immer klüger als ich, und erfahrener – und sie streichelt mich, und ich lass mich streicheln – aber –

HELEN: Aber -?

PIX: Ich möchte einmal selber streicheln! (101). [...] wissen Sie, es ist nicht angenehm, wenn ich zum Beispiel durch das Kaffeehaus gehe, wo sie ihren Stammtisch hat und höre, wie die Leute sagen: Das ist der Kleine von Alix Matthieu (102).

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<sup>152</sup> Compare Richard McCormick especially pg. 18 and 21, and Maria Tatar pg. 10-12 on this point.

This clearly shows the women's superiority at this point. Pix is financially dependent on his girlfriend, and has to live with his deflated masculine identity. He becomes an ornament to the image of the New Woman as Alix is presented.

A broken perfume bottle becomes another image for the reversed power relationship between Alix and Pix. He makes up the story of a fictional dog that belongs to Alix. This dog broke one of Alix's perfume bottles, and Pix is supposed to pick up a new bottle from the beauty parlor. The reader gets the impression that Pix is talking about himself here.

PIX: Sie hat ihre Parfümflasche zerbrochen, das heisst natürlich nicht sie, sondern der Hund, nicht absichtlich natürlich...ein reizender Hund sonst. Kennen gnädige Frau den Hund meiner Freundin *er zeigt* So ein Langhaariger...und riecht entsetzlich nach Parfüm – und meine Freundin hat natürlich garnichts davon – sie hat mich hierher geschickt, sie muss unbedingt noch ihr Parfüm bekommen...(104).

The perfume here can be read metaphorically. First, it emphasizes the sense of smell, which is excellently developed in dogs. It is also a sign of ownership. Drenching the dog Pix in Alix's perfume marks him as an object that belongs to her. Basically, one could say that this metaphor comes close to the marking of territory that dogs perform with their urine. The human sense of smell is very weak, so people have to enhance the aromas with artificial substances like perfumes. Figuratively, Pix gets surrounded by New Women and everything she represents because perfume was one of the most important luxury items of the New Woman as countless advertisements in the illustrated magazines show. Pix is not only soaked in the overbearing presence of the New Woman, but begins to act like one, as I will show later on.

When Helen finally spends a night with Pix, she finds these dog-like traits in him. For once, she tells him that he looks like a terrier in the mornings. “HELEN: *nimmt seinen Kopf und streicht ihm das Haar zurück* Unausstehlich bist Du... und eine Frisur wie ein scotch terrier – wie ein englischer Pudel”(118). Thus, Pix visually embodies a dog. Helen also complains that Pix has been entirely trained by Alix and is not able to utter any original thought. “HELEN: Wie ein Papagei. Mehr Worte, als Du von dieser Frau Matthieu gelernt hast, kennst Du nicht. Schätzlein! Schätzlein hin und Schätzlein her” (117). Here, the words that he recalls can be interpreted as tricks or orders, which Alix reinforced in him. It is significant to see that Alix again marks her ownership by limiting Pix’s vocabulary to whatever *she* has taught him. There is no independent ego in Pix, who would try to break loose from his owner and learn from other sources.

At many points Pix demonstrates odd behavior that could be attributed to a dog. For example, when he wakes up in the morning after he spent the night with Helen, he pedals with his feet and starts sniffing at her handbag. “PIX *dehnt sich, strampelt ein wenig, riecht an HELENS Handtäschchen, das auf dem Nachttisch liegt, sieht das Telefon an. Das Telefon klingelt. Mit einer Gebärde der Überraschung und des Erschreckens*” (122). Pix is nervous, easily irritable and many things simply scare him to death. This fear is expressed another time, when he comes to the beauty parlor and is supposed to be confronted with Alix (his owner) and Helen, the woman with whom he betrayed Alix. He describes his fear as “Hundeangst.” “PIX *steckt den Kopf herein* Ja...? Bleibt in der Tür stehen KATJA: Nun kommen Sie doch herein, Pix! Gott, haben Sie eine Angst... PIX: *aufrichtig* Eine Hundeangst!” (152). There is no doubt that Pix sees himself as a dog, as one, moreover, with no apparent wish to escape the gilded cage of his



comfortable life with Alix, although this life seems to come at a cost of his human will and freedom. Baum here plays to the fantasy life of Weimar men, staging both the seductions of lapdog-like comfort and the *hündisch* humiliations of being dominated by the New Woman.

Baum may have found the inspiration for this canine metaphor in the *Uhu* magazine. In the April 1928 issue, a cartoon draws the same parallel between men and dogs, laying particular stress on the sexual implications of this comparison. “Es lenzt...” “It is becoming spring” is the subtitle of a street scene depicted by Walter Trier. A woman dressed in the newest fashion is followed by a pack of eleven men, who pursue her like mangy dogs following her female canine companion. The woman and the she-dog are connected through their accessories. The woman wears a red hat, while the she-dog is decorated with little red bows. The smiling faces and phallic walking sticks of the men are but the modified, human equivalent of the male dogs’ hanging tongues. We might not forget that Pix also went astray for Helen, another female who attracted him right from the start. But eventually he returns like a loyal dog to his real owner, Alix.

The construction of Pix as a lap-dog shows the dominance of the New Woman over the weak masculine subject during the Weimar Republic. At the same time it is possible that Baum tries to show how Pix gets entangled in the oppressive image of the New Woman just as women were forced into this lifestyle by the press. As I’ve shown in my examples, the tight grip of the New Woman’s image surrounds Pix from all sides and with all senses. Pix smells like a New Woman thanks to the perfume, New Women pet him but he cannot return this form of affection, and his appearance is also determined by

the New Woman when Alix fixes his tie and comments on his shirt. The New Woman's image is an outside force that slowly takes over every aspect of Pix' personality and suffocates his identity. Women probably felt similarly when the press propagated the New Woman's image and surrounded them with a mold to which they had to conform. Just as Pix enjoys the comforts that come along with the surrender to this lifestyle, women could find a space of personal freedom in the confinements of the New Woman's image.<sup>153</sup> This personal freedom entails a redefinition of and experimentation with gender roles, which seem to be reversed in this play as women take on strong masculine traits while the men turn out to be rather effeminate.

### **Gender Role Reversal**

The concept of the New Woman is a framework in which women can live out their dreams, aspirations and fantasies. It is a field of emancipation, in which women reinvent themselves according to the guidelines in the press and media of the day. This redefinition of what it means to be a woman and a New Woman to boot were in flux during the Weimar Republic and entailed the experimentation with what Judith Butler coined as "the performative act of gender". Baum focuses with her New Women and Pix on the breakup and changes in the understanding of fixed gender roles. While Helen Bross represents a stereotypical New Woman with masculine characteristics, her counterpart Pix is an effeminate male. Baum not only portrays the New Woman as a

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<sup>153</sup> Nottelmann describes Vicki Baum's childhood as difficult. She had to create "little islands of freedom" inside the confined space that her father created for her. Baum learned early on that she can have what she wants as long as she adheres to the established rules around her. "So brachte Hermann Vicki eine wichtige Lektion bei: Nur Anpassung und Leistung zahlten sich in barer Münze aus. Nur wenn sie sich verstellte und sein ‚Spiel‘ mitmachte, konnte sie sich kleine Inseln der Freiheit schaffen. Denn von dem Geld, das Hermann ihr gab, kaufte sie sich heimlich Obst und Limonade" (Nottelmann 2007: 27).

masculinized new gender that adjusted to the fashion and beauty image of the time, but also explains, through the figure of Pix, that men of the Weimar Republic had to adjust to the concept of the New Woman by becoming more feminized themselves.<sup>154</sup>

Pix is an effeminate male, who shares many character traits with the New Woman and sports her image as it is represented in the illustrated magazine. His character is shaped by the visual culture and media of the time, as well as by the demands of the women who surround him. He is an example of the collapsed patriarchal system that men of the Weimar Republic feared. Except for Pix, two other men, Elias and Adonis, share a similar fate. Elias, Helen's uncle, acts as Helen's substitute mother, and adopts a nurturing female role. Adonis is the salon's handyman, while his main job is to act as visual eye candy for the women who visit the salon. While these two men do not assume a gender reversal to the extent that Pix does, they similarly cater to the needs of the New Woman, and do not represent a strong patriarchal power system.

Pix has to give up his self-determination as a man (which every traditional man was supposed to have) due to the oppressive relationships he assumes with the women in the beauty parlor. His current girlfriend Alix stresses her right to possess him by giving Peter a name that mirrors her own. The two names are non-gender specific, and blur the lines of power distribution in this relationship. Who is the man? Who is the woman? The

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<sup>154</sup> Patrice Petro observes in her analysis of the female reader that images of androgynous women were questioned much more than images of effeminate males. The illustrated press published these images to evoke a reaction in the readers that something must be wrong with the women of the time, while changes in male identities were overlooked. Therefore, I suggest that looking at the effeminate Pix is important in order to notice that the concept of the New Woman changed the masculine identity as well. "Yet it is significant that the contest question [in the *BIZ*] does not ask the reader to respond to the representation of unstable male identity; instead, the question asks the reader to respond to the representation of unstable female identity and thus prescribes the meaning of the image as an interrogation – however playful or ironic – of female sexuality as that which is 'other'" (Petro 107).

only hint towards determining the dominant party lies in the comparison to marriage rituals. During the Weimar Republic it was still common that a woman adopted her husband's last name, hence lost part of her identity and labeled herself as belonging to this man. Baum reverses this tradition in the relationship between Alix and Pix, and turns the New Woman Alix into the dominant party.

Dominance is spelled out as possession in the relationship between women and men. "KATJA: Ein reizender Kerl, Ihr Pix. Wie lange haben Sie ihn eigentlich schon?" (16) Katja's question not only expresses inequality between the two partners in this relationship, but turns this singular circumstance into a socially accepted situation. Katja naturally assumes that Pix belongs to Alix, and also Pix has to realize that society assumes him to be Alix's possession. "PIX: [...] wissen Sie, es ist nicht angenehm, wenn ich zum Beispiel durch das Kaffeehaus gehe, wo sie ihren Stammtisch hat und höre, wie die Leute sagen: Das ist der Kleine von Alix Matthieu" (102). Baum creates a scenario where the reversal of power relationships is possible. Judith Butler calls the power imbalance between man and woman fictional. Its existence lies in the patriarchal system that gives men power over women, as Butler argues, "The univocity of sex, the internal coherence of gender, and the binary framework for both sex and gender are considered throughout as regulatory fictions that consolidate and naturalize the convergent power regimes of masculine and heterosexist oppression."<sup>155</sup> Baum gives women the power over men, and not only establishes a matriarchal system in her play, but makes it socially accepted. The social acceptance of female power in Baum's play suggests that a different narrative of power distribution between men and women is possible. The status quo of

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<sup>155</sup> Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble. Routledge. New York and London. 1990. 44.

the patriarchal system is an agreement of cultural conventions; not a given, and hence can be reversed.

Baum not only anticipates Butler's argument that patriarchy is a fictional cultural narrative, but also explores the possibilities of gender role reversal. Butler argues that "the masculine' and 'the feminine' genders are not biologically fixed but culturally presupposed"<sup>156</sup>. This implies that society assumes women act in a certain way, and men differently. Baum does not question the existence of the biological sex of men and women, neither does she hint at grey zones of transgender persons nor homosexual love interests. Heterosexuality and biological sex are given constants in the play; however, Baum experiments with the culturally accepted behavior of men and women. Thus we see Pix assume a behavior and actions that society labels as "feminine." When Helen tells Pix that he looks intolerably like a dog, he immediately reaches for a mirror and asks apprehensively, "Sehe ich scheusslich aus?" (118). Also, while Helen tries to talk to him, he starts to give himself a manicure. Annoyed about his behavior, Helen takes the nail file away from him and encourages him to be a man and choose between herself and Alix. Helen is annoyed by Pix's demeanor, because she is ready to step out of the framework that the media created as the New Woman, and return to old-fashioned gender roles. She wants to slip back into a female role model of mother and housewife, and is disappointed that this is not possible with a man like Pix.

Pix assumes a behavior that is traditionally characterized as feminine, even more so Baum creates in Pix a counterpart to the New Woman. She fits Pix with characteristics that were promoted by the illustrated magazine as typical for the New Woman. In one of

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<sup>156</sup> "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ,expressions' that are said to be its results" (Butler 33).

the first conversations with Helen, Pix expresses that he does not have a profession, but he is excellent at all leisure time activities that are associated with the New Woman.

HELEN: Wir sprachen davon, dass Sie keinen Beruf haben. Können Sie garnichts?

PIX: Doch! Zum Beispiel Tennisspielen. Ich habe schon vier Preise gewonnen. Sie wissen, solche Windhunde aus Silber. Sie sehen mich so erwartungsvoll an, als wenn ich ein Fortsetzungsroman wäre. Es kommt aber nichts mehr... Ich chauffiere ganz gut, ja richtig, ich kann auch ein bisschen stenographieren, das heisst: ich kann es schreiben, leider kann ich es nie lesen. Einmal habe ich in einem Film gespielt! (49).

In this passage Baum portrays Pix as the stereotypical New Woman. His abilities range from playing tennis, which was one of the most popular sports in the Weimar Republic to driving a car and stenography. Tennis as an athletic activity was closely connected to the image of the New Woman. Hence, there are numerous advertisements of the New Woman with a tennis-racquet making commercial for hair and skin-products in the illustrated magazines of the period. Moreover, Pix alludes to the popular installment novel that addressed the New Woman and her lifestyle as the main theme. Pix refers to himself as an installment novel, and thus equates himself with the New Woman. His ability to drive a car well alludes to the representation of cars and women in advertisements of the Weimar Republic. In fact, the combination of cars and women was so common in the 1920s that many companies used these not only to sell cars but also unrelated products like “Kölnisch Wasser” perfume. Being a stenographer was one of the most common professions for the white collar New Woman: the office girl who was not that well-off and had to earn money in order to keep up with the fashion and lifestyle of the day. Finally, the pinnacle of Pix’s talents, playing a minor role in a movie, has been analyzed by many academics as one of the roots of the New Woman’s existence in his

essay “The Little Shop Girls go to the Movies.”<sup>157</sup> Siegfried Kracauer criticizes the uninspired movie industry, which puts movies with predictable and recurring themes on the market that lead to the mindless distraction of the masses. The main victims, according to him, are the little shop girls, who fall for the pretense of easy fortune and fame. The movies created the desire to become one of the stars or starlets in order to achieve glamour and fame. The photographer Yva picked up on this stereotypical fantasy of the New Woman in her photo essay “Kätchen Lampe.” A parallel between the heroine of the photo essay and Pix is that they both succeed in acting as an extra in a movie (like so many extras with high hopes before them). Hence, Baum accumulates the stereotypes of the New Woman as displayed and enforced by the media in Pix. She gives him the superficial appearance of the New Woman, and keeps the real achievements of a new generation of women, such as financial independence, and success in the work force – typical masculine traits – to the women in the play. This passage adds a reversal of gender images to the switch of gender performance.

Obviously, Baum creates in Pix a man who is deeply engaged with, and supportive of, the new type of women around him, but at the same time he is confused and overburdened with the New Woman’s expectations for men to keep up a traditional gender performance. Pix is fascinated with the strong New Woman who knows what she wants, who earns her own money, and who keeps him like a boy toy, but at the same time he is intimidated. “PIX: Ihr seid so tüchtig, Ihr Frauen von Heute – so fertig – so sicher – so überlegen...Man kriegt ja nichts als Minderwertigkeitskomplexe” (102). The fear of

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<sup>157</sup> Kracauer, Siegfried. “Die kleinen Ladenmädchen gehen ins Kino”. In: Das Ornament der Masse. Suhrkamp. Frankfurt am Main. 1977. 279-94.

an overpowering woman who assumes a traditional male role speaks of a castration anxiety in men. The men can no longer take on masculine gender roles and public lifestyles because the New Woman invades these masculine spaces, nor can they confidently enforce dominant male behavior.

His last rebellion against what women like Alix have made of him fails. In his attempt to court Helen, he tries to impress her by mentioning that he will finish his studies and work for her like a real man.

“PIX: Ich habe nie Geld und nie Sorgen. Ich bin eine Lilie auf dem Feld. Aber das mit dem Frack und dem Smoking [er hat sie gegen Bargeld versetzt], das ist etwas Heroisches, das ist eine symbolische Handlung. Ich habe die Schiffe hinter mir verbrannt. Wenn ich jetzt anfangen, mich nur mehr jeden dritten Tag zu rasieren, wird eine ethische Natur aus mir” (63).

His heroic speech unites feminine (“Ich bin eine Lilie auf dem Feld.”) and masculine (“Ich habe die Schiffe hinter mir verbrannt.”) metaphors, which could be taken from movies or dime-store novels. The idea of growing a beard could reinforce his masculinity, as well as the attaché case that he bought to carry around his books for his studies. However, soon enough the reader recognizes that his behavior is only superficial, and that he has not changed at all. Even when he presents Helen the attaché case he expects some approval from her and finally asks how he looks with his new “handbag.”

PIX: Wissen Sie, was ich mit dem Geld für den versetzten Frack und Smoking angefangen habe? Ich habe mein Studium wieder aufgenommen. *er zeigt triumphierend die Aktenmappe, die er mit sich brachte und die er gleich am Anfang auf die Couch gelegt hat.* **Sehen Sie, was ich hier habe?**

HELEN: Eine Aktenmappe!

PIX: Eine Aktenmappe, Ausverkauf, beste Lederimitation, 2 Mark 80. **Wie steht sie mir?**

[...] PIX: **Sind Sie jetzt zufrieden mit mir?** (emphasis J.F.)(64).



Pix sometimes acts like a little boy who needs approval from older women. But then he wishes to win the upper hand and be with a younger woman so that he can be the dominant party.

Pix's behavior as an example for the adjustment of men to the New Woman speaks for a symbiosis between women and men. Men can no longer request and just take from women in every aspect of life; they also have to give to make a relationship work. Pix adjusted to this give and take, and is contemptuous of women who sponsor his lifestyle in exchange for sex and his escort services. Being a sex object comes naturally to him, and thus he is unpleasantly surprised that he is Helen's first lover.

PIX: Es gibt Negerstämme, tapfere Männer, die eine abergläubische Furcht vor Jungfrauen haben. [...] Ich fand es bezaubernd, dass Du so jung und so – bist...; aber ich war natürlich entsetzt. Bitte, zeige mir einen jungen Mann von 1930, der nicht entsetzt wäre, wenn er die Verantwortung aufgeladen bekäme, der – Erste zu sein (118-119).

He is burdened by the high expectations he assumes she has for him, and is worried whether he is a good enough lover. It is easier to be one out of many than to be the first and so, one of the most memorable moments in a woman's life. Thus it is more convenient for Pix to completely approve of the New Woman's sexual liberation, and extract the best for his own lifestyle out of her behavior than to fight for the boundaries of old gender roles.

Pix's adjustment to the new female behavior brings about the necessity for the New Woman to readjust and reevaluate her understanding of a new generation of men. Helen's disappointment in Pix and his aloof and effeminate actions is a result of the scarcity of the interaction she had with men before, and the belief in strong traditional male roles. She never expected that the lifestyle she leads and promotes as a New Woman

would cause a reaction in men and a change in the self-understanding of the masculine gender. Alix is the one who explains this new type of men to Helen.<sup>158</sup> She praises his qualities as a man who is exactly right for the New Woman.

ALIX: Oh nein, wir Frauen von heute, so wie wir geworden sind, für uns ist ein Mann wie Pix gerade recht, - wie Pix,- nicht wie Peter. Es gibt noch viel zu wenig von dieser Sorte, aber die Nachfrage wird auch hier das Angebot regeln. Wir haben selber Sorgen und Kämpfe und Probleme genug. Wir brauchen Männer, die gut aussehen und vergnügt sind und angenehm zum Ausspannen (144).

Alix is clearly talking about a gender role reversal in which the woman is the breadwinner with problems at work, and the man is supposed to provide comfort, entertainment and joy at home. She goes even further in her explanations when she calls Pix a 60% man, who is just right for the New Woman, because a 100% man would only dedicate 10% of himself to a woman. This idea of determining the gender of a person numerically alludes to Otto Weininger's theories at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>159</sup> His studies show that gender cannot be classified as male and female. Instead he suggests a much larger grey scale in-between, where people have a certain percentage of female and male characteristics. This study explains that in addition to the gender role reversal, and the reactions it brings about, the Weimar Republic offered a space for a new definition of gender as a category. One wonders where this breakup of static gender role images would have led without the interference of National Socialism.

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<sup>158</sup> Bertschik sees Alix as the Alter Ego to the author, while I argue that Baum is mirrored in the main character Helen (Bertschik 2005: 200).

<sup>159</sup> Weininger, Otto. Sex and Character. An Investigation of Fundamental Principles. Indiana UP. "Man and Woman, then, are like two substances divided between the living individuals in different proportions, without the coefficient of one substance ever reaching zero. One could say that in *empirical experience there is neither Man nor Woman, but only male and female*. Thus one must no longer call an individual A or an individual B simply a 'man' or a 'woman,' but each must be described in terms of the fractions it has of *both*" (Weininger 14).

The love story between Helen and Pix shows that the concept of the New Woman entails the potential for the reversal of gender roles and a restructuring of power distributions. The adjustment of male behavior to the New Woman's lifestyle comes unexpectedly, and needs to be further explored. Patrice Petro argues that the female adaptation to men happens because of indifference of women towards the male identity in crisis.<sup>160</sup> I go a step further in my argument, because as I have shown, men readjust to the new gender roles of the New Woman. It seems to be Baum's agenda to show that men in her play change in reaction to the image of the artificial cover girl in New Woman magazines, while the real New Women are not only ahead of men, but also much more evolved than their portrayal in the media.

**“Manchmal ist sogar der Schwindel nur Schwindel...”<sup>161</sup>**

This puzzling phrase towards the end of the play sums up the conflict of the New Woman's lifestyle. It illustrates how the promotion of the ideal New Woman in the press becomes woman's reality. Women have to show that they can adapt to the cultural standard in order to engage in changing and creating their own destiny. Baum takes great care to situate her play in the visual advertisement culture of the day. Helen tries to break out of the deceptive world she and her uncle have built with the Helen Bross method. However, in the end Helen must understand that she can never flee the deceptive visual world which lies outside of her salon and beyond her control. Therefore, she realizes that

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<sup>160</sup> “Significantly, however, the feminization of male identity is not said to cause a problem for woman; instead, it is male in-difference which is said to encourage the woman to parody masculinity and engage in a ‘masculine masquerade’” (Petro 114).

<sup>161</sup> See Bertschik on this point. “Mit einer solch vollständigen Desillusionierung, die allerdings nur dem lesenden Publikum zuteil wird, spitzt Baum auf der Metaebene das zu, was sie ihre Protagonisten auf der Handlungsebene bereits erahnen lässt: dass ‘sogar der Schwindel nur Schwindel’ sein kann” (Bertschik 2005: 2002).

the thought of her cheating her clients is the intrinsic deception. The bogus world Helen and the society around her have created has become reality; there is no deception involved anymore.

The reality of the deceptive advertising world infiltrates the beauty salon with various popular items of Weimar Republic society and the illustrated magazine plays a central role in this movement of infiltration. Not only are clients waiting for their treatments shown flipping through magazines (8), but Pix also reads them while waiting for his girlfriend Alix (42). Although Edlef Koeppen criticizes the superficiality of the illustrated magazine, he concedes that for better or worse, “[the] magazine has become a concentrated sign of our times.”<sup>162</sup> Especially for a beauty salon the magazines gain an important status. Information about the latest trends is provided about beauty treatments as well as the newest hairstyles and hair colors. Elias, Helen’s uncle himself admits that he was inspired by a newspaper article to open a beauty salon and condemn Helen to a life of artificial beauty. “Da habe ich in der Zeitung gelesen einen Artikel über Schönheit. Das ist Konjunktur habe ich mir gesagt: Schönheit!” (72). Furthermore, Elias lets himself be guided by the magazine reports. For example, he suggests to Helen that she has to grow her hair to a longer length in order to stay on top of the latest trends. Next to the length of the hair, the importance of the hair’s color also leads to a very painful treatment for Alix. It is remarkable that a natural hair color can only be achieved through an unnatural torturous treatment with a non-specified machine. “ALIX: Bis jetzt hat das Haarefärben nicht weh getan. MADAME: Es wird nicht mehr gefärbt. Der neue Apparat

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<sup>162</sup> Koeppen, Edlef. “The magazine as a sign of the Times.” In: Kaes, Anthony. Weimar Republic Sourcebook. University of California Press. 644.

reaktiviert die natürliche Haarfarbe. Die natürliche Haarfarbe kommt wieder” (11). The society is fixated on the artificiality of Weimar’s surface in a way that the natural process of growing the hair simply with its natural color is out of the question. Growing the hair naturally would take too long; and the fashion magazines state that the natural hair color needs to be worn right at this moment. The concern about hairstyles and colors can be found in various articles from the *Uhu*. For example, the dangers of the bob cut are discussed in one advertisement, while the preferred color, in this case blond or brown in another “Blond oder Brünett?”

The affinity with consumer goods in Pariser Platz 13 turns into a commodification of women as well as men. Often there are allusions to products and shopping as a leisure activity when women refer to themselves or the men around them. Katja, for example, explains that she lies about her age by making herself younger than she is, and comments that this action has the same psychological effect as buying a product for 50 Pfennige below the 100 Marks than 20 Pfennige above. “KATJA: Ich also – ich gebe neunundvierzig zu. Neunundvierzig vorbei. Ich mache mich nur um zwei Jahre jünger – eine Bagatelle, aber entscheidend. Das ist wie beim Ausverkauf. Um 99 Mark 50 wird noch gekauft; um 100 Mark zwanzig bleibt die Ware übrig” (38). Even today we find this selling technique in the prices that end on 99 cents. People love to buy material things that are just below a round dollar amount, because it conveys to them the message that they are getting a good price for the product. Such items are high in demand, an effect Katja tries to achieve by locating her age just below the 50 years-of-age-line.

But it is not only the women who use allusions and metaphors of consumer goods. Elias, who tries to protect Helen and their beauty salon empire, explains to Helen that Pix is not a man, but a Rolls Royce. Thus he transforms Pix into a commodity that is nice to have and show around, but Pix can never be a true self-sustaining individual and companion.

ELIAS: Das ist wie mit einem Rolls Royce. Man glaubt, man kann den Preis bezahlen und kauft sich das Auto, und es frisst Benzin, und es frisst Öl, und es frisst Steuern und es frisst Reperaturen und es frisst einen ganz auf.

HELEN: Er ist doch ein Mann!

ELIAS *wütend* Er ist kein Mann. Er ist ein Rolls Royce. Ein Mann, der den ganzen Tag nichts zu tun hat, ist ein Rolls Royce (74).

The car allusion suggests that Pix is a luxury item, which will cost much more than the purchase price. Stressing the word “fressen” over and over again also expresses Pix’s passiveness. He will cost much more than his purchase price which is the beginning of a relationship, and will never sustain himself, but stay constantly dependent on the buyer [Helen] he is with. Financially, it does not make any sense to engage in a relationship with Pix. His value lies just like fashion and beauty in presenting a status symbol to society.

### **Conclusion:**

Vicki Baum’s play Pariser Platz 13 is a collection of the major attributes of Weimar Germany’s visual culture. Based on this background, Baum joins the striving toward artificial beauty, possession of consumer goods and the developing decomposition of strict gender role definitions in this ironic play. Baum not only links her own editorial work for magazines like *Die Dame* and *Uhu* to this play (as Julia Bertschik has argued),

but also draws inspiration from advertisements and photographs from the magazines of the period. Thus she makes it a point to expose the visual culture of the Weimar Republic as a decomposition and reformation of gender relationships and gender politics. She tries to enlighten her audience by presenting reality in a satirical way, which ends in bitter irony, when Baum asserts that “Manchmal ist sogar der Schwindel nur Schwindel.”<sup>163</sup> She has to accept that the satirized world she spun in her play is reality, and cannot be changed by a play that becomes part of the consumption of popular culture.

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<sup>163</sup> Michael Levine pointed me toward the idea that the word “Schwindel” could also be translated with dizziness. The structure of the sentence is similar to a double negation. It is very twisted and causes a feeling of being lost while reading and trying to comprehend it. I would like to suggest that this sentence mirrors the message of the play in which reality and artificiality merge together in a tight bind that does no longer allow for the New Woman to distinguish between her own identity and a mass produced image. Her life becomes an existence of constant dizziness.

## Chapter 4

### Performative Beauty in Gina Kaus's Die Verliebten

*“Auf der Bühne ist eine Frau nicht schön, wenn sie schön ist, sondern wenn sie die Schönheit zu spielen versteht” (Die Verliebten 61).*

Gina Kaus's novel Die Verliebten (1928) explores the concept of the “New Woman” in terms of performance. The two main characters, Gabriele and Terese, represent New Women; each occupies an extreme end of the New Woman spectrum. Both grow in the course of the novel into a more balanced version of the New Woman, integrating their own personalities with the demanding image of the New Woman in the Weimar Republic. As a theater actress Gabriele is in the public eye, influencing her female audience with her portrayal of the New Woman on stage. At the same time she tries to keep up this image in her private life, which becomes public due to her fame. Terese, on the other hand, is a very private person; she expresses her New Woman characteristics through her slender boyish body build and her ambitions to pursue a doctoral degree. My argument for this chapter will be that neither Gabriele in her public surface appearance nor Terese in her cerebral portrayal is successful in her pursuit of the image of a New Woman. The secret of success for being a New Woman lies not just in a change of look and lifestyle nor solely in changes of internal disposition and ambition; it is a balanced relationship between these two aspects. Gabriele is not naturally a New Woman because her experience is never an unconscious one. She tries to get every detail right by consciously engaging in performative acts, which she controls through her camera eye. I would like to suggest that Gabriele's perception of herself is less an effort of the mind's eye, but a reflection on herself from an internalized, external viewpoint. She sees herself



as a director who stages her actions based on the greatest effects on the audience.

However, living her life with persistent vigilance leads to a split personality. Gabriele has to perform at all times, and, moreover, envisions herself from the outside to monitor if she complies with the image of the New Woman. The visual has great metaphorical importance in this novel, ranging from allusions to the standard images of the New Woman in illustrated magazines of the period to comparisons to war and the diseased, dying body. I maintain that the comparison of love to battlefields, which is mostly Terese's experience in her relationship with men, is a figurative extension of World War I. As Maria Tatar and Richard McCormick argue, the Weimar Republic was marked by misogyny: men perceived women as the new enemy, holding them responsible for the lost war on the home front. This belief materialized in the *Dolchstoßlegende*.<sup>164</sup> I would like to expand the dynamics of this antagonism further to suggest that women also perceived men as a threat to their emancipated status as New Women. Love in this context is re-imagined as a power struggle, troubling traditional gender roles and gender relations. Although love became a dangerous, war-like game, it also presents a valuable tool in Kaus's novel for the New Woman to overcome her split personality, and find her true self through reinvented engagements with the other sex.

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<sup>164</sup> "The right-wing myth that helped to coalesce these tendencies [scapegoating groups within Germany for the lost war] was born with the Weimar Republic itself: the *Dolchstoßlegende*, the legend of the 'stab in the back,' according to which Imperial Germany had been humbled in World War I not on the battlefield, but on the home front by the enemy within – that is, by socialists, Jews, and women (and implicitly by other 'others' such as homosexuals)" (McCormick 20).

"Yet all of them [writers, artists, filmmakers] must in some ways have been implicated in the psychic fall-out of the war years: the sense of resentment directed against victors, noncombatants, and military chiefs alike; the crisis of male subjectivity occasioned by a sense of military defeat; and a painfully acute sense of the body's vulnerability to fragmentation, mutilation, and dismemberment. [...] Women, who had escaped the shells and shrapnel of the trenches and survived the war with bodies intact, could easily slide into the role of a covert enemy, one that had cheered them on and had thereby become complicit in plunging them into physically devastating military combat" (Tatar 12).

The publishing history of Gina Kaus's novel Die Verliebten is representative of the hybrid personality of the New Woman that I propose. The author, Gina Kaus, had to perform the role of the New Woman in public to ensure her success as a female writer. She struggled to integrate this persona in her public as well as her private life. Her first attempts at publishing, then under the pseudonym of her husband, indicate that she felt pressure to assume a different persona in order to establish herself in the putatively masculine writer's market.<sup>165</sup> The name she later used for her works, Gina Kaus, is a short form of Regina and her first husband's last name "Kaus." Choosing a spunky first name and identifying with her husband's last name demonstrates the identity struggle New Women faced. Her struggle rehearses the complex demands of performing a perfect public figure of the New Woman for the press while privately attempting to re-incorporate the traditional values and lifestyles to which she remained attached.

Kaus explores the conflicts of these pressures—in terms of her own identity as well as of women in the Weimar Republic—in her novel. Die Verliebten offers a psychological study of four individuals trying to find love in the Weimar Republic. The main protagonist, Gabriele, is a 25-year-old actress who begins the novel in a relationship with Christian, a handsome history student suffering from feelings of extraordinary inadequacy. His upper-middle class family awaits the publication of his first book, yet pressure immobilizes him and prevents him from writing at all. While he is the romantic

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<sup>165</sup> Vollmer explains that Kaus published previously to her marriage under a man's pseudonym: Andreas Eckbrecht (Vollmer 1999: 246). Also Marie-Louise Roth mentions this fact. "Unter dem Pseudonym Andreas Eckbrecht erschien 1919 die Komödie *Diebe im Haus*" (Roth: 168).

lover in this novel, Gabriele stays with him only for amusement, understanding him less as a lover than a man performing the role of lover in the drama of her life. The second New Woman, Terese, is a 21-year-old law student who desperately tries to make a love relationship with the older theater critic Otto Hartmann work. Hartmann, an intellectual who does not believe in love, conceives of women as objects for his pleasure and trophies of his masculine prowess.<sup>166</sup> He seeks out Gabriele to be his next lover-prize. Unable to tolerate Hartmann's cheating, Terese becomes proactive. She befriends Gabriele—not to avert the relationship between Gabriele and Hartmann, but to “observe.” She takes a curious pleasure in placing herself in the role of the suffering victim. Gabriele breaks off the relationship with Christian due to boredom and sends Terese to console him. Terese and Christian become lovers, as well as Gabriele and Hartmann.<sup>167</sup> The novel is preoccupied with the exchange of lovers and their psychological dispositions, as well as the consequences of exchange in the changing matrix of gender relationships of the Weimar Republic. Kaus intended to have her novel published in the Propylen section of

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<sup>166</sup> “Wenn Terese in diesem Text die nur scheinbar Schwache und Opferwillige ist, [...] ist Hartmann der vordergründig selbstsichere Intellektuelle, der sich jedoch seiner vermeintlichen geschlechtlichen Überlegenheit ständig versichern muss” (Capovilla 2004: 45).

<sup>167</sup> The constellation of the personal in this novel is closely connected to Kaus's friends and love interests at the time.

“Als Kaus Wien Richtung Berlin verliess, besuchte sie Milena Jesenska in Prag. Während dieses Aufenthalts unterhielten sie sich über die jeweiligen Beziehungen zu Franz Xaver Schaffgotsch, und erkannten ihn jeweils in der Erzählung der anderen nicht wieder. Aus der Anregung dieses Gesprächs heraus konzipierte Kaus *Die Verliebten*. [...] Die beiden Frauenfiguren Gabriele und Terese sind fiktive Komposita von Anteilen und Lebensbruchstücken von Milena Jesenska, Gina Kaus und Ella Frischauer. Die Figur des Literaturkritikers Hartmann weist einige Parallelen zu Ernst Polak auf, während die Person Franz Xaver Schaffgotschs, dessen Rolle im Leben von Kaus und Jesenska ursprünglich Kaus zur Konzeption des Romans anregte, dann im Roman für die Figur des Christian keine wesentliche Rolle spielt” (Capovilla 2004:43).

As another biographical connection Capovilla mentions that the novel's locations, the cities G. and M., can be read metonymically for Gina and Milena (Capovilla 2004:47). The literature critic's name, Hartmann, is also telling, because he is indeed a very cold, rough and disconnected person. I thank Martha Helfer for pointing me towards this peculiarity.

the Ullstein Verlag, which addressed an intellectual audience. Understanding her novel to exceed the trivia of popular pleasure novels, Kaus was hoping to make an intervention into the gender problems troubling the time. However, the Ullstein Verlag decided to publish this psychological study as a light entertainment book among the Ullstein books.<sup>168</sup> Kaus was disappointed, but quickly followed up with more entertaining novels such as Luxusdampfer.<sup>169</sup> Hence Kaus falls into the trap of a vicious cycle. She wants to contribute to a critical investigation of the image of the New Woman, but has to adjust to the demands of the publishing house— catering to an ideal that the media promotes and demands.

### **Body/Beauty Image**

For understanding why I argue that being a New Woman meant foremost performing a new lifestyle in public, it is crucial to look at the beauty concept and body image for the New Woman as it was propagated in the illustrated magazine. Both Gabriele and Terese answer the call for a new slender body image, but while Gabriele follows the advice from the magazines meticulously, Terese feels less concerned about make-up and clothes. She adjusts to what she thinks is appropriate. Alternatively, as a

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<sup>168</sup> "Ein ‚Schlag‘ sei es für sie gewesen, erinnerte sich Gina Kaus in ihrer Autobiographie, „als der Roman ‚Die Verliebten‘ nicht im Propyläen Verlag erschien, wo er sich an eine literarisch gebildete Leserschaft gewandt hätte, sondern in den Ullsteinbüchern, die ausschließlich zur Unterhaltung gedacht waren. Hier paßte dieses Buch nun wirklich nicht hin, und so fand es ein entsprechend geringes Echo“ (Kaus ctd. In Vollmer 1999:247).

Mulot expresses that the Ullstein Verlag actually held Kaus back from becoming a more serious writer by forcing her into writing popular literature. "Sie [Kaus] wurde auf einen Platz verwiesen, den sie mit ihrem literarischen Ehrgeiz verlassen wollte. Man drängte sie unerbittlich auf ein bestimmtes Gleis zurück. Sie sollte Unterhaltungsliteratur schreiben. Was wäre geschehen, wenn man sie zu einer ‚literarischen‘ Karriere ermutigt hätte?" (Mulot: 246). I would like to argue that restricting Kaus's creativity in such a way is again another way of opening up an „emancipation space“ for her, but at the same time the borders of this space are clearly set by the primarily male-run Ullstein Verlag.

<sup>169</sup> Kaus, Gina. Luxusdampfer. Roman einer Überfahrt. Allert de Lange. Amsterdam. 1937.

theater actress, Gabriele is accustomed to reading the critiques about her performance in newspapers, and adjusts her behavior accordingly. Therefore, she also relies on the popular press for her portrayal of the New Woman.

The Weimar Republic's image of the New Woman is primarily surface driven. Following the fashion guidelines from the illustrated magazines was the easiest way to replicate this ideal, becoming the image of a New Woman on the surface. Clothing and discipline of the body were the quickest ways for a woman to state that she supported the changing attitudes and values of the times. It is a rebellious act to distance oneself from the female image of the "mother" generation, as well as to make oneself unfamiliar to the men in society. Kaus, however, is interested in teasing out the nuances of the tacit assumption that internal feelings and beliefs would follow the outside appearance, particularly through the psychological conflicts of her heroine Gabriele. She begins as a "picture perfect" New Woman, taking great care to cultivate her outside shell. Making explicit the conflicting psychological pressure of such surface performances, Kaus illustrates through Gabriele that there is more to a New Woman than just modeling and copying looks and behaviors from the pages of an illustrated magazine, and that the consequences are more than superficial.

Gabriele's fight for the right body is marked by the demands of the public and her job, but at the same time it is a break from the expectations of the previous generation. While Terese naturally has a well-build body in terms of the modern vogue, Gabriele has to struggle to create and maintain this figure, dramatizing the psychological struggle through the physical. "Gabriele kämpfte, wie jede moderne Schauspielerin, um äußerste

Schlankheit und Gelenkigkeit und hatte diesen Kampf gegen eine große Neigung zu körperlicher Untätigkeit zu führen” (83). Popular emphasis on a healthy and beautiful body during the Kaiserreich and the Weimar Republic arose with the belief of the members of the “life reform movement” (Lebensreformbewegung) that “modern civilization, urbanization, and industrialization had alienated human beings from their ‘natural’ living conditions, leading them down a path of progressive degeneration [...]” (Hau, 1).<sup>170</sup> The New Woman’s idea of an ideal body exceeded the concerns of health, stressing an aesthetic of absolute thinness. The self-perception of the New Woman and her separation from the traditional woman is concentrated foremost on the body, which emerges as a complex social and psychological signifier. Gabriele must work hard to remain in the exclusive club of New Women because idleness would automatically throw her back into being a normal woman with curves.<sup>171</sup> Even in her profession, there is a distinction between modern actresses (“wie jede moderne Schauspielerin”) and regular ones based on looks, implying that emphasis on the body image exceeds self-reliance through work.

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<sup>170</sup> Hau explains that the life standards and life expectancy increased in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the medical and life sciences improved and saw a positive development in the growing urbanization, industrialization and civilization, the “life reform movement” tried to promote natural remedies (such as preventive exercise) to enforce the healing process of society (Hau 1).

<sup>171</sup> Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan’s argument that all aspects of a women’s life were supposed to be rationalized seems to be another reason for women’s efforts to reach the ideal body. The athletic body allows women to walk around in simplified clothes, which provide more freedom of movement, instead of old-fashioned corsets and long skirts. Also, a strong body is a healthy body and helps women to cope better with the double burden of work and family life. Thus, the New Woman’s body image adhered to a new fashion statement as well as to practicality needs of the time. “Rationalization was supposed to help women better manage the double burden of work and family through new labor- and time-saving devices and through the introduction of efficient time-and-motion-coordinated patterns of work organization. Even sexual techniques and birth control were not spared from attempts to ‘rationalize’ the most private of human activities” (Bridenthal et al. 11).

Pursuing the physical extremes of a New Woman is at odds with, as well as a denial of, the biological nature of women. The self-imposed conditions of slender body features force the New Woman to discipline the female form into the masculine through continual, rigorous exercise ‘routines.’ During one of Gabriele and Terese’s athletic workouts, Gabriele recognizes that Terese’s body features are more masculine than her own, and therefore, however perversely, more beautiful.<sup>172</sup>

Sie [Terese] war herrlich gewachsen, knabenschmal um die Hüften, mit kleinen, hochangesetzten Brüsten und kräftigem Muskelspiel unter fehlerfreier, robuster Haut. Die Nacktheit war ihr angenehm und natürlich. [...] “Dein Körper ist für die Ewigkeit gebaut,” sagte sie [Gabriele] seufzend (84).

Gabriele envies Terese for her narrow hips and her defined muscles—a body that is built for eternity. This description traces the line of Greek statues celebrating the beautiful male youth and testifies to the dependency of the modern beauty ideal of the Weimar Republic on antique models. Looking at the illustrated magazines of the time, such as *Uhu*, we see that the authors of exercise guides and advertisements allude to the Greeks and the body culture of antiquity as models for the present time. Because the Hellenistic society was male dominated, women aimed for the male body in the hope of also achieving male intellect and power. The New Woman’s body-discipline is driven by the belief that the substance will follow the surface. In this view, the right look will secure automatic approval of new lifestyles by society. However, instead of living up to

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<sup>172</sup> “Die zu beobachtenden Tendenzen ihrer [der Neuen Frau] ‘Vermännlichung’ ( d.h. ihre ‘Entweiblichung’), die Entfremdung von ihrer Natur, sah Thiess nicht als das *eigentliche* Interesse und Ziel der Frau, sondern nur als radikalen, übertriebenen Ausdruck einer ersten Phase in der Eroberung männlicher Bastionen. Da die traditionelle Frau primär als ‚Geschlechtswesen‘ galt, habe die um ihre Freiheiten kämpfende moderne Frau ‘zunächst den Eros fuer sich leugnen’ müssen, ‘um vor dem Manne als menschlich gleichrechtliches Wesen zu stehen’” (Thiess ctd. in Vollmer 1998:40).

traditional female models, the New Woman's ideal body image was geared to masculine body structures. The underlying strength of a masculine body also promised the intellect and ability to engage in male dominated areas such as university studies, politics, and the work force. Working hard on attaining the ideal body further reveals the wish to remain young and beautiful as long as possible. Age posed a threat to the existence of the New Woman because her image relied on youthful intimations of potential; and, her existence, as we have seen, is understood only as a function of her image.

The expectations for this new body image are in direct conflict with the biological realities of motherhood and pregnancy—and indicate a vexed relationship with the social and psychological.<sup>173</sup> Motherhood poses a threat to the image of the New Woman, which Gabriele's response to Terese's body rehearses. After admiring Terese's slender hips, Gabriele announces: "Ich glaube, du könntest acht Kinder haben und säugen, ohne daß man sie dir zutraute. Bei mir wäre ein einziger Ausflug ins Familiäre gefährlich. Ich könnte eines Tages aussehen wie eine richtige Frau"(84). Evidently, the New Woman cannot become a mother due to the possibility that she could no longer sport the body image of the skinny, flat-chested New Woman. Terese, whose body is more masculine than feminine, has better chances at giving birth without harming her body image simply because her masculinity makes her a better looking New Woman already. Gabriele suggests that a New Woman is not truly a "real woman." A real woman distinguishes

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<sup>173</sup> "Das Geschlechtsleben der Frau ist für Baeumer untrennbar mit der Mutterschaft, die die Vollendung der Liebe bedeute, verbunden. Die Einheit von Liebe und Mutterschaft sei naturbestimmt, gottgewollt; mit der Erfüllung dieses 'Lebensplans' stelle die Frau sich in die göttliche Ordnung, werde Teil des natürlichen Zusammenhangs. [...] So betont Bäumer zwar die freie weibliche Selbstbestimmung, gleichzeitig sei die Frau aber moralisch, im höheren Lebenssinn, zur 'schöpferischen' Mutterschaft verpflichtet" (Bäumer ctd. in Vollmer 1998: 41-42).



herself from the New Woman through curves, which eventually show up during pregnancy and transform the masculine New Woman's body into a maternal traditional woman's body.

The New Woman's fear of transforming into what nature intended her to be speaks for an underlying self-hatred regarding the category "woman." Along with the fear of losing the perfect body comes the social entrapment that comes with a child. A mother loses her independence. She cannot afford to execute that amount of self-focus that the New Woman enjoyed for the first time. The New Woman's image is, therefore, entangled with narcissistic impulses: she makes her own money and decides what to buy and what to wear. She amuses herself at parties or at the movies, and her sexual liberation allows her to choose as many sexual partners as she likes for fun, not for reproductive purposes. A child limits these newly found freedoms, banning women from the New Woman lifestyle because motherhood labels her as old. Moreover, single parenthood was still an exceptional status. In most instances, pregnancy meant to return into the traditional role of housewife and mother, dependent and overshadowed by the masculine breadwinner. Although women were granted equal rights in the constitution from 1919, they were still at a disadvantage in marriage. The wife would lose her legal possession of property while her husband could determine if she could keep her job. Because of these limitations, many women chose to remain unmarried.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> "Parallel to the new constitution, the government also maintained a large body of Imperial law, such as the criminal code of 1871, which outlawed abortion and restricted access to birth control, and the civil code of 1900, which restricted women's rights in marriage and divorce" (Bridenthal et al. 5). Ute Frevert argues in her book *Women in German History* that the New Woman was the definition of a new type of bourgeois woman, one who worked as a secretary or shop girl between the end of her school

## Performative Acts

As I have mentioned before, Gabriele's ambitions exceed the mere body image upon which she concentrates. Her profession as an actress allows her to remain in the role of the New Woman. For Gabriele, the New Woman is a character that she has to live up to, a mold established by the popular press. In order to achieve liberation through conformity, she attains the right body, wears the right clothes, dates the appropriate men, and adopts specific movements as a cultural pantomime. In her performative actions, Gabriele always keeps the visual consequences of her actions in mind. Subconsciously, she is strongly influenced by the popular press, and tries to align her life with the static and moving images she sees in the magazines and movies.

Gabriele portrays the perfect New Woman on stage as well as in the public aspects of her private life; nothing she does is natural. Her life as a New Woman is a performative labor—flawlessly executed, but alienated from her inherent, private disposition. Gabriele has acquired the outside shell of the New Woman, studied and internalized her looks, actions and behaviors, but she has not evolved into the New Woman from internal ambitions. Terese, on the other hand, is very emotional and lets her soul shine through for everyone to see. These distinct approaches demonstrate the discrepancy between the behaviors of the two women and leave Gabriele puzzled. She adheres to and performs a correct mode of behavior, and, consequently, is both troubled by and disapproves of Terese's interaction with others.

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education and her marriage. For Frevert, the temporary appearance of women in the workplace was practically a patching of the gap in their lives until they got married (Frevert 179).

“Ich bin so glücklich, wie ich es nie im Leben war und wie ich nie geglaubt hätte, daß man glücklich sein kann. ” [Terese] sprach diese Worte nicht, wie Gabriele auf der Bühne getan hätte, mit gesenktem Blick und gedämpfter Stimme, wie um den Zorn der Götter nicht zu wecken, sondern geradezu herausfordernd. Es war, als läge ihr vor allem daran, Gabriele von ihrem Glück zu überzeugen. “Wirklich!” fügte sie noch hinzu und legte zur Bekräftigung ihre große, stattliche Knabenhand auf Gabriele’s Knie (221).

Terese’s behavior provokes Gabriele’s tenuous control of her own image. She has learned how to express such a feeling in the correct way, which is more modest, characterized “mit gesenktem Blick und gedämpfter Stimme”—not to infuriate the gods. Gabriele does not accept Terese’s transparency as an expression of a genuine feeling, but labels her utterance as a line from a play. Even Terese sees through Gabriele’s artificial behavior, and recognizes when she becomes untrue to her performance. “Ich [Terese] kenne die geheimen Gesetze ihrer Glieder besser als sie selbst. Wenn sie irgendeine ‘falsche’ Bewegung macht, weil sie sie irgendwo gesehen oder sich ausgedacht hat, ich bemerke es sofort” (99). Terese emphasizes the artificiality of Gabriele’s movements, the ones that she has copied from somewhere. She might allude to the illustrated magazine *Die Dame*, which featured fashion drawings that tried to represent the New Woman in natural poses. The ‘natural poses’ usually consisted of women entering or leaving a car or a night club, while stretching their limbs in a way that would accentuate the cut of the clothes or the delicateness of the accessories. We can assume that the imitation of the newest fashion of the New Woman also entailed certain hand movements or postures that looked good on paper, but did not translate into a natural movement in real life. Perhaps that is the reason why Gabriele’s motions seem wrong at times.

Gabriele's performance works best on stage or in other public spaces. She gets into trouble when she is on her own and has to find behavior patterns that she has not studied before. Alone, just writing a letter becomes a difficult task as Gabriele does not find any convincing words she could address to another person. In her theatrical context, letters are only a stage prop, which the actress does not have to write. Terese therefore, rightly, conceives of Gabriele's lack of words as indicative of a deeper flaw or deficiency that prohibits her from successfully describing her feelings in a letter to Christian. "Was für ein Brief! Ein zehnjähriges Mädchen verfügt über einen größeren Schatz an Worten und Gefühlen. "Ich habe mich geirrt" – das war so ziemlich alles, was sie über das Erlebnis eines ganzen Jahres zu sagen wußte. Und ich möchte schwören, selbst diesen Satz hat sie aus einer Rolle" (125). The letter at which Terese smiles is Gabriele's goodbye to her former lover. Her speechlessness resembles the missing feelings she did not have in the year long relationship. All she can offer Christian is a line from a play because there is no interior feeling she may draw from to write lines herself. Christian is little more than a prop to her public appearances, which are themselves merely an extension of her work on stage. Their relationship exists for publicity purposes; its value lies only in its appearance because appearance is all it is. This performed 'make-believe' corresponds to the *Uhu's* April 1928 edition, in which the magazine reports on new outrageous beauty treatments (such as sleeping while hanging from a rope for a slender stretched body). However, as it turns out this report was just an April's fool joke; nevertheless, it convinced the readership through the performance of the models in the accompanying photographs despite the publication's unmasking of the joke in the next issue. Just like the make-believe photographs, Gabriele's interactions beyond the theater

stage remain in a performative mode. She has patterns of verbal expressions paired with the idea of appropriate behavior in her mind, which render her everyday actions unnatural. Even Gabriele's intimate relationships with men become a performative character study of an accomplished actress.

Gabriele's relationship with Christian is marked by a gender role reversal that overshadows their connection. Christian is rather good-looking, and thus acts as an accessory, or eye candy on Gabriele's side. "Aber weil er [Christian] in der Sphäre einer Schauspielerin lebte, weil er ihrem Vergnügen diente und damit dem Stadtklatsch, nur deshalb wurde er wie ein Kavalier behandelt, der ein Recht auf luxuriöse Vergnügen hatte" (39). Remarkably, it is Christian who receives his place in society through Gabriele. She is not the breadwinner in their relationship; she does not sponsor him, and even lets him pay for restaurants and gifts. Nevertheless, it is through her that he receives a social identity, indicating a complex reconfiguration of gender roles. As Richard McCormick points out, the emancipatory potential of the New Woman lies in the "blurring of fixed gender and sexual identities."<sup>175</sup> The power in this relationship lies in Gabriele's hands. She gives Christian a name in society, a public identity that is similar to the character Pix in Baum's play Pariser Platz 13.

Interestingly, this gender role reversal is pursued by Gabriele and confirmed by Christian. He complies with the role he is offered, and takes on female characteristics in this relationship. For once, he changes externally by putting on Gabriele's satin pajamas, which is simultaneously a change of gender roles on the surface and an attempt to gain

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<sup>175</sup> McCormick, Richard. Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity. Film, Literature, and "New Objectivity." Palgrave. 2001.5.

access to Gabriele's interiority: "Sie öffnete die Tür. Christian saß an ihrem Bettrand, in einem grünseidenen Pyjama, der eigentlich ihr gehörte, das Deckenlicht war ausgeschaltet, und zwei Wandarme warfen rosafarbenes Licht auf sein zärtliches, verspieltes Gesicht" (26). Christian only interacts with Gabriele's external shell by showing himself in public with her, or having sex with her, but he is unable to penetrate her mind. He suffers greatly from this fact, because he loves her passionately. Gabriele perceives his actions as effeminate and exaggerated. "Er wird es bereuen, dachte sie mit richtigem Haß, während sie auf den Knopf des zweiten Stockwerkes drückte, ich werde ihm diese operettenhafte Vorstellung von Liebe schon austreiben!" (25). Gabriele despises Christian's cliché idea of love. Her aversion might stem from being herself unable to reciprocate his feelings, which remind her that her personality is an assemblage of stage roles. Traditionally, it is expected that the woman will be the one who raises high-hopes for romantic love, while men are characterized as the cooler sex, alienated or in denial of their feelings. In Gabriele and Christian's relationship, however, this stereotype is reversed and points towards an unstable shift of traditional gender roles.

While Gabriele is allowed to change her gender role behavior, and play out her understanding of love in any way she desires; she does not give Christian permission for a similarly playful approach to love. Her assessment of Christian's love as an "operettenhafte Vorstellung von Liebe" characterizes his feelings as both feminine and fake. We find a comparable criticism of love in Siegfried Kracauer's essay *The Little Shop Girls go to the Movies*. He characterizes these young women's infatuations with the heroes on the big screen as unrealistic, and makes the girls' minds dull. Gabriele's negative appraisal of Terese's blind love for Hartmann, who does not want her, similarly

expresses a critical standpoint towards love directed at another person. She does not understand how one can hold on to a love that brings suffering and is not reciprocated.

Du weißt – für mich ist Liebe gleichbedeutend mit Heiterkeit, Freude, Steigerung des Persönlichkeitsgefühls, Übermichhinauswachsen –, wird dies mir versagt: so stirbt meine Liebe. Und täte sie es nicht von selbst, so wäre ich doch bereit, sie um jeden Preis auszubrennen, um den Preis einer Flucht [...] Nein, das vertraut man niemandem an, nicht einmal sich selbst, das fälscht man, selbst für das eigene Bewußtsein, das vergißt man und verkapselt man, daran geht man zugrunde oder man wird daran groß – aber man legt es nicht einer neuen Freundin wie einen Blumenstrauß auf den Tisch (105).

For Gabriele, love is at most a rational feeling employed for personal gain: love is always exchangeable, predicated on self-love of the most economic kind. If love becomes complicated, painful, or intolerable, Gabriele simply encapsulates the feeling and rejects it. Gabriele is therefore ill-equipped to understand Terese's and Christian's enthusiastic dedication to a feeling that is harmful to one's self. Terese and Christian become guilty of the same weakness in Gabriele's eyes. "Ich habe hier eine liebe, liebe Freundin gefunden. Obwohl sie klug ist und bald ihren Doktor machen wird, hat sie doch so viel Herz, daß sie mich manchmal an Dich [Christian] erinnert..." (108). Presumably, rational thought, intelligence, and intellect – qualities that were reserved for men – do not allow for emotional feelings; the New Woman absorbs this myth and makes it her own.

Gabriele's self-rationalizing approach to love allows her to treat love relationships as business. In contrast to Terese and Christian, who hold on to sincere feelings, Gabriele has the ability to portray an illusion of a woman in love. She can study and copy the behavior of women in love, and use this ability to her own advantage, but she cannot feel what Terese might feel for Hartmann or Christian. For Gabriele relationships are for fun and personal gain, but invite only minimal investment. Thus, she calculates carefully if it

is worth her while to enter a love relationship with the business tycoon Karlweiss in order to profit from his connections.

Schließlich war ja auch Karlweiß nicht blind vor Liebe, sondern bloß ein wenig geblendet, von einem Glanz, den sie aus zweiter Hand, vom Rampenlicht, bezog. Der Direktor hatte ihm gesagt, daß diese Frau vielleicht eine europäische Karriere machen werde. Er wollte, daß sie ihm mit ihrem Glanz helfe, einen Schatten zu werfen, der ihm gefiel, und sie wollte von seinen Beziehungen einen Scheinwerfer für ihr erstes Auftreten. Sie fand sich in der Situation, überzahlen zu müssen, war aber bereit dazu, gequält von Lampenfieber und schlechten Vorgefühlen (59).

Gabriele wants to engage in this relationship as a business transaction.<sup>176</sup> Gabriele is in line with Karlweiss, which allows for both parties to operate with the same power in this male-dominated space. Therefore, Gabriele assumes masculine characteristics by making decisions based on rational thought and not feelings. She similarly steps out of the stereotype of the nurturing female. Gabriele will invest her acting abilities in the relationship, but at the same time, she calculates that she will get better reviews for her performance, which in turn will further her career (also understood as a masculine endeavor).

Gabriele's "masculinity" is demonstrated through her rational thinking, her lack of feelings for others and self-centeredness, and thus she is the complete opposite of Terese. Gabriele is a cold person with a smooth surface that protects her from harm, as well as feelings of love and inadequacy.

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<sup>176</sup> Gina Kaus similarly invested rationally in a relationship with the businessman Josef Kranz. He could not divorce his wife and thus could not marry Kaus. Instead, he adopted her. During the day she played his daughter, and at night she became his mistress. Kaus expresses in her autobiography that their relationship was based on rational thought, but at the same time she did not live up to her part. "Ich hatte zwar nichts Schlimmeres oder Niedrigeres getan als jede Frau, die aus Vernunftgründen heiratet, und hätte ihm einfach eine gute Frau sein sollen. Das war ich nicht" (Kaus, Von Wien nach Hollywood 37).



Gabriele erwacht wie ein Kind, mit viel zu großen Entschlüssen, Freude an der eigenen Person und einem tadellosen Teint. Sie hat die vertrauenswürdigste Haut, man darf sie aus allernächster Nähe ansehen, weder Schminke noch Tränen noch gelegentliches Luderleben haben ihr geschadet. Diese Haut ist wie mit unzerstörbarer Gesundheit gefirnißt, das äußere und das innere Leben gleiten daran ab, ohne Spuren zu hinterlassen (99).

Und gerade weil sie keine Tiefe zu haben scheint, ist, was unter dieser glatten, eisklaren Oberfläche sich verbirgt, doppelt interessant... (99).

Aber Erleben und Empfinden gehen an ihr vorbei, ohne sie zu beschädigen. Sie hat den letzten Härtegrad, wie der Diamant, und schneidet alles, was sich ihr entgegenstellt, entzwei – ohne es auch nur zu wissen (100).

The author describes Gabriele as the product of a magazine. Gabriele seems static like a photograph. Neither tears, nor make-up, nor partying all night leave any traces on her perfect skin. She already wakes up with a flawless complexion, and thus is the personification of the artificial New Woman from the covers of the illustrated magazine. Remarkably, the author labels Gabriele's skin as "vertrauenswürdig" (trust-worthy). This might be another allusion to the New Woman of the illustrated magazine. The shiny cover of the magazine pages that features the New Woman promises women all-around that they can rely on the image the press promotes. Following the advice from the magazines helps to become a New Woman, and in turn allows her to take on this persona as armor to shield her from harm. Most importantly, women are supposed to trust the magazines, which results in a stronger turnover for the press, and secondly, by adjusting to the promoted image of the New Woman women should gain more trust in themselves. In this respect, the outer shell of the New Woman has positive connotations: it helps her to find work and sustain herself, as well as to gain the confidence to engage in love relationships for pleasure without the economic trappings of marriage. Gabriele resembles this ideal, the woman-image who always smiles from the photographs on the

magazine pages—free from worry and free from the complexities of interiority under the surface. The illustrated magazine and the image of the New Woman provide for women in need in a time full of turmoil and economic distress.

The illustrated magazine's promise for self-sufficiency of the New Woman jeopardizes the traditional relationships between men and women. Socially emancipated, the New Woman is no longer dependent on men. In reaction, men feared that their masculinity was undermined and accused women of not living up to their natural obligation of motherhood; the 'hysteria' of this masculine fear, however, gained legitimacy because Germany lost many men during the war and 10% of the pre-war population due to territorial concession: women were needed to revitalize the population and men wanted them to do so according to the pre-war gender roles.<sup>177</sup> At the same time, it became important for the New Woman to be self-sufficient, because the war left Germany with a surplus of women, which meant that even if there had been no New Women, many women would have had no partner for marriage and were responsible for their own survival. The historic aspects of the time created a paradoxical situation for everyone, and the struggle to adjust to changed conditions troubled the relationships between women and men, suggesting that these too needed to re-adjust. The rupture in the defined pre-war gender roles made it hard for men and women to come together. Love shifted from the status of a natural feeling of attraction to one of debilitating disease.

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<sup>177</sup> "Fears of demographic disaster followed the sky-rocketing 'homecoming divorces' and the perception that many 'surplus' women, denied husbands by the slaughter of war, would not produce babies to replace a lost generation" (Bridenthal et al. 9).

Kaus characterizes love as a disease that needs to be prevented or treated, and thus does not allow for a traditionally healthy relationship between women and men. Terese's love for Hartmann essentially is expressed as a chronic disease. Attuned Hartmann left her long before, unrealistic and debilitating feelings linger on. Perceptive to this, Gabriele labels Terese's feelings as an ailment that persists but does not kill Terese, because she developed antibodies (*Antitoxine*), which keep her sickness in check. These antibodies are habit and the feeling of pleasure for suffering.

Es gibt Menschen, die bekommen jede Krankheit, die es gibt, jedes Jahr liegen sie mindestens einmal unter dem Messer des Chirurgen, dazwischen haben sie Typhus und Dysenterie, einen Herzklappenfehler und ein Gallenleiden – aber irgendwie hat es ihr Körper gelernt, mit allen diesen Krankheiten in erträglichem Einvernehmen zu leben; ein Bauernlackel bekommt die Blattern und ist in drei Tagen unter der Erde. [...] Jene Antitoxine, die dafür sorgen, daß sie [Terese] nicht daran stirbt, sind erstens einmal die Gewohnheit, zu leiden. Dann die Freude daran (106).

The advantage of allowing oneself to fall in love and not running from this awful disease is that the soul becomes accustomed to the suffering. Terese has been in this on/off relationship with Hartmann long enough to acclimate to the suffering as though it were a chronic disease one had to accept. Instead of Gabriele's strong belief in love as a way of personal self-fulfillment, Terese accepts the downsides of love. Only if Gabriele continues to gain from a relationship will it continue to be worthwhile to her. Once the superficial relationship she pursues fails to cater to her, she flees or drops the man. New Women like Gabriele exhibited less patience and understanding for masculine quirks and habits, because with their own income they were no longer dependent on men and, therefore, did not have to accept male-domination as the means of survival. In that respect, love does more harm for women than good— a disease that lingers. The idea is

to avoid love as much as possible, to become immune or keep it under control and to get out of it lightly (glimpflich).

Nein, Gabriele kann das nicht verstehen, Gabriele, die in der Liebe Freude, vor allem aber sich selbst sucht, Teile ihres Wesens, die in alle Welt verstreut sind und die sie wiederfinden muß, um vollkommen zu werden. Gabriele kann das nicht verstehen, weil sie niemals, "um einen Mann gelitten und das Leiden ertragen hat, nie sich in das Leiden verliebt hatte" (85).

Once Gabriele seems to fall for Hartmann, she refuses to contemplate a love relationship with him. During her stay for a guest performance in one of the cities of her theatrical schedule, she orders a cab to drive around town. Inevitably, her thoughts wander to Hartmann, whom she has left behind in M. She feels first emotions in her heart, but tries to suppress these feelings. A heart is like an inner enemy, she says, and the beautiful visit to the city in an open car turns into a potential threat for catching pneumonia.

Und zu dem neuen Kraftgefühl kam eine neue Angst. Denn wenn man ein "Herz" hat, so hat man gewissermaßen einen inneren Feind, auf den man sich nie ganz verlassen kann. "Zurück ins Hotel," rief sie dem Chauffeur zu. Und schlüpfte wieder in den Pelz. Das fehlte noch, daß man sich gerade jetzt eine Lungenentzündung holte (199)!

Here again, love becomes parallel to a disease, terrifying to the self-reliant New Woman who puts great emphasis on her health. A real love could lead to marriage and reliance on a husband, who has the power to decide if his wife was allowed to still work in the marriage.

Gabriele not only has a job she wants to keep, but works on her career. Marriage would also lead to children and the entrapment of motherhood. Gabriele admits that she cannot allow herself to be a mother, because her body would no longer conform to the ideal body image of the New Woman. "Bei mir wäre ein einziger Ausflug ins Familiäre gefährlich. Ich könnte eines Tages aussehen wie eine richtige Frau" (84). The New

Woman is presented as a new type of lifestyle that is not supposed to be passed on to the following generations through birth, but remain as a static element of the time period.

The New Woman is a barren woman. Neither Kaus nor Baum's New Women is allowed to participate in motherhood. Only Keun leaves her main protagonists pregnant in her open-ended novels. Gabriele recognizes that she participates in the static lifestyle of the New Woman. She realizes that it makes no sense to pursue a career when she cannot share the fruits of her labor with a family member: "Wenn man irgendwo eine alte Mutter hätte, der man die guten Rezensionen einschicken könnte. Oder einen Mann, den ihr Erfolg stolz macht. Oder zumindest eine Feindin, die darunter leidet. Es ist so sinnlos, für die Theateronkels zu spielen und die parfümierten Parkettdamen und für sich selbst" (202). Kaus presents to us the static period in a woman's life as she tries to adjust to the image of the New Woman. Meanwhile, she always faces an uncertain future once the unbearable lightness of being a New Woman is wiped out through woman's biological disposition and her aging.

Men also express their fear of love through the language of disease. Hartmann lets the feelings of love, combined with envy when Gabriele talks about other men, take hold of him untreated. As a man who is threatened by the growing power of women, he wants to assure himself that he at least has control over his own feelings. Richard McCormick argues in his book Sexuality and Gender in Weimar Modernity that men figuratively suffered from a castration anxiety during the Weimar Republic because the humiliation of the lost war endangered the male individual, and the rise of the New Woman threatened men with a loss of "power, control and mastery –ultimately issues of social, political, and economic power, not sexuality, yet often as not discursively represented as a type of

castration.<sup>178</sup> Related to this confusion is men's tendency to blame women for men's increasing lack of power" (McCormick 21).<sup>179</sup> Thus, Hartmann tries to control his situation by pretending that love and envy are not simply feelings that overpower a human being, but feelings that can be consciously aroused or contained.

Wenn er trotzdem nichts gegen seine quälende Eifersucht unternahm, so geschah es aus einer Art von wissenschaftlichem Interesse: er war neugierig, wohin ein Mann seiner Art getrieben wird, wenn er sich treiben läßt. Er beobachtete sich wie ein opfermütiger Arzt, der sich eine gefährliche Krankheit injiziert hat, überzeugt, das Gegengift in der Tasche zu tragen (142).

Hartmann wants to believe that he has his feelings under control, and imagines that he takes part in a scientific experiment in which he injects himself with a dangerous disease; yet, at the same time, he is assured of holding the antidote and having the power to make this feeling stop at will.

Christian is frozen because of fear. He cannot amount to anything because he is afraid of failing and of change. Christian shies away from writing his first book which should be so important that he would have a name amongst scholars immediately.

Und als ich nun begann, meine Situation und meine nächsten Pläne zu bedenken, da sah ich, daß auch der Ehrgeiz von mir abgefallen war – du weißt es vielleicht

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<sup>178</sup> As McCormick argues furthermore, underlying under the castration fear was a growing fear of losing the autonomy of the individual due to industrialization and modernity. "The supposed autonomy of the individual – so central to Western ideology since the enlightenment – was increasingly threatened by industrialization, technology, and warfare in the early twentieth century. The traditional order and the individual's fixed sense of identity became de-stabilized, unleashing a new fluidity that inspired both fear and desire – fear of the new and uncertain, and desire for liberation from traditional norms" (McCormick 21).

<sup>179</sup> Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion Kaplan describe men's fears about the New Woman in terms of a generation of women who undermines the continuity of the German nation. "Fears of demographic disaster followed the sky-rocketing 'homecoming divorces' and the perception that many 'surplus' women, denied husbands by the slaughter of war, would not produce babies to replace a lost generation" (Bridenthal 7).

nicht, wie sehr mich der Ehrgeiz gequält hatte in all den Jahren, die ich müßig gegangen war? Und wie dieser Ehrgeiz mit den Jahren wuchs, denn je später ich begann, desto größer mußte der erste Wurf sein! Aber desto unwahrscheinlicher wurde, daß er mir gelang (252-253).

However, the fear of change holds him back. Having lived through World War I, and all the changes and break-ups of society's classes, leaves him afraid of causing even more uncertainties. He does not want to be another element that brings about unsteadiness in life. It can be argued that the New Woman is the victim of a similar fear. They developed into a static, barren form of women, who were not future oriented but tried through catering to themselves through a *joie de vivre* attitude, and the convulsive attempt to remain young, flexible, and dynamic. The idea of living life in the moment instead of focusing on the future stems also from the fact that the future was hard to predict during the Weimar Republic. Except for the time period between 1924 and 1928, the time of relative stabilization in Germany, people did not know if they still had a job the next day, or the money to buy a loaf of bread. Being self-centered became a logical attitude; money earned one day could be worth nothing the next. Under this threat, the Weimar Republic and, specifically, its New Woman, became pleasure seeking and strove for instant gratification.<sup>180</sup>

### **The Visual**

Media such as illustrated magazines and movie theaters had an easy market during the fast-paced and uncertain conditions of the Weimar Republic. People needed to stay informed about the economic and political situation as soon as changes occurred.

The need to know instantly created a consumer culture of immediate, however disposable

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<sup>180</sup> "Inflation turned the moral universe upside down, so that the traditional values of thrift, saving, and delayed gratification suddenly became meaningless, even counterproductive" (Bridenthal et al. 9).

and ephemeral, gratification. Sporting the newest fashion and make up for women similarly signaled that the New Woman was knowledgeable about the current events as presented in magazines. For Gabriele, it is especially important to read newspapers and magazines, because she makes a living out of people's demand for light entertainment and escapism. Newspapers give her reviews: they are an important source for her career, as well as the troubling delineations of her image. Hence, Gabriele's actions are very much dependent on the press.

Gabriele's life as an actress has an influence both on her appearance on stage and on her private life. Her private life becomes an extension of her stage work. Photography and the media require the theater actress to keep her performance up to date, because every move she makes could be captured for eternity on film. Life for women in the Weimar Republic was therefore paradoxically static and frozen in time like the moment in a photograph as described by Roland Barthes, while directed always towards the future. The photograph is a trap for the New Woman.<sup>181</sup> In public she fears being photographed and leaving lasting impressions within a society of labile fashion. Therefore, she must keep up appearances at all times. Life as a New Woman is a constant posing. While professional models have a couple of shots in a session with a professional photographer to get the pose right; this is not a possibility in everyday life. The New Woman becomes a victim to the demands of the press and the technology of

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<sup>181</sup> "Wie die reale Welt wird auch die filmische Welt von der Annahme gestützt, daß die Erfahrung beständig im selben konstitutiven Stil fortlaufen wird; die Photographie hingegen sprengt den "konstitutiven Stil" [...]; sie ist ohne Zukunft (darin liegt ihr Pathos, ihre Melancholie); sie besitzt nicht den geringsten Drang nach vorn, indes der Film weiterstrebt und somit nichts Melancholisches hat" (Barthes 100).



photography. Every step the New Woman makes can be recorded forever. How much the private life of a New Woman is affected by the public eye shows in Gabriele's acquaintance with an industrial businessman, Karlweiss.

Mitten im größten Trubel der letzten Proben machte sie die Bekanntschaft des Großindustriellen Karlweiß. [...] Man sah ihm an, daß er gut wußte, wie heiß begehrt der freie Platz an seiner Seite war. Er war noch jung, sah gut aus und hatte ausgezeichnete Manieren. Vor allem aber war das ein Mann, der mit seiner Liebe Staat machen wollte: man sollte ihn um seine Geliebte, diese um seine Liebe beneiden (58).

Instead of looking for a portion of private happiness, Karlweiss looks for a woman who will make others envious. Not only does this transform the New Woman into an inanimate object, it demonstrates how private feelings such as love evolve when they enter into the public sphere. A love relationship is a public business that is fed by the public's thoughts and feelings about that connection. In this respect, this passage exemplifies the society pages of *Die Dame*. The magazine featured short reports on new theater actresses, but also reported on public events, balls and parties. Significant attention was given to who showed up with whom, and to the clothing the people in the spotlight wore. Reporting of these events marks the preliminary stages of our interest in stars and the paparazzi's work of today. A relationship between Karlweiss and Gabriele would be founded on the entertainment value this connection could offer. For Karlweiss, the visual image of a relationship that they portray for the public is of ultimate importance. In addition to the envy people are supposed to feel for Karlweiss' ability to entice a beautiful New Woman to take the public stage with him, this woman should also be envied for her privileged position at Karlweiss's side, and the love he wants to shower her with (or at least the appearance of love that he might perform in public). The

relationship between woman and man remains a simulation of love for the public, rather than a product of feelings.

The show status of love relationships that Gabriele manifests suggests a shift from an ideology in which such pairings were natural; the newly defined connection between women and men implies that they can only be re-enacted consciously as something unnatural. The media becomes a substitute, a stand-in for feelings that are no longer achievable. The media over decades had already twisted the realities of love relationships in photo essays and movies. Frustrated men and women who saw the ideal of love relationships in magazines and movies turned away from real relationships because the performed ones on the screen always look better than their own. Similarly problematic is that the peak of a relationship in movies and popular narrative is always portrayed in a happy wedding ceremony. The audience does not know where the couple goes from there. What follows after the wedding is no longer portrayed, and thus the audience does not have a model for relationships that go beyond the ceremony; this absence becomes present as frustration because no one knows how to behave in this newly ambiguous relationship. It is not scripted. "Aber dieser eitle Mensch, der sich sofort nach Büroschluß langweilte, wollte der Welt das Schauspiel einer großen Liebesleidenschaft bieten, und von ihrer Rolle in diesem Schauspiel fühlte Gabriele, daß sie ihr nicht lag (59)." The potential love relationship between Karlweiss and Gabriele is a spectacle, and thus, geared towards the visual portrayal based on the ideas of a happy relationship. The spectacle implies that there is an audience watching the couple; therefore, rather than seeing herself as a woman in love, Gabriele feels that she will have to employ her acting skills to satisfy an always present, anonymous public.

Gabriele and Karlweiss's relationship is marked by the visual language of show business, which qualifies it as a public performance for entertainment value. Karlweiss is not madly in love with Gabriele, but is rather blinded by her stardom, glamour, and brilliance (*Glanz*). Gabriele admits that this radiance is not inherent, but reflective of a shine that she receives from the spotlight, indicating the transformative power of the limelight. They become something better, more attractive than they actually are in the spotlight. Living up to this ideal image in the press is difficult for the everyday woman, but also for the New Woman, who has to stay in this performative lifestyle. Karlweiss wants to use Gabriele's shine to cast a shadow, which means that Gabriele becomes a source of light that helps Karlweiss to make an impact by throwing a shadow. "Er wollte, daß sie ihm mit ihrem Glanz helfe, einen Schatten zu werfen, der ihm gefiel, und sie wollte von seinen Beziehungen einen Scheinwerfer für ihr erstes Auftreten" (59). Gabriele, on the other hand, expects Karlweiss's social connections to be a spotlight for her first performance. This relationship is marked by a public performance; it does not offer any real feelings between man and woman, but is an exercise in the entertainment of the masses.

In contrast, Gabriele's relationship with Hartmann is represented as a natural connection. Their meetings usually take place in walks through the forest. The author provides a comparison between Gabriele and a tree. Hartmann expresses he would like to leave a mark on Gabriele just as he scores his initials into the bark of a tree. However, he has to admit that Gabriele's outside skin is too thick and he could never penetrate it. "Aber daß er bis dahin keine tiefere Kerbe in diesen glatten Stamm schneiden könnte – das war es, was er so sehr fürchtete, dass er ihr lieber die Melodie vorenthielt, auf die ihr

Blut wartete” (144). The seasons that cause the trees to blossom or shed their leaves become a symbol for Gabriele and Hartmann’s love relationship. When Gabriele and Hartmann take a first walk the forest is cold and barren. Towards the end of the novel, they revisit “their” tree and discover that it carries a luscious blanket of leaves.

“Sehen Sie nur!” rief Gabriele plötzlich – “unsere Ulme!” “Wo?” fragte Hartmann erstaunt und drehte sich im Kreise. Vor ihnen ragte, riesengroß, der Baum, zu dem sie auch bei ihrem winterlichen Spaziergang gekommen waren, der damals kahl gewesen war wie die andern und auf dessen rauhe Rinde Hartmann seine Hand gelegt hatte, mit so tiefer Vertrautheit, daß Gabriele eifersüchtig wurde. Jetzt stand er, wie die andern Bäume ringsum, üppig in Blättern. “Dies hier?” fragte Hartmann. “Das ist eine Rotbuche” (281).

Just as the tree is in full bloom, so too is Gabriele’s and Hartmann’s relationship. Nevertheless, Gabriele still cannot distinguish an elm tree from a copper beech tree. She tries hard to identify the feeling that she and Hartmann share, which we find in her approach to nature. On their first walk together she does not know anything about nature and does not appreciate it. I would suggest that this emphasizes Gabriele’s status as a New Woman who is very knowledgeable about fashion and popular culture, but has no connection to the nurturing mother image of Mother Nature. At the end of the novel this appreciation has grown like the leaves on the tree. She still has problems naming the trees, and hence the terms of her feelings remain unclear as well.

Gabriele’s first love relationship is also marked by the visual. As a teenager, Gabriele falls in love with a photograph of Lord Byron and not with his poetry. Her admiration for the portrait leads her to begin a relationship with an actor who acts the part of Lord Byron in a play. “Ein kleines Jahr später wurde ich die Geliebte eines Schauspielers, der in einem elenden Kitsch, der ‘Lord Byron‘ hieß, die Titelrolle spielte”

(79). The transfer of Gabriele's romanticized feelings as a teenager for a dream image to the actor who is also just a stand-in for the object of Gabriele's desire is fed by the visual impact that a photograph had on her. The allure of the visual transforms from a photograph to the animate reproduction of Lord Byron. We can assume that Gabriele's knowledge of acting makes her believe that the replica of a desired object is just as good as the original. After all, all her relationships show the involvement of acting.

Gabriele's perception of love relationships shows that she does not expect a serious engagement with another person. Rather, the man becomes a vessel for her innermost wishes for the characteristics of a dream partner. The living man must, therefore, perform this ideal character.

Sie hatte den Mann, in den sie verliebt war, mit allerlei Eigenschaften, die ihr gefielen, ausgestattet, ob er sie besaß oder nicht, hatte allerlei bewegte dramatische Szenen um ihn herumgruppiert und jede Wirklichkeit dabei verloren. Niemals hatte sie sich ernsthaft Sorgen darum gemacht, was für ein Mensch Christian wirklich sei und wie er sich in wirklichen Situationen des Lebens benehmen würde (137).

Gabriele creates her dream-man based on assumed male roles from the theater plays she takes part in; yet, the influence of the mass media cannot be ignored. Kaus does not give us any records about serious relationships Gabriele might have had. Therefore, she does not have the opportunity to choose favorite characteristics from her partners, but has to go back to magazines and movies to assemble her dream partner. In addition to the qualities that Gabriele bestows on her men, she also envisions dramatic scenarios that she might experience with these men. The inspiration for these adventures might come from the installment novels of the illustrated magazines, whose main audience and protagonist was usually the New Woman. Gabriele realizes that she does not judge her partners based

on their personality, but employs her ideal vision [Wunschbild] and her observations [Beobachtungsbild] to understand the person. “Jeder Mensch ist geheimnisvoll und kompliziert, wenn man ihn liebt – das hatte Gabriele schon oft gedacht; vielleicht kommt es daher, daß wir ein Wunschbild von ihm haben, das zusammen mit dem Beobachtungsbild auf unser Bewußtsein eindringt, was eine unscharfe, verwischte Kopie ergeben muß” (88). In her relationships, Gabriele does not interact with her partner, but only relates to visual cues. What she sees is what she gets, and if she does not like what she sees, she twists her observations into her ideal. Her relationships lack engagement with the true character of the man she is with, and keeps her connections on a surface level.

### **Split Personality**

The New Woman focuses on the media for lifestyle and relationship ideas, because all pre-war constants such as the function of women in society, as well as her relationship to men are lost or changed. The lifestyle magazines portrayed is a stand-in for the lack of a well-organized and predictable life. However, Kaus argues that if people adopt a lifestyle from manufactured, exterior fashion trends rather than interior drives, a discrepancy manifests between what one is and what one tries to be. That is not to say that traditional women did not feel the same pressure of having to live up to being a good housewife and mother in a patriarchal system. We just have to think of Theodor Fontane’s Effi Briest or Sigmund Freud’s studies on female hysteria to see that women before the explosion of the illustrated press had problems harmonizing what they were and what society wanted them to be. I would like to maintain that this balancing act

caused a split personality in Gabriele. While she assumes the persona of the New Woman in public, she has to face a different Gabriele in her mirror image.

Sibylle Mulot characterizes Gina Kaus's literature as "psychologische Charakter- und Gesellschaftsromane."<sup>182</sup> Die Verliebten in particular gives such insight into the psychological dispositions of characters. Gabriele monitors her interactions with others based on her ideal image of the New Woman, which works well in public, but when she finds herself alone in front of her mirror she has to face what lies beneath the mask. Gabriele's split personality shows in the fact that she and her reflection in the mirror do not match up. She does not recognize herself in the mirror image. Hartmut Vollmer calls this divergence "die Versuche einer Ichfindung im Du (wobei das Ich jedoch in sich selbst gespalten ist – sinnfällig dargestellt in der wiederholten Begegnung Gabriele's mit der ‚erfahrenen Frau‘ ihres Spiegelbildes); [...] in ihnen artikuliert sich die Problematik zwischen Intellekt und Emotion" (Vollmer 252).<sup>183</sup> Instead of calling Gabriele's encounters with the mirror "Intellekt und Emotion," I would like to suggest a reading that splits Gabriele's personality into Gabriele—the actress, and Gabriele—the woman.<sup>184</sup>

At the beginning of the novel, Gabriele's mirror image assumes the role of a critical mother figure. Gabriele's parents died when she was a young girl and therefore,

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<sup>182</sup> Mulot, Sibylle. Nachwort zu Gina Kaus. Die Schwestern Kleh. Frankfurt/M., Berlin 1989. 294.

<sup>183</sup> Vollmer, Hartmut, ed. Gina Kaus. Die Verliebten. Oldenburg: Igel Verlag, 1999. 252.

<sup>184</sup> Andrea Capovilla suggests that Kaus' female protagonists are influenced by the author's own experiences and also are an attempt to play out different versions of her life as it could have been. I agree with Capovilla but would like to add that in the novel Die Verliebten Kaus does not only explore the life of the New Woman in two opposite protagonists (Gabriele and Terese) but also explores in the figure of Gabriele what happens if the self of a person (das Ich) does not match up with society's ideal of a woman in a particular time period. "Gina Kaus's particular combination of 'Unterhaltung' and autobiography is experimental in terms of content. The autobiographical 'Ich' is split among several characters; alternative versions of the life that has been lived are enacted" (Capovilla 2000:157).

she did not have a female model to emulate. Nobody taught her right from wrong, and guided her towards adulthood. “Insgesamt beschreibt sie sich weniger als das Kind ihrer Eltern, sondern eher als ein Kind ihrer Zeit” (Walter 69).<sup>185</sup> The narrative intimates that Gabriele relies primarily on movies and magazines to constitute her idea of being a woman. Nevertheless, she requires a confidante with whom she can privately drop the masquerade of being a New Woman. Her mirror image keeps her company, and reflects with her on the turns she takes in life. The experienced woman in the mirror is much older than Gabriele, because she is a representation of Gabriele’s soul, her knowledge, her history, her dreams, and her feelings. Gabriele herself is the personification of the timeless and ageless New Woman. She has to stay young and conform to this image, so she projects the evidence of time passed, experiences, hardships and even the first wrinkles onto her mirror image.

Sie sah auf ihr Spiegelbild wie auf eine Frau, die sie seit einer Unzahl von Jahren kannte, die sie wie eine treue Amme seit jeher begleitet hatte, die alles von ihr wußte und die von diesem Wissen schwere Mundwinkel bekommen hatte und Falten auf der Stirne. Gabriele wird vom Spiegel forttreten und lachen, jene Frau aber wird dort bleiben, in dem geheimnisvollen unsichtbaren Raum hinter dem Glas, und ihre Stirne wird sich nicht entwölken (10).

The experiences, and the time that Gabriele has been living already cannot become undone. Hence, this part of Gabriele is trapped in the mirror (“jene Frau wird dort bleiben”), and remain worried and thinking about the choices Gabriele makes (“ihre Stirne wird sich nicht entwölken”), while Gabriele herself can shed the weight of her past

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<sup>185</sup> Ingrid Walter analyses Kaus’ autobiography as a story by an exile author. She expresses that Kaus establishes herself as a child of her time rather than a child of her parents. Comparing this to Capovilla’s point that *Die Verliebten* has biographical connections to Kaus’ life and her friends and lovers, Gabriele can be read as an alter ego to Kaus herself. Just like Kaus defines her personality based on the Zeitgeist, Gabriele has to produce her persona based on the media of the time and the reviews she gets in the newspaper (Walter 2000).



by stepping away from the mirror and breaking into laughter. The New Woman lives in the here and now, concentrating only on the near future. This opposition is also expressed in the language. In referring to the old woman in the mirror Kaus uses the past tense “wusste” and “bekommen hatte”, while the New Woman Gabriele acts out future events “wird forttreten.” The former represents a static captivity inside the mirror, while the latter exemplifies action and life.<sup>186</sup> Deep thoughts will cause wrinkles, and destroy the image of the New Woman Gabriele wants to project to the outside.

Caught between the end of the relationship with Christian and a connection to Hartmann that she cannot fashion in her customary way, Gabriele realizes that she is very much alone in her New Woman status. Her unfulfilled wish for a “glückliche[s] Ideal einer ‘Dualunion’” (Vollmer 251), makes her face the experienced woman in the mirror again, and she realizes that her current lifestyle will lead to loneliness and unhappiness.<sup>187</sup> The experienced woman, who is the personification of Gabriele’s feelings and her soul, has progressed towards being an old woman (“hundertjährige Frau”) with tired eyes.

Dann nimmt Gabriele mechanisch ein Stück Watte, taucht es in den Fettopf, neigt ihr Gesicht zum Spiegel, hebt die Hand, um sich abzuschminken ... Und läßt sie wieder sinken. Ihr gegenüber sitzt die hundertjährige Frau, die alles von ihr weiß, ihr grell geschminktes Gesicht hängt wie eine Maske vor zwei müden, erloschenen Augen. Als diese Augen Gabriele erblicken, gefriert das Konversationslächeln um den vollen Mund, daß es aussieht wie eine junge Wunde zwischen alten Narben. “Das bist du,” sagt die alte Frau zu Gabriele. Das ist kein Spiegelbild, das ist das Porträt eines grausamen Seelenentlarvers. Es ist, als habe

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<sup>186</sup> The verbs “wird bleiben” and “wird sich nicht entwölken” are also in the future tense and refer to the old woman. However, I would like to suggest that these are static and inactive verb meanings that are ascribed to the old woman, while Gabriele is able to move and act actively “wird forttreten” and “wird lachen”. It is significant though that Kaus uses the future tense for Gabriele’s actions and not the present tense. She seems to imply that Gabriele has to give herself instructions (similar to stage directions) to be able to act at all, which speaks for Gabriele’s performative life that requires her to adhere to her ideal of the New Woman, and carefully plan every move she makes.

<sup>187</sup> Vollmer, Hartmut, ed. Gina Kaus. Die Verliebten. Oldenburg: Igel Verlag. 1999. 251.

die künstliche Tünche der Theaterschminke die natürliche Tünche der Jugend von diesem Antlitz fortgewischt und diese uralte, steinerne Einsamkeit bloßgelegt, diese Verhärtung des mit nichts und niemandem verbundenen Menschen (201).

It is significant that Gabriele finally recognizes herself in the mirror image, and identifies with the old woman who clarifies: “Das bist du.” The only barrier between the two is the theater make-up, which represents Gabriele’s lifestyle of artificial performances that adhere to the norms and ideals of the New Woman; yet these are distinct from and unexpressive of Gabriele’s interiority. For the longest time, theater make-up prohibited Gabriele from breaking through the artificial boundaries of her existence and resonating authentically with her inner being. “[Gabrieles] Konversationslächeln [gefriert] um den vollen Mund, dass es aussieht wie eine junge Wunde zwischen alten Narben.” Gabriele’s conversational smile is an artificial tool of social exchange, not a genuine expression of feelings. Her smile metaphorically encapsulates her lifestyle—always directed towards creating a positive impression on others. But now the smile freezes because Gabriele sees that she will end up alone. People will move on, and nobody will stay with Gabriele if she does not open up and let someone have a look beyond the public mask. The social commentary of the novel suggests that men surround themselves with women like Gabriele in public because they are pleasant, predictable, and “in fashion,” but it also poses the question: who will want to stay with an image? When the make-up, a persistent metaphor for the New Woman’s fashionable lifestyle, is wiped away, there is nothing left but an old, lonely lady.<sup>188</sup> It is a signal for Gabriele that she will not be able to act out the New Woman forever, and increasing age will make her current lifestyle impossible.

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<sup>188</sup> Elizabeth Boa makes a similar argument about the ballet dancer Grusinskaja in Vicki Baum’s novel Menschen im Hotel. She argues that Grusinskaja’s feelings gain authenticity once her tears wash away the

Throughout the novel, Gabriele increasingly understands that her life as a New Woman is one of hermetic solitude from which feelings cannot emerge. Just portraying the superficial happiness and enjoyment of one's body and looks is not enough to feel truly balanced and fulfilled—indeed, it is only enough to simulate the act of feeling an absent feeling itself. The experienced woman in the mirror has already arrived at the conclusion that Gabriele's life cannot go on as is (“dass die alte, erfahrene Frau [...] höhnische Mundwinkel macht”); nevertheless, Gabriele is not yet ready to give in. As Gabriele's relationship with Hartmann turns more and more into a feeling of love, she becomes increasingly disturbed because it defies the narrative mapped out for her in magazines and in the theatre. It is not the superficial love relationship she had with Christian, which was a mere character study for Gabriele, the actress, not an investment of feelings. Her relationship with Hartmann, however, requires her soul (“solch sonderbarem Heiligen”); she cannot relate to him with artificial performances anymore. Finally, Gabriele feels a connection between what she tries to portray and everything that is specific to her personality, collapsing public and private, and reabsorbing that which she had once banned into the mirror.

Manchmal, wenn sie in den Spiegel sieht, bemerkt sie, daß die alte, erfahrene Frau, die alles von ihr weiß, höhnische Mundwinkel macht. Die erfahrene Frau glaubt überhaupt nicht an Freundschaft, sie fühlt sich ganz einfach verletzt und spottet, weil man mit solch sonderbarem Heiligen die schöne Zeit vertut. Gabriele sieht deshalb überhaupt nicht mehr so gern in den Spiegel. Sie beschmeichelt

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makeup. However, the audience wants to retain both faces: that of the glamorous mask and the authentic feelings behind the mask. In my opinion, this implies that the New Woman's performance has to remain intact for the audience although the individual behind the mask might suffer. That means Grusinskaja just as Gabriele gives herself away to the image of the New Woman and disregards her own wishes and needs. “But then Gaigern performs a declaration of love which gradually becomes authentic, just as the tears falling down Grusinskaja's face wash away powder and mascara. Yet the intended reader wants both faces: the real face under kisses (assuaging the anxiety which the cult of beauty induces) but also the glamorous mask (promising escape from the typing pool)” (Boa 126).

auch nicht mehr des Morgens mit den Lippen die eigenen Arme, sie fühlt nicht mehr die Wärme des Bades, die Kälte der Brause als Liebkosungen, kaum fühlt sie jemals mehr das süße Gefühl von Jugend und Kraft, das ihr früher ihr gesunder Körper so oft verschafft hatte. Und sie hat auch kein Bedürfnis nach einem Mann. Auch nach keinem anderen (161-162).

This realization is hurtful to Gabriele, because it makes life harder. She tries to avoid the mirror. At the same time she notices that she does not feel young and powerful anymore (“kaum fühlt sie jemals mehr das süße Gefühl von Jugend und Kraft, dass ihr früher ihr gesunder Körper so oft verschafft hatte”) because she deals with feelings and thoughts that she had denied herself to maintain her mask. The amount of self-love practiced by the New Woman (“mit den Lippen die eigenen Arme [beschmeicheln]”) is no longer sufficient for her ego. Gabriele’s rejection of a man in her life can be read as an act of defiance to her feelings for Hartmann because she rejects it forcefully in two sentences rather than one (“Und sie hatte auch kein Bedürfnis nach einem Mann. Auch nach keinem anderen”). It may be that she really cannot yet “need” a man because she has to work on bridging the psychological gap that she discovered in her refusal to look into the mirror. She has to redefine the terms for engaging in a relationship with a man like Hartmann. She feels that a relationship with him will be different (“solch sonderbarem Heiligen”) and cannot be accommodated by her previous ideas about love.

The love she feels for Hartmann provokes a revelation about her mirror images that encourages Gabriele to see herself in a new light which is less flattering, though more accurate than the Glanz of the theatrical spotlight. Looking at the woman in the mirror, she realizes that her behavior towards Christian has been heartless and she is ashamed of “die herzlose Kumpanin,” that represents the actions of her past. Still,

Gabriele feels shame for the woman in the mirror and not herself, which implies that she is not fully aware of her past.

Da sah sie drüben im Spiegel eine alte Bekannte: die erfahrene Frau, die alles von ihr wußte, blickte teilnahmslos über einen zerzausten Männerkopf zu ihr hin – ganz genau wie an jenem 15. September, als sie das letztmal mit Christian in diesem Zimmer gewesen und zum erstenmal erkannt hatte, daß er ihr gleichgültig geworden war. Sie schämte sich der herzlosen Kumpanin (238-239).

The woman in the mirror has a much greater knowledge of Gabriele's life and actions than she herself does, showing the discrepancy between Gabriele and her mirror image. Gabriele's awareness of her "self," which is not only a performative act of what the society might expect from her, is in transition.

Hartmut Vollmer's idea of finding one's identity through a love relationship, "Die Ichfindung im Du," is similar to Hegel's "master-slave dialectic."<sup>189</sup> In order to find oneself, one requires recognition from the outside. Therefore, maybe Vollmer's ideas about identity formation for the people of the Weimar Republic do not need to be restricted to a heterosexual love relationship. I would like to argue that Gabriele profits much more from friendships than love interests in finding herself. Although Gabriele explains that love is a self-exploration for her, she never comes closer to her true self through a relationship with a man.

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<sup>189</sup> Vollmer, Hartmut. Liebes(ver)lust. Existenzsuche und Beziehungen von Männern und Frauen in deutschsprachigen Romanen der zwanziger Jahre. Erzählte Krisen – Krisen des Erzählens. Igel. Oldenburg. 1998.

"Die in den Romanen geschilderten Begegnungen und Beziehungen von Mann und Frau, Liebesfindung und Liebesverlust, sind eng verbunden mit Projektionen individueller Existenzsuche. Die Liebe, die Dualunion von Ich und Du, ist fuer den traditionellen Entwicklungs- und Bildungsroman ein entscheidendes, katalytisches Moment im Prozess einer Selbst- und Weltfindung, einer Verwirklichung und Vervollkommnung des Ich im Spannungsfeld von Individualität und Sozietät" (Vollmer 15).

Du weißt – für mich ist Liebe gleichbedeutend mit Heiterkeit, Freude, Steigerung des Persönlichkeitsgefühls, Übermichhinauswachsen –, wird dies mir versagt: so stirbt meine Liebe. Und täte sie es nicht von selbst, so wäre ich doch bereit, sie um jeden Preis auszubrennen, um den Preis einer Flucht (105).

This passage suggests that Gabriele wants to explore the various forms of love in order to better portray the role of a woman in love rather than being involved emotionally, and gain a feeling of growth. Love is a study of theater roles, of finding new ways of expression, and not a meaningful connection between a man and a woman. Vollmer's description of life in the Weimar Republic supports this interpretation; for, if people of the Weimar Republic lived a life of constant superficial escapism to avoid the reality of a crumbling Weimar Germany, then Gabriele's shallow connections to men may also be considered a superficial escape from her own embattled interiority.

Historisch-chronologisch umgrenzt vom revolutionären Kampf für die Demokratie und vom wirtschaftlichen Zusammenbruch, dem die unheilbringende Machtergreifung der Nationalsozialisten folgte; geprägt vom kriegesischen Niedergang einer alten, monarchischen Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung und einem von vielen erhofften freiheitlichen Neubeginn, der an der Brüchigkeit seines Fundaments schliesslich scheiterte, gestalten sich in den Romanen dieser Zeit, in ihren Menschenbildern immer wieder die tiefe existentielle Unsicherheit und Orientierungslosigkeit, vor der sich die bürgerliche Welt in den Genüssen und Vergnügungen äusserem Lebens zu retten suchte (Vollmer 1998: 11-12).

Gabriele's attempt at finding herself in the other depends on a power struggle between a man and a woman. Both parties want love but not for the price of dependence and subordination.

### **Love is a battlefield**

Gina Kaus's Die Verliebten extends the battlefield of World War I into a fight between man and woman on the grounds of everyday to reach a peaceful togetherness.

Maria Tatar has argued in her book Lustmord that the relationship between men and

women was tainted by World War I. Men who came back physically and psychologically wounded from the battlefield expressed their anger at the traumatic events through a sexually violent attitude towards women. Tatar refers to Otto Dix's sketches which feature the fragmented, harmed, injured or murdered female body.<sup>190</sup> These sketches are brutally indicative of the new hostilities that men directed toward women. Yet, it is not only the men's attitude towards women that changed dramatically during World War I; women also responded differently to men. Hartmut Vollmer expresses that women had to take charge of their own destiny, because the ideal of the strong German hero and protector had died in the war.<sup>191</sup> Women's emancipation was a necessity due to the lack of the masculine support at home during World War I, but at the same time women understood men's absence and traumatized return as a chance for an outbreak from the confined spaces of housewives and mothers. Women tried to be more like men in their actions and appearance to gain the social and political status men possessed. Nevertheless, they also put effort into appealing to men sexually with their New Women's look – some for personal enjoyment, others to gain a secure situation as a wife at a husband's side. We can consider Gabriele to be more of the experimental type, while Terese aims for the latter. Although there was a substantial disconnection between men and women, their physical and psychological need for each other had to be fulfilled. I argue that Kaus portrays this disconnection through images of war, armor, and weapons

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<sup>190</sup> "In the cartoonishly surreal self-portrait, Dix depicts himself with a mock ferocious expression, wielding the bloody knife used to dismember a woman in a room with the very lamp and chair of the later *Sexual Murder*" (Tatar 15).

<sup>191</sup> "'Der Mann hat sich durch den Krieg blamiert', gestand Carl Sternheim 1926, 'seine Unzulänglichkeit und die seiner Welt ist der Frau klar geworden. Sie will also selbst ihr Geschick und dann überhaupt das der Welt in die Hand nehmen, denn die Illusion des Helden, auf den sie sich verlassen kann, ist ihr verlorengegangen'" (Sternheim ctd. in Vollmer 1998:39).

that allow the sexes to interact and fight with the each other, but also protects them from falling too deeply for the other on the battlefield of love.

One setting of these battlefields is the women's workplace. Her interaction with men in this location shows a gender role reversal. Because the workforce—making money to sustain one's own person—was mostly limited to men until the early Nineteen-hundreds, it exuded a masculine atmosphere to the extent that women felt they needed to adjust to the masculine gender in order to fit in and be successful. In Gabriele's case the workplace is the theater. We see that she transforms into a masculine being in the interactions with her colleagues, while portraying the ideal of a traditional or New Woman on stage. Working at the theater at this point in time becomes a crucial test for Gabriele, because she has to fight like a man in order to prove herself behind the scenes, while embodying the picture-perfect women on stage to enchant the audience. "Sie [Gabriele] war immer im Theater lauter und schroffer als zu Hause, das hing wohl mit dem ‚Beruf‘ zusammen. Zu Hause war sie eine Dame. Hier stand sie wie ein Mann im Daseinskampf. Hier, hinter den Kulissen, war mit Anmut und Vornehmheit nichts zu machen, hier gab es keine Rücksicht, keine Galanterie" (20). Gabriele expresses that her profession makes her take on characteristics of the masculine gender. The metaphorical fight to establish oneself in the workplace turns into a real fight: Gabriele has to dig into a theater colleague's ribs because he tries to put her into a subordinate place, enforcing the power of traditional gender roles by groping Gabriele. "Dem besoffenen Kerl, dessentwillen sie sich im Stück zu erschießen hatte, gab sie, weil er ein wenig zudringlich wurde, zwischen den Kulissen einen Rippenstoß, daß er taumelte" (22). Gender relationships become a constant struggle for dominance and keeping face.



Gabriele's actions on stage reproduce the struggle for superiority and victory. In a way, the Germans' defeat in World War I led to the women's triumph over men and their emancipation. Without the necessity of sustaining themselves while their men went to war, women might not have ventured into the workspace so easily. The disruption of traditional relationships between men and women led women to test out new forms of relationships and explore a self-definition through pushing the boundaries of the defined space for women. Disappointment about the lost war and the downfall of the German masculine hero created a need to look out for new victorious and self-confident heroes that would strengthen the German people's identity and belief in themselves. We see a similar shift in the theater roles that Gabriele plays on stage. The masses would rather applaud victorious women in otherwise immoral plays than cheer for the virtuous but hurt innocent ("die gekränkte Unschuld").

Aber sie wußte, daß auf der Bühne eine Frau um so leichter hinreißt, je sieghafter die Rolle ist, die sie im Drama zu spielen hat. Die Zeiten sind vorbei, da das Publikum, naivmoralisch, die gekränkte Unschuld angebetet. Es jubelt, wenn auch mit schlechtem Gewissen, den Siegern zu, und deshalb ist es der Traum jeder Schauspielerin, den "Triumph des Weibes," wenn auch bloß in einer Strindbergischen Kanaille verkörpert, darzustellen (20).

The audience develops a bad conscience for clapping for the immoral victorious protagonist, indicating the German demoralization after World War I. Here, the actions in the theater represent a pervasive feeling of shame for the lost war, as well as the need to look for heroes and a more fortunate future. Women find an aperture for emancipation in men's loss of social superiority. The emancipatory process is a symbol for a victorious war hero that women and men can identify with as long as the New Woman is only

portrayed on stage. Of course, men had more problems with her emancipation when they interacted with women in everyday life.

Women had to constantly fight to keep the upper hand in the game of love and not to fall back into old gender role images. Even harder though is the fight they had to withstand with themselves. We see, for example, that Gabriele is torn between her new powerful position over her lover Christian and traditional expectations for female roles. “Sie fühlte sich gleichzeitig als sein Henker und als seine Mutter, die dem Henker in den Arm fallen will” (26). Gabriele wants to end the relationship with Christian, which is atypical female behavior according to traditional values. She feels like an executioner because she believes that he could try to commit suicide if she drops him. The power to decide about life and death clashes with the woman’s nurturing feelings of motherhood. Gabriele would like to give Christian the death blow, but at the same time she would like to spare his life. As a mother figure, Gabriele tries to prevent his death and even contemplates sacrificing herself. The New Woman clearly stands between expanding her new powers and reversing the decline of the masculine hero, which would eliminate her new found freedom.

Besides the New Woman’s struggle with her own identity— she is caught between traditional gender roles of housewife and mother, and the need to claim the men’s spheres of work, career, money-making, independence and success—New Women amongst themselves also fought to create the image of the New Woman in their own image. Terese and Gabriele both have New Women’s characteristics, but they are fitted with different sets of traits. Their friendship features both envy and spitefulness,

becoming a wrestling match over the status of the better New Woman. “[S]ie machten die ‘Brücke‘ oder ‘Spagat,’ sie sprangen Schnur, schlugen Purzelbäume oder rangen miteinander. Terese siegte immer” (84). In their workouts it becomes apparent that Terese has a better natural inclination to be the New Woman featured in the magazines of the period. Gabriele enviously observes Terese’s boyish appearance, which brings her closer to the New Woman’s body ideal of a masculine silhouette. The right body would grant access to the masculine spheres of politics and work. Gabriele strives towards a body more like Terese’s. However, she does not reach this ideal, which is expressed through Terese’s victory every time they wrestle.

Terese might be the prototype for the successful New Woman, who will provide women with a direction to achieve their ideal. Because Terese already has the right body, she might be more suited in giving birth and returning to this body image afterwards. “[I]ch glaube, du könntest acht Kinder haben und säugen, ohne daß man sie dir zutraute” (84), Gabriele says enviously. Thus Terese can give birth to the next generation of New Women. In the course of the novel, Terese does become pregnant, but she decides to abort the child, because she did not want Hartmann, who is the child’s biological father, to marry her for feelings of guilt and responsibility. She is the New Woman who takes charge of her body and her own destiny. Although she did love Hartmann and wanted to bind him to her, she remains truthful to her status as a New Woman by not giving in to an easy traditional fix of gender relationships of this sort.<sup>192</sup> Terese aims toward a true love

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<sup>192</sup> While Terese rejects having a baby as a traditional social trap for the biological parents, the author herself saw motherhood as one of the female’s intrinsic desires, which could be pursued without settling for a husband. Atzinger writes about this: “In ihrem lebenslangen Kampf um Selbständigkeit und Unabhängigkeit, in dem Rückschläge selbstverständlich nicht ausbleiben, werden jedoch auch Wünsche

relationship with Hartmann rather than a socially required connection. Terese undermines the opportunity for a continuity of the New Woman beyond her own life, but has to react this way in order to stay true to a New Woman's value of independence.

Terese ultimately looks for a traditional relationship with a man she loves. However, she needs to fight for this love otherwise it is not worthwhile. Gabriele emphasizes that Terese is in love with suffering. A rich businessman asked Terese for her hand in marriage right after she finished school, but she chose to cheat on her fiancé with Hartmann. At the same time she lived off her ex-fiancé's money. Instead of being thankful for his support, she despises his weakness of helping her. "Er erinnert mich an mich selbst. Er ist sozusagen aus demselben Geschlecht, dem Geschlecht derer, denen die Hufe fehlen, um auszuschlagen, wenn sie gemartert werden. Die unzählige Fußtritte ertragen von jenen, die Hufe besitzen" (96). Terese describes this man's weakness as her own flaw: Neither can properly adjust to the time. They do not know how to fight for what they want and, therefore, become passive recipients of other people's violence. Gabriele does not understand Terese's passive inclination to victimization. She accuses Terese of not taking advantage of the opportunities she has been given in the Weimar Republic.

Sie nimmt das Geld des verlassenen Bräutigams, dieses über alle Maßen demütigende Geld von der Gnade eines, den sie gekränkt hat. Sie müßte es doch

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und Sehnsüchte sichtbar, die der traditionellen Frau zugeschrieben werden. So hegt auch sie den Wunsch nach einem Kind, nach einer "richtigen Familie," es sind aber (momentane) existenzielle Leidenschaften, die auch zu ihrem Leben gehören, und nicht Inbegriff und alleiniges Ziel ihres Lebens. Als Ehefrau und Mutter kehrt sie das traditionelle Frauenbild um, indem sie den Vater ihres Kindes auswählt und dem Mann hauptsächlich die Rolle des Erzeugers zuweist. Sie findet sich in der Rolle der Alleinerzieherin und Alleinernährerin zurecht, wenn es ihr nicht sogar ein Bedürfnis ist, denn sie fordert von ihren mittellosen Ehemännern niemals finanzielle oder sonst eine Unterstützung, im Gegenteil sorgt sie des Öfteren für den Lebensunterhalt verflossener Liebhaber oder Ehemänner (Blei, Kaus, Frischauer)" (Atzinger: 93).

nicht tun. Ein junger, gesunder Mensch hat doch hundert andere Möglichkeiten, um nicht Hungers zu sterben. Aber sie sitzt in ihrem Atelier, müßig, und wartet, bis ihr das Wasser so weit an die Kehle gestiegen ist, daß ihr wirklich nichts anderes übrig bleibt als die Erniedrigung unter den Edelmüt eines Getretenen. Warum tut sie das (107)?

In this passage the various approaches to the image of the New Woman are shown.

Gabriele takes on opportunities that the time period offered to women to become independent and sustain themselves. She is literally working hard on her career, her body and her love relationships. Terese, on the other hand, is blessed with natural attributes that fit the aims and lifestyle of the New Woman (which is produced artificially). She has the right body, and even the intelligence to pursue a doctoral degree, a new opportunity to achieve a higher degree for women during the Weimar Republic. However, she lacks any practical skills, and the will to adjust to a New Woman's lifestyle. She does not have the self-discipline or feeling of self-worth to accomplish things on her own. Her dependence on others shows in the following examples: her father makes her study; she runs after a man who does not want her; and, she supports herself with the money from her ex-fiancé. Her passive existence is finally overcome when Gabriele sends Terese to take care of Christian. In Gabriele's war for love she uses Terese as a buffer to shield Christian from the death blow she gave him during their break-up. In turn, Terese becomes active and engages in a relationship with Christian.

Although Kaus offers some solutions for a new form of love relationships between men and women, she undermines them immediately. One of the most interesting and often forgotten love relationships in the novel is the one between Hartmann and his ex-wife. Hartmann's wife had an extramarital relationship with a younger man. Hartmann knew about this relationship and even approved of it, thereby establishing an open

relationship. Society, however, steps in and destroys both their relationships and the embryonic idea of a new kind of relationship between the sexes it represents. Their daughter is ridiculed in public for her parents' behavior. In turn, Hartmann's wife becomes puritan and accuses him of being unfaithful. Both had a solution for the dilemma of man and woman, but instead of rising above social conventions Hartmann's wife becomes a strict advocate of the rules that ruined her chance at happiness.

### **Conclusion**

Kaus leaves her two main protagonists at a stage in their development that shows Gabriele and Terese's on their way into more moderate versions of the New Woman. Terese lets go of her unsuccessful love for Hartmann, and gets together with Christian, who becomes sober from his love drunkenness after an attempted suicide. Terese enters this rationally sound relationship and learns to invest more balanced feelings. She explains that she and Christian fit together very well, because of their backgrounds and upbringing in higher class settings. Nevertheless, she has to live with the knowledge that Christian loved Gabriele much more than he loves her. Her ability to live with this knowledge is evidence of her personal advancement in the novel because she steps out of the suffering victim's position. Gabriele, similarly, evolves into a woman who employs more substance than surface into her new relationship with Hartmann. She knows that Hartmann is not her ideal of a man; he certainly does not look the part. His reluctance to give in to Gabriele's charms makes her able to offer Hartmann more of herself than the perfect performance of a New Woman that she wants to project to the outside. Still, Gabriele does not regress into a traditional woman figure, but goes on pursuing her

career. Kaus does not provide us with a happy end for either of the two couples; instead, she articulates a compromise in which the New Woman can live her new lifestyle as well as have a meaningful relationship with the other sex.

## **Appendix: Figures**



# Beim Verschönerungsarzt

Die Chirurgie der Gesichtsplastik in Amerika

Ein schönes Gesicht ist ein Geschenk Gottes. Das haben die Menschen zweitausend Jahre lang gesagt und geglaubt — und jetzt ist auch das nicht mehr wahr. Der Arzt magt sich wiederum an, auf einem neuen Gebiet die Natur zu verbessern: er modeliert mit seinem Messer das Menschengesicht in ein schöneres um!

Die Entwicklungswege der Wissenschaft sind auch oft sonderbar von äußeren Umständen bestimmt. Die Entwicklung der gesichtsplastischen Chirurgie verdanken wir in doppeltem Sinne dem Weltkrieg. Die Millionen von entsetzlichen Verwundungen und Verformungen, die operativ behandelt werden mußten, gaben den Ärzten ebenso traurige wie reiche Erfahrungen. Sie ließen in fünfzig Jahren

nicht hätten sammeln können. Man hat im Kriege Operationen auszuführen gelernt, an die man früher nicht einmal zu denken gewagt hätte (z. B. Herz- nährte, Gehirnerschütterungen usw.). Groß war auch die Zahl der Unfälle, denen Krieger weggerissen worden waren, Stirnwunden oder Backenknochen zertrümmert waren, und die dennoch weiterlebten. An ihnen lernten die Ärzte, die zertrümmerten, zerschmetterten, verformten Gesichter mit künstlichen Metall- oder Knochenplatten, mit Verwachsungen, mit Haut- und Haarttransplantationen so zusammenzusetzen, daß ihr Aussehen wenigstens erträglich war und den Opfern ein geistiges und seelisches Wohlbefinden in streng abgeschlossenen Abteilungen erspart blieb. Gegen diese Operationen bedeutet die gesichtsplastische Chirurgie, die man heute vornimmt, eine chirurgische Leichtigkeit und Kleinigkeit.

Der Weltkrieg schuf dann aber auch das Bedürfnis und die Nachfrage nach solchen gesichtsplastischen



Gesichtsverschönerungen in Amerika: Entfernung von Wangen durch Operation. Die Patientin vor Entfernung der Wangen.



Die Patientin mit gestricheltem Gesicht nach Entfernung der Wangen.

Variete- und Tanzbühnen. Ihre Zahl hat sich außerordentlich vermehrt, und für sie ist ein hübsches Gesicht geradezu Existenzbedingung.

All das hat die Frauen unserer Zeit mehr als jemals auf die Wichtigkeit der äußeren Erscheinung aufmerksam gemacht. Sie haben sich den Plastikern schneidern lassen, der so sehr verjüngt und Kameraderie verleiht. Sie haben ihren Körper durch Sport und Gymnastik verbessert und wissen diesen guten Körper durch die Kleidung zur Geltung zu bringen. Sie haben endlich alle die Kunst der kosmetischen Gesichtverschönerung, die Hautpflege und Zahnpflege, das Schminken usw., die früher nur den Berufs Schönheiten der Gesellschaft und der Bühne bekannt waren, erlernt. Damit ist schon viel getan, aber

einem Gesicht, das die Natur durch eine zu lange oder zu dicke Nase, durch faltige, runzlige Haut, durch häßliche Ohren, zu kleine Augen oder häßlichen Mund entstellt hat, kann man mit Kosmetik allein keinen Scharm geben. Diesen Frauen (aber auch Männern, wovon noch die Rede sein wird) kommt jetzt der gesichtsplastische Chirurg zu Hilfe. Er hat schon manchem Mädchen zu einem Mann, schon manchem großen Bühnenkometen zum Engagement, schon mancher Frau, die das Alter aus dem Erwerb zu drängen drohte, zu neuer Stellung verholfen.

Gesichtsplastische Operationen sind schon vor dem Krieg und zuerst in Deutschland vorgenommen worden (z. B. Nasenbroschen-Entfernung, Nasenformverbesserung usw.). Aber in einem Umfang von praktischer Bedeutung werden diese chirurgischen Gesichtverschönerungen bisher nur in dem Land vorgenommen, das jeden technischen Fortschritt

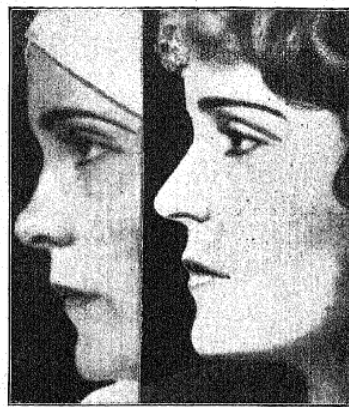


Der Vor-Schwergewichtsmann Dempsey mit seiner früheren und seiner neuen Nase, die er sich machen ließ, als er Flindersfeller wurde.

bald die Erfahrung, daß auch hier genau wie auf dem Heiratmarkt die Frau mit dem hübschen Gesicht nicht immer, aber häufig erfolgreicher ist als die häßliche. Das Bewußtsein ihres gefälligen Aussehens gibt ihr Selbstbewußtsein, Sicherheit, Selbstvertrauen. Gilt dies schon für die Frau in Büro, Laden und Gewerbe, so gilt es noch viel mehr für die Frauen vom Theater, vom Film, von den



Gesichtsverschönerungen an amerikanischen Film- und Bühnengestirnen: Eine Filmschauspielerin vor und nach der Verschönerung.



Nasen-Verschönerung an einer Schauspielerin. Phot. International.

Figure 1.1. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, March 1926, issue 14.



Ein Beger mit einem breitgespaltenen (sogenannten „Blumenholz“) Ohr.

Das neu modellierte Ohr nach der Operation.

Nasen-Veränderung an einer Filmschauspielerin in Hollywood: Die Patientin vor und nach der Operation.

als erstes aufnimmt: in Amerika. Dorthin sind operative Entfernung von Runzeln, Nasenformveränderung, Vergrößerung der Augen, Verkleinerung des Mundes usw. auch unter Leben- und Väterfräulein keine Seltenheit mehr. Zentren dieser neuen Chirurgie sind New York (das Institut des Prof. Pratt, der selber ein von ihm vergrößertes Mädchen geheiratet hat) und die Filmstadt Hollywood in Kalifornien, wo Dr. Hoffinger und Dr. Griffith eine große Praxis haben.

Die häufigste Operation ist Entfernung von Runzeln, Glätten und Straffen der Haut. Sie wird von zahlreichen alternden Frauen gefordert, die ihre schlaffen Wangen, ihre traurigen Mundfalten, ihre Krähenfüße entfernen haben wollen, um „zehn Jahre jünger“ auszusehen. Das operative „Straffen“ der Haut, das „Heben“ des Gesichts bewirkt man, indem man aus der zu welken, schlaffen Haut Stübe herauschneidet. Damit die Narben nicht sichtbar sind, schneidet man stets am Haartrand, an den Ohren und in der Schläfengegend. Zuerst erhält die Patientin entlang der Haarlinie eine Einspritzung von Novokain und Adrenalin. Das Novokain anästhesiert und vermindert die Schmerzen, das Adrenalin zieht die Blutgefäße zusammen



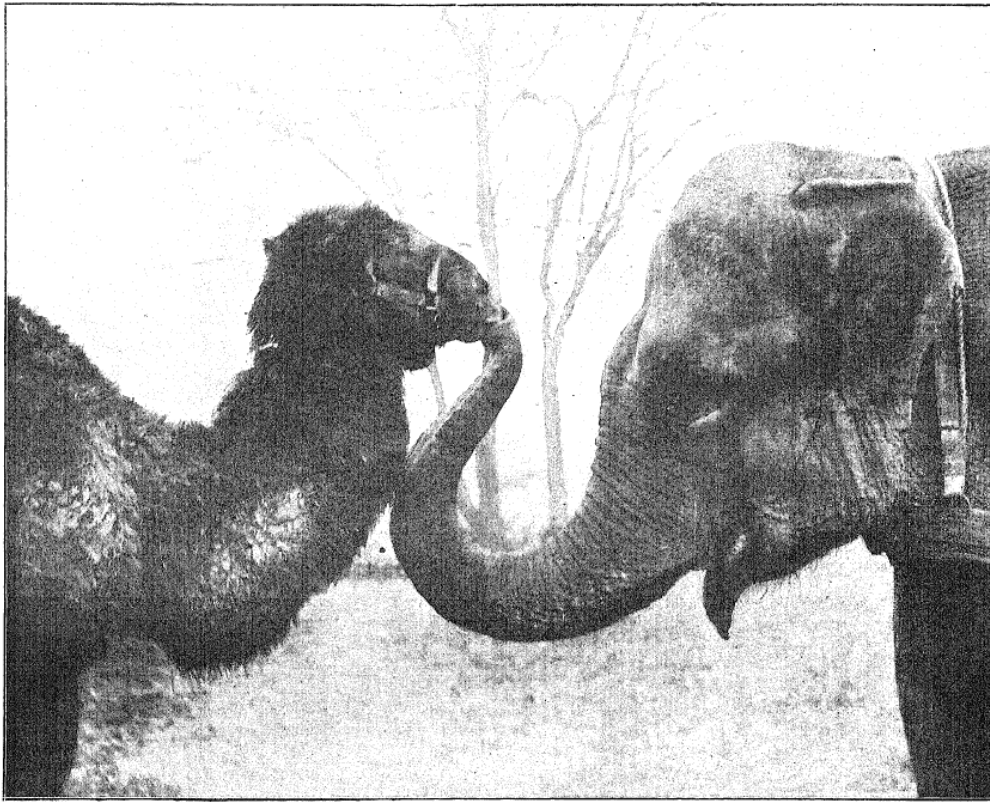
Der amerikanische Chirurg Dr. Pratt bei Ausführung einer Operation, die die Entfernung der „Krähenfüße“, der Altersfalten unter den Augen bezweckt.

Phot. International.

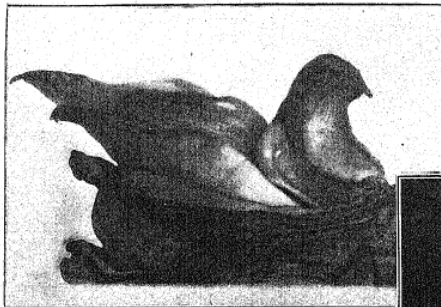
und vermindert den Blutverlust, der bei diesen Operationen ohnedies nicht erheblich ist. Dann macht man entsprechende Einschnitte in die Haut, zieht die Haut hoch, bis sie straff ist, schneidet mit einer kleinen Krummzange die überschüssige Haut fort — oft insgesamt bis zu zehn Quadratzentimetern! — und näht dann die Haut mit japanischer Seide zusammen. Die Operation ist schmerzhaft genug, daß viele Frauen dabei ohnmächtig werden — Morphin wird nicht angewendet —, aber alle halten die Operation mit erstaunlicher Entschlossenheit aus. Dann werden die Wunden behandelt und beplastert, und nach 15 bis 20 Minuten ist alles vorbei. Nach zwei Tagen können die Nahtfäden entfernt werden, nach acht Tagen ist alles verheilt, und eine Unterbrechung der Berufstätigkeit tritt meistens überhaupt nicht ein, da die Pflaster durch das Haar verdeckt werden können. Die einzige Unannehmlichkeit nach der Operation, das kalte, gespannte Gefühl in der Haut (Reaktion nach dem Novokain), dauert nur ein paar Stunden. Langwieriger und subtiler ist das Entfernen von Näsenfäden, das Straffen des Gesichts usw.

Schwieriger sind Nasenoperationen. Hier muß der

Figure 1.2. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, March 1926, issue 14.



Die Freunde: Herzliche Begrüßung zwischen Elefant und Kamel bei ihrem Zusammentreffen während eines Umgangs im Zoo.

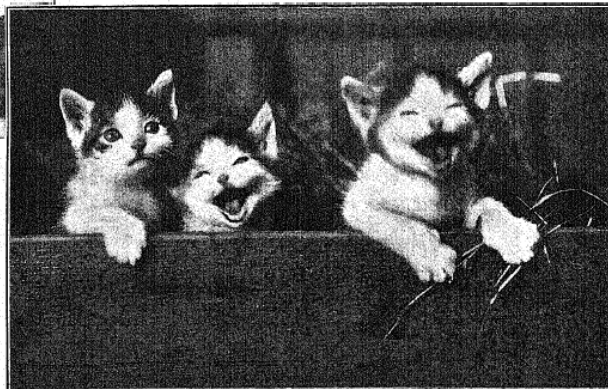


Ein Naturpiel: Eine Zwerge, die in Form einer Taube gewachsen ist.

Operateur nicht nur ein geschickter Chirurg sein, sondern auch plastisch-ästhetischen Sinn haben, um die neue Form richtig zu wählen. Handelt es sich um Operationen der Nasenspitze (Verkürzung, Verdünnung), so wird nach erfolgter Anästhesie der Nasenflügel zerschneiden, dann mit einem Haken der Knorpel ausgebohrt, die Haut straff gezogen und der Nasenflügel nach innen vernäht. Bei Veränderungen des Nasenrückens (Entföderung usw.) wird die Haut auf dem Nasenrücken aufgeschnitten, das Nasenbein abgemeißelt und das Ganze dann vernäht. (Der Gefäßschirurg muß vorzüglich nähen, damit keine sichtbaren Narben bleiben.) Diese Operationen sind nicht sehr schmerzhaft, weil die Nase

nicht sehr empfindlich ist. — Veränderungen der Mundform werden meist gleichfalls durch Hautstraffungen erzielt, indem man z. B. so die Mundwinkel „hebt“, erscheint ein großer Mund kleiner. Es werden aber auch direkt Lippen-Operationen vorgenommen (z. B. um allzu wulstige Lippen dünner zu

machen), die sehr schmerzhaft sind, wie jeder schlagende Student gut weiß, dem einmal ein Nadel die Lippe gespalten hat. Ebenso schmerzhaft sind operative Verkleinerungen allzu großer Ohrmuscheln. Doch wohl das Tollste, was überhaupt gemacht wird — es wird sehr selten ausgeführt und ist eine typische



Lachende Kätzchen.

Figure 1.3. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, March 1926, issue 14.

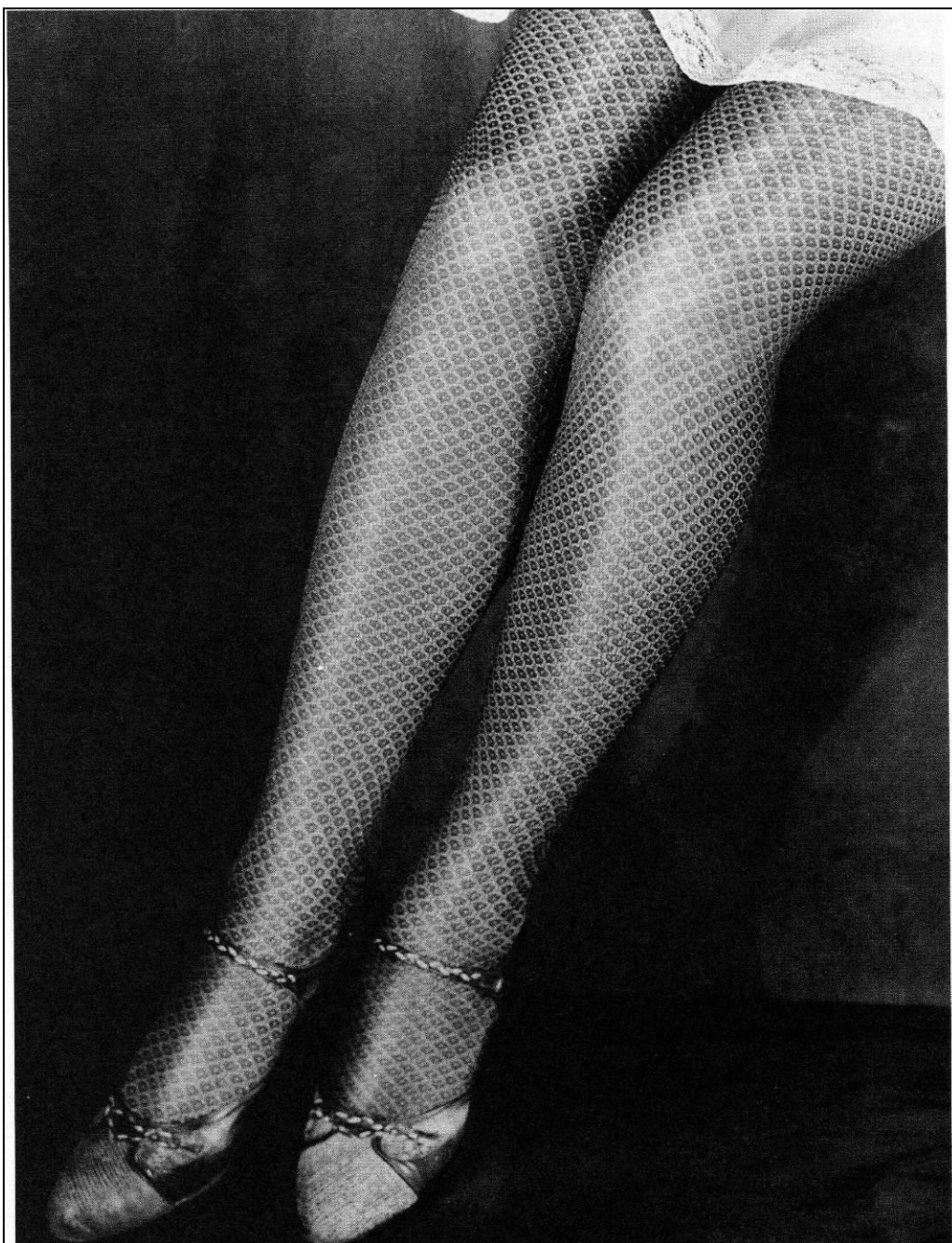


Figure 1.4. Yva. Stockings. 1932, vintage print Kunstbibliothek SMB, Lipperheidesche Kostümbibliothek; Yva Photographies 1925-1938. 135.





Figure 1.5. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Figure 1.6. Uhu, November 1930, issue 2.

### Wichtig für korpulente Damen!

Ungenügendes Funktionieren der Stoff-  
umwandlung und schlechtes Arbeiten  
der Nieren sind oft die Ursache von  
großer Körperfülle. Neo Kruschen  
Salz treibt die überflüssigen wässrigen  
Massen auf natürliche Weise hinaus.



### Fettleibigkeit – Verstopfungen

Jede Dame sollte täglich Neo Kruschen Salz nehmen, denn es wirkt vorbeugend gegen Verdauungsstörungen und Stoffwechsel-Erkrankungen. Neo Kruschen Salz gebraucht man zweckmäßig bei **FETTLLEIBIGKEIT** und **VERSTOPFUNGEN**. Haustrinkkuren mit Neo Kruschen Salz sind zur Erhaltung der Gesundheit sehr geeignet und wirken als vorbeugender **SCHUTZ GEGEN VERSTOPFUNG**. Neo Kruschen Salz hält das innere System und die Organe gesund, indem es übermäßigen Ablagerungen von Schlacken, Unreinigkeiten und Giftstoffen im Körper vorbeugt, sie ausscheidet und dadurch die schädlichen Wirkungen wie **RHEUMA, GICHT** etc., die diese Ablagerungen hervorrufen, vermeidet. Neo Kruschen Salz durchspült und reinigt auf natürliche und milde Weise Nieren, Leber, Magen und Darm und wirkt dadurch erfrischend und belebend auf den gesamten Organismus. Nehmen Sie jeden Morgen eine kleine Messerspitze voll in einem Glase warmen Wassers, und Sie werden Ihrer Gesundheit einen großen Dienst erweisen. In Apotheken und Drogerien RM. 3.— pro Glas, 100 Tage ausreichend.

# Neo Kruschen Salz

Kruschen-Salz G.m.b.H., Berlin N 65, Gerichtstr. 12-13

Figure 1.7. Uhu, April 1929, issue 7.



**18 Pfund  
zugenommen**



und diese 18 Pfd. gleichmäßig verteilt auf Gesicht, Arme, Brust, Hüften und Waden. Bedenken Sie, wie Ihre Figur durch diese Gewichtszunahme verschönert wird und um wieviel Sie sich dadurch begehrenswerter machen. Durch die wohlschmeckenden

**„Eta-Tragol-Bonbons“** (für Damen, Herren und Kinder von gleicher Wirkung), die nach der Mahlzeit genommen werden, läßt sich das Körpergewicht in einigen Wochen um 10 bis 30 Pfund erhöhen. Die unschönen Knochenvorsprünge an Wangen und Schultern schwinden. Pfund für Pfund nehmen Sie zu, an allen Körperteilen zeigt sich Fettansatz. Unbehagen und Unlust weichen, und nach ein paar Wochen hat das bisher schmächtige Aussehen einer vollen, ebenmäßigen Erscheinung Platz gemacht. Zugleich schaffen sie aber auch, indem sie die roten Blutkörperchen vermehren, Nervenkraft und Blut. Schachtel M. 2.50 gegen Nachnahme. Zu beziehen von der „Eta“-Chemisch-technische Fabrik, Berlin-Pankow 109, Borkumstraße 2.

Figure 1.8. Uhu, April 1929, issue 7.



Wenn die

# Venus von Milo

Arme hätte  
würde sie heute den  
**Punkt-Roller**  
benutzen






Als man auf der griechischen Insel Milo im Ägäischen Meer beim Ausgraben unterirdischer Gewölbe war, fand man so mancherlei Kostbarkeiten altgriechischer Kunst. Aber das Wertvollste war die berühmte Venus, jene Schönheitsgöttin von Milo.

Die Frau, deren Körper so wundervoll, so unerhört herrlich ist, steht im Pariser Louvre, und hier erregt sie die Bewunderung aller Besucher.

Venus von Milo! Schönste Erdenfrau ohne Arme! Hättest Du Arme und würdest Dir ein Gott lebendigen Odem einhauchen, Du wärest beflissen, Dir Deinen himmlischen Körper auf Erden zu erhalten. Aber man erhält sich keinen Körper durch den Willen allein, durch Autosuggestion etwa, ein Körper bedarf der intensivsten Pflege.

Ganz gewiß — das Ideal des schönen Körpers wurde schon im alten Griechenland erst durch zweckvolle Gymnastik erreicht.

Bevor man am hellenischen Gymnasium mit Speer und Diskus üben durfte, mußte die Massage die Glieder und Muskelkräfte ebennmäßig entwickeln.

Was vor 2000 Jahren die Griechen, als Väter aller Leibesübungen, erkannten, hat für uns heute noch die gleiche Bedeutung.

**„Zweckvolle Gymnastik“ — wie nötig ist sie dem bürohockenden Städter mit seinem trägen Blutkreislauf und den Verfettungen an Leib und Gliedmaßen.**

Erst die tägliche Gymnastik mit dem „Punkt-Roller“ bringt das Blut in Bewegung, fördert die Hautatmung und entfernt den Fettsatz an jeder Stelle, wo er sich zeigt.

Ganz gleich, wo sich Fettpolster bilden, am Leib, an den Hüften, am Nacken oder den Schenkeln, an jeder Stelle ist der „Punkt-Roller“ rein örtlich anzuwenden, und da er seiner kräftigen Saugwirkung wegen viel intensiver wirkt als die Handmassage, bringen 5 oder 10 Minuten tägliches „Punktrollen“ das erwartete Resultat schneller zuwege.

**„Punktrollen“ hilft besser als übertriebener Sport das Ideal des ebenmäßig schönen Körpers verwirklichen.**

Tausende und aber Tausende haben durch „Punktrollen“ schöne schlanke Körperformen zurückerlangt und neue Freude am Leben gewonnen.

**Tausende und aber Tausende benutzen den „Punkt-Roller“ täglich, weil er den Gefahren des sitzenden Lebens entgegenwirkt, jugendfrisch und leistungsfähig hält und anstrengenden Sport entbehrlich macht.**

Preis für den „Punkt-Roller“ M. 12.50, „Doppel-Punkt-Roller“ M. 17.50, mit auswechselbaren Saugnapfen M. 25.—, „Gesichts-Punkt-Roller“ M. 7.50. Achten Sie auf die Schutzmarke „Punkt auf der Stirn“, denn dieser Apparat hat die wirksamen Kautschuk-Saugnapfen. 25 Auslandspatente und 5 D. R. P. angemeldet. — D. R. G. M. Nr. 908705, 955422, 967771. Der „Punkt-Roller“ ist in allen einschlägigen Geschäften zu haben. (In Berlin auch in den 32 Geschäften der Firma M. Pech.)

**L. M. BAGINSKI, FABRIK ORTHOPÄD. APPARATE G.M.B.H.**  
BERLIN-PANKOW 12 / HIDDENSEESTRASSE 10  
Verlangen Sie ärztliche Literatur

Figure 1. 9. Uhu, September 1927, issue 12.



Figure 1.10. Uhu, September 1927, issue 12.



# Der "schöne Hut"

Eine Frauenfrage  
von  
M i x

Aus dem galanten Jahrhundert:  
Zuerst kommt der Hut!  
Ankleide-Szene nach einem französischen  
Kupfer

Wie hat die Schlange im Paradies eigentlich ihr Gespräch mit Eva begonnen, jenes allererste Frauengespräch, das so schwerwiegende Folgen für die Menschheit nach sich zog? „Eva,“ sagte die Schlange, „ich bin's. Ich bin gekommen, um dir meinen wundervollen neuen Hut zu zeigen, schau!“ Und alles Weitere ergab sich von selber. So wenigstens stellt Shaw es in seinem „Zurück zu

Bei der Modistin  
(französischer Kupferstich)

Figure 1.10. Uhu, September 1927, issue 12.

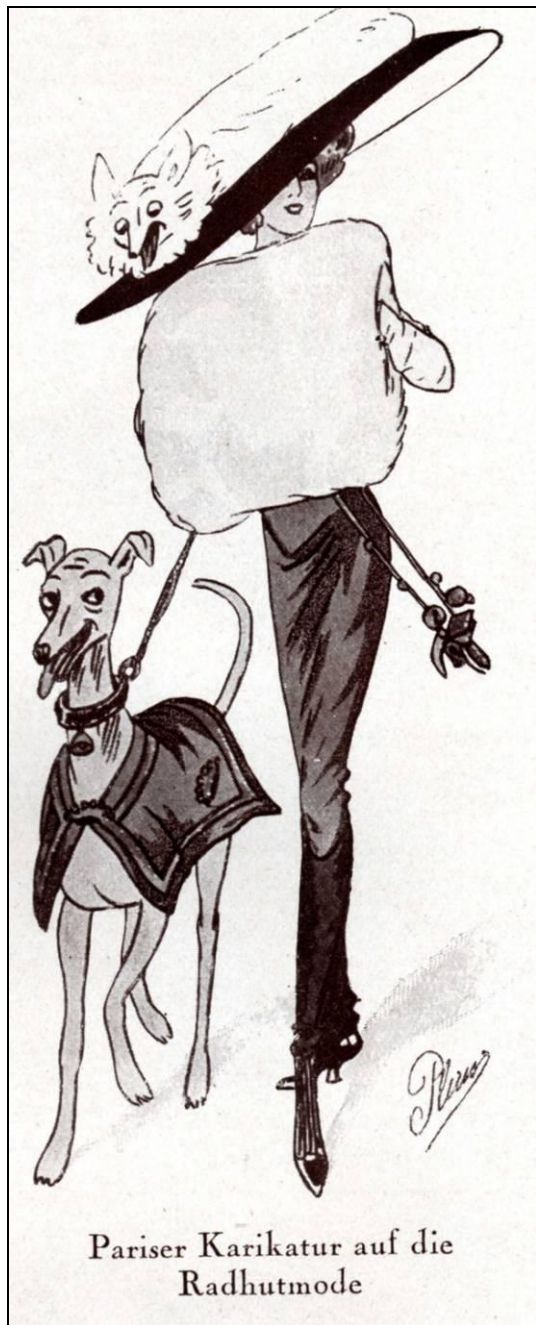


Figure 1.11. Uhu September 1927, issue 12.





Figure 1.12. Annonce, Lehmann/Stegl circa 1920, Weisser, Michael. Wirksam wirbt das Weib. Die Frau in der Reklame. Edition Deutsche Reklame. 1985. 77.

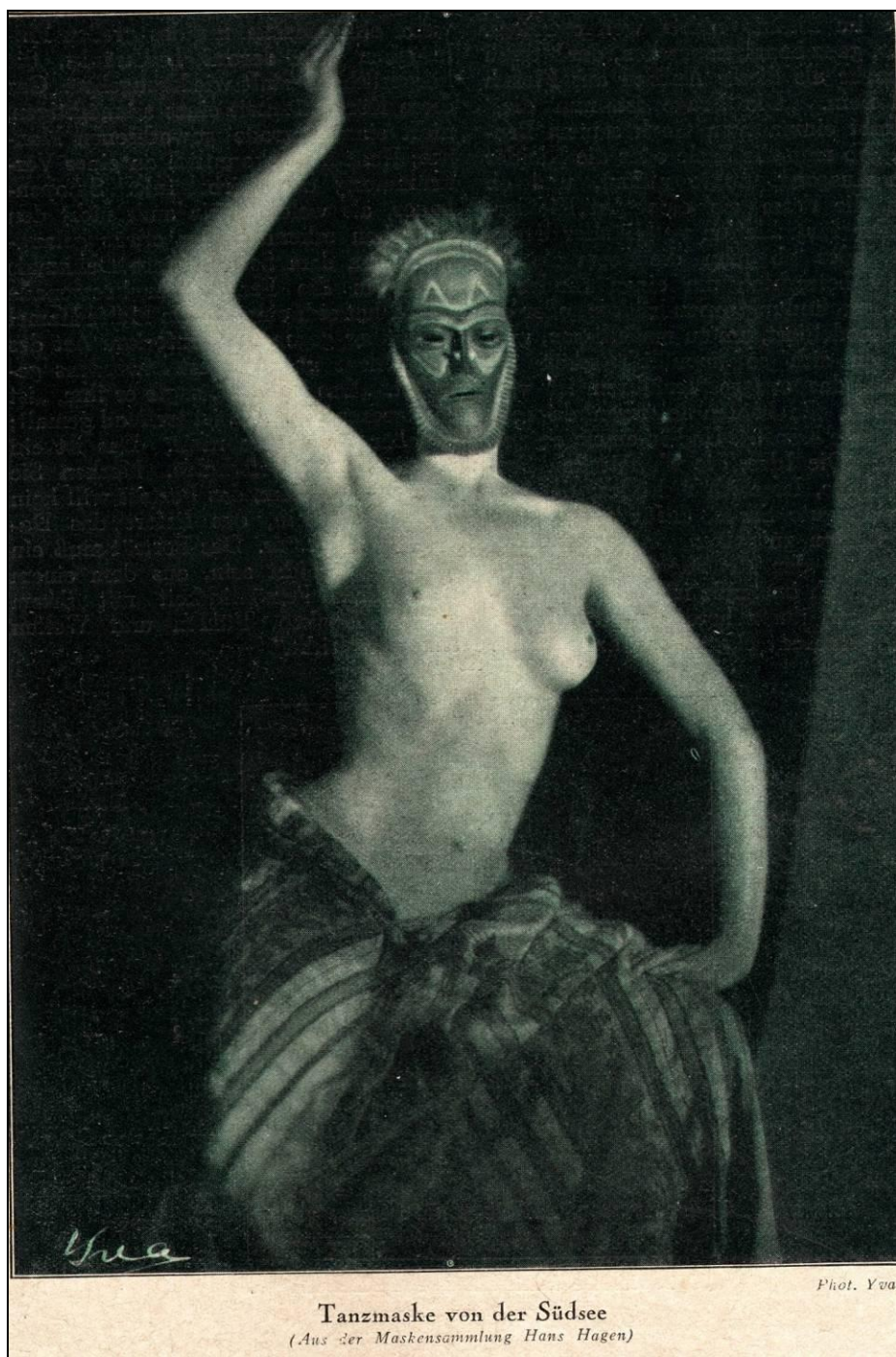



Figure 1.13. Uhu, April 1929, issue 7.





Figure 1.15. Uhu, April 1928, issue 7.



**Sie  
werden beobachtet!**

Die Herren sind schärfere Beobachter, als Sie es glauben, und sie beobachten besonders eine Dame in ihren leisesten Bewegungen. Bei der heutigen Mode wird eine Dame nur dann als vollkommen schön angesehen, wenn sie keine überflüssigen Haare auf Gesicht, Armen, Nacken u. Beinen hat, die durch die feinen Strümpfe sichtbar sind, und eine weiße, zarte Haut besitzt.

Bisher bediente sich die Dame des Rasiermessers, um sich aller überflüssigen Härchen zu entledigen; dieses kratzt, verursacht Pickel, hinterläßt einen dunklen Schimmer und läßt die Haare schneller und härter nachwachsen. Viele andere Depilatoren sind kompliziert in der Anwendung und riechen schlecht. Die neue Entdeckung des Wunderwirkenden „Taky“ erlaubt es heute jeder eleganten Dame, sich innerhalb 5 Minuten an jeder beliebigen Stelle aller lästigen Haare zu entledigen. Taky vernichtet die Haare bis zur Wurzel und verhindert in vielen Fällen das Nachwachsen.

Machen Sie noch heute einen Versuch mit „Taky“ und Sie werden kein anderes Mittel mehr benutzen.

**Taky** ist erhältlich in allen einschlägigen Geschäften. Preis M 2,50 pro Tube. Jeder Tube ist ein Garantieschein beigelegt. Generalvertretung für Deutschland: A. Bornstein & Co., Berlin W62, Kalkreuthstr. 4. Tel.: Nollendorf 6666/67. Generalvertr. f. Tschechoslowakei: Karel Tausik, Prag I, Templova Ul. 5

Figure 1.14. Uhu, April 1928, issue 7.





Kätchen Lampe aus Braunschweig zieht zu ihrer Tante nach Berlin  
 Sie möchte etwas werden: Handschuhverkäuferin oder vielleicht sogar Stenotypistin, auf jeden Fall will sie nicht länger in Braunschweig bleiben. „Man hat da gar keine Aussichten.“ Außerdem ist die Tante sehr glücklich, wenn sie ein so unerfahrenes schüchternes Wesen wie Kätchen mit ihrer Tantenliebe betreuen darf.

# Kätchen Lampe,

## DAS MÄDCHEN AUS BRAUNSCHWEIG

oder  
 Eine Diva wird  
 gemacht  
 Aufnahmen Yva

Wenn Sie Kätchen Lampe treffen sollten, falls das überhaupt möglich ist, dann werden Sie von ihr selber hören, wie abscheulich der UHU über sie hergefallen ist, und daß Kätchen Lampe ihn verklagt hat. Sie habe niemals Kätchen Lampe geheißt, sondern seit ihrer Konfirma-



Die erste Tasse Kaffee bei der Tante in Berlin  
 „Hier in der Küche ist es nämlich immer hübsch warm und wozu den Kaffee erst durch die ganze Wohnung tragen.“ Kätchen hört die Schauergeschichten über

Figure 1.17. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.

Der erste Entdecker von Käthen Lampe  
 Käthen ist in Berlin Handschuhverkäuferin in einem Warenhaus geworden. Ein junger Mann aus dem benachbarten Seidenlager hat sich mit ihr im Café getroffen. „Nein, Fräulein Lampe, wie eine Frau wie Sie das überhaupt ertragen kann, den ganzen Tag hinter dem Ladentisch zu stehen und jedem Kunden, der ein paar Handschuhe braucht, so freundlich zuzulächeln, als wenn er sonst wer wäre! An Ihrer Stelle hätte ich schon längst versucht, beim Film anzukommen. Sie sehen ja der Brigitte Helm zum Verwechseln ähnlich. Die hat auch mal so angefangen wie Sie. Dabei haben Sie noch irgend etwas, das die Helm nicht hat. Schade, daß ich nicht beim Film bin. Wenn ich so ein Regisseur wäre wie der Lang, eine Sensation würden Sie werden. Und dann ab nach Hollywood ...“

Der zweite Entdecker von Käthen Lampe

... neulich habe ich in einem Film eine Frau gesehen, die sah aus wie Sie. Kennen Sie Lilian Harvey? Genau so, dasselbe Gesicht haben Sie. Sie müßten in eine Schauspielschule gehen. Sie haben so eine weiche, zarte Stimme. Vor zwei Jahren hatte ich eine Freundin, die ging einfach zu Carl Fröhlich und hat eine Bombenrolle gekriegt ...“

Der dritte Entdecker von Käthen Lampe

„Sollte ich die Ehre und das Vergnügen haben, neben der berühmten Filmdiva zu sitzen? Nein? Erstaunlich! Sie haben gnädiges Fräulein gar nichts zu dem Film zu tun? Verzeihen gnädiges Fräulein meine Zudringlichkeit, aber ich selbst bin ein großer Verehrer der Lichtbildkunst. Ich habe eine Autogrammsammlung von sämtlichen Filmstars. Fast dünkt mich, als sollte gnädiges Fräulein einmal als eine neue Marlene Dietrich meine Sammlung mit einem besonderen Autogramm zu ihren ersten Entdecker“ zieren.“

Figure 1.18. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Figure 1.19. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Figure 1.20. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Figure 1.21. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Figure 1.22. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.





Belauschtes Gespräch im Filmatelier der Alexander-von-Wiese-Produktion:

Der erste Hilfsregisseur: „Was sagst du zu der Lampé? Die wird immer ein gebildeter.“  
 Der zweite Hilfsregisseur: „Ja, ja. Die Schwedinnen!“  
 Der dritte Hilfsregisseur: „Wieso Schwedinnen? Lampé ist doch französisch.“  
 Der erste Hilfsregisseur: „Wieso französisch? Aus Weimar ist sie, habe ich gehört.“  
 Der zweite Regisseur: „Na, dafür ist sie aber mächtig eingebildet.“




*Fot. Hildebrandt*

Aus einem der vielen Artikel über Karin Lampés Jugend  
 Das Wohnhaus hoch oben in Schweden, in dem ihre Eltern, schlichte, aber begüterte Landleute, leben . . .

Was aus der guten, lieben Tante einer Filmdiva wird  
 „Wen wollen Sie sprechen? . . . Meine Nichte ist leider persönlich nicht zu sprechen. Wenn Sie etwas wünschen, schreiben Sie bitte an das Sekretariat von Karin Lampé.“

Figure 1.23. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.



Das Ende vom Liede:  
Als Vermählte empfehlen sich: Karin Lampé und Alexander von Wiese.

tion schon Karin Lampé, und in Braunschweig sei sie nur ganz vorübergehend gewesen. Ihre Urgroßeltern seien wirklich Schweden gewesen, nicht ganz in Schweden, aber von der Wasserkante. Niemals habe sie mit der Tante in der Küche gesessen. Die Tante sei aus einem sehr guten Hause. Das alles wird sie Ihnen in gebrochenem Deutsch erzählen, mit einigen ausländischen Sprachbrocken vermischt, gleichgültig, ob es nun Englisch, Französisch oder Schwedisch ist.



Eine kleine Überraschung nach der  
Trauung:  
... aber filmen darfst du nicht mehr, das  
paßt mir nicht ...

Figure 1.24. Uhu, November 1932, issue 2.





# Der Schnurrbart

Eine Tragikomödie  
in 15 Bildern  
Aufnahmen Yva

Der Schnurrbart, wie Bob ihn haben möchte:  
„Gestern habe ich ein Bild von einem sehr vornehmen Engländer gesehen. Er hatte einen wunderbaren Schnurrbart. So einen Schnurrbart möchte ich mir mal wachsen lassen.“

Wenn ein Mann sich einen Schnurrbart wachsen läßt, so ist das ein ganz schwerer Entschluß. Falls er Verwandtschaft hat, besitzt er zwei Möglichkeiten, sich ihrem Urteil zu entziehen: er kann sie ausrotten, oder aber er geht auf ein halbes Jahr in die Sahara. Sich bei Verwandten oder Bekannten zu zeigen, während der Schnurrbart im

Vierzehn Tage nach dem großen Entschluß:  
„Na, ein bißchen kümmerlich sieht er ja noch aus!“

Figure 1.25. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.26. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.27. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.28. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.29. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.30. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.



Figure 1.31. Uhu, June 1931, issue 9.

St. 13 Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung



*Sei modern*

und elegant. Wähle die Frisur, die alle Vorzüge zur Geltung bringt. Je persönlicher das Haar „zugeschnitten“ ist auf die Trägerin, um so kritischer wird es betrachtet — um so sorgfältiger muß es gepflegt sein. Elida-Haarpflege macht das Haar wundervoll schmiegsam, seidenweich und glänzend, diskret duftend. Zur nächsten Kopfwäsche nur das sodafreie Shampoo.

**ELIDA**

Figure 1.32. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, March 1926, issue 13.





*Sei schön  
durch Sport  
und  
Elida!*

Sport ist der ewige Jungbrunnen, aus dem Jugend, Elastizität und Schlankheit steigen. Aber nach jedem Sport ist die Pflege der Haut und der Haare nicht nur eine unbedingte Notwendigkeit, sondern auch eine wunderbare Erfrischung. Der weiche Schaum der Elida Ideal-Seife dringt tief in die Poren und reinigt die Haut milde und doch gründlich. Elida Haarpflege säubert Kopfhaut und Haar, entfernt das überschüssige Fett, erfrischt und belebt die Kopfhaut.

**ELIDA  
IDEAL-SEIFE**

So rein und mild und dezent parfümiert, daß selbst zarteste Haut sie ohne geringste Störung ständig verträgt. Die Luxusseife für 80 Pf. — Doppelt stark parfümiert M. L. —.

**ELIDA  
HAARPFLEGE**

Macht das Haar seidenweich und locker, gibt ihm prachtvollen Naturlanz und bewahrt die natürlichen Wellen. Elida Haarpflege das Päckchen 30 Pfennig.

**ELIDA HAUTPFLEGE**

Figure 1.33. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, June 1926, issue 25.



*Selbstbewusst*

kann nur wahre Schönheit sein. Wissen, daß man schön ist und wissen, wie man es sicher bleibt, gibt Selbstvertrauen. Bringt Erfolg, Glück und Macht.

Der Weg zur dauernden Schönheit ist die richtige Pflege des Teints, um seine natürliche Frische zu erhalten. Elida-Ideal-seife enthält nur die edelsten Rohstoffe in raffinierter Verarbeitung. Ihr weicher Schaum dringt mild in die Poren und hinterläßt ein wunderbares Gefühl der Weichheit und den dezenten Duft des herrlichen Parfüms.

So rein und mild ist Elida-Idealseife, daß selbst zarteste Haut sie ständig ohne Störung verträgt.

**ELIDA-IDEAL-SEIFE**

ELIDA PARFÜMERIE A. G. LEIPZIG-WAHREN

Figure 1.34. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, May 1926, issue 21.



**Rahma**  
MARGARINE  
**buttergleich**

**Zum frohen Osterfest**  
gehört der gute Osterkuchen. Ob's ein zarter Butterkuchen ist oder verlockendes Kleingebäck, alles gerät prächtig mit  
**„Rahma Margarine buttergleich“**  
„Rahma buttergleich“, aus Frischmilch und edlen Speisefetten hergestellt, entspricht an **Geschmack und Nährwert**  
der besten Molkereibutter und kostet nur 50 Pfg. das 1/2 Pfd.

Figure 1.35. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, April 1926, issue 14.



**Rahma**  
MARGARINE  
**buttergleich**

Wenn zum lieblichen Pfingstfest sich  
die Erde mit Sonnenglanz u. Blütenzweigen schmückt,  
dringt Frühlingsglanz auch ins festliche Haus, wo unterm Fliederstrauß  
köstliche Rahma-Kuchen mit verlockendem Butterduft zum fröhlichen Kaffeetisch laden.

**Rahma-Margarine buttergleich**  
gibt allen Pfingstgerichten den **Geschmack und Nährwert**  
besten Molkereibutter und kostet nur 50 Pfennig das  $\frac{1}{2}$  Pfund.

Figure 1.36. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, Mai 1926, issue 21.

# Rahma

MARGARINE  
buttergleich



F.T. WÜRDEL.  
BERLIN.

*Ri - wa - wi -  
Ein Türring ist wertvoll!  
Wir fühlen uns so frisch und heil.*

*Wir essen „Rahma buttergleich“.  
Ri - wa - wi -  
Ein Türring ist wertvoll!*

**1/2 PFUND · NUR 50 PFG.**

Figure 1.37. Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung, May 1926, issue 18.





Figure 1.38. Uhu, September 1925, issue 12.



Figure 1.39. Uhu, September 1925, issue 12.

Meine Bluse, die ich dann dem Mädchen  
geschenkt habe, selbst gestickt  
*Stickerin*

Bis jetzt sind es sieben Berufe.  
Doch ich muß der Reihe nach vorgehen.  
Am besten nach meinem Tagebuch. Otto  
findet es altmodisch, daß ich jeden Abend  
aufschreibe, was am Tag passiert ist. Aber  
jetzt sieht man, wie wichtig das ist!

**Montag**

Hannas Röckchen gefärbt  
*Färber*

Pneumatik am Fahrrad repariert  
*Mechaniker*

Ottos Frackhemd, das ich  
vergessen hatte zur Wäsche-  
rin zu geben, selbst ge-  
waschen. *Wäscherin*

**Dienstag**

Nägel gereinigt (sie sind  
vom Färben ganz rot)  
*Maniküre*

Pneumatik hält nicht. Fahrrad zur Repa-  
ratur gebracht. . . . *Laufbursche*

Frack, wo ich die Sauce draufgegossen  
habe, gereinigt. . . . *Reinigung*

Frack geplättet (Otto braucht ihn abends)  
*Plätterin*

Frack gestopft, wo ich beim Plätten das  
Loch gebrannt habe. . *Kunststopfer*

**Mittwoch**

Gardinen angemacht. *Tapezierer*

Otto Kopf gewaschen  
*Friseur*

**Donnerstag**

Otto erkältet. Im Hals  
nachgesehen  
*Hausarzt*

Rattengift in Keller  
und Küche gestreut  
*Kammerjäger*



Eilaufträge zum Oberhemdbügeln werden sofort erledigt

Figure 1.40. Uhu, September 1925, issue 12.





Figure 1. 41. Uhu, September 1925, issue 12.

## VICKI BAUM:

### EIN TAG FÜR DIE SCHÖNHEIT

Ich habe den Rat von einem Ziegfeldgirl, und weil er mir gut scheint, will ich ihn weitergeben, zu allgemeinem Nutz und Frommen.

„Sehen Sie“, sagte das Girl, „wir sind nicht einen Cent mehr wert, als wir aussehen, jede einzelne von uns; ich meine nicht nur von uns Girls, ich meine jede Frau. Sie bekommt so viel vom Leben, wie ihr Aussehen wert ist. (Das Girl selber, nebenbei gesagt, sah aus „like a million dollars“, wie man drüben sagt, strahlend und glänzend, mit diesem Schimmer einer jungen Frucht, den die Amerikanerinnen sich anzupflegen verstehen.) „Man muß sich etwas

Mühe geben, sicher!“ sagte mein Ziegfeldgirl. „Aber es ist gar nicht so schlimm — und es macht sich bezahlt. Ich zum Beispiel, und viele von uns, wir haben einen Tag in der Woche nur für die Schönheit reserviert. Wie das gemeint ist? Nun ganz einfach.

Erstens wird an diesem Tag unter allen Umständen genug geschlafen, es wird soviel Schlaf nachgeholt, als man in der Woche versäumt hat. Dann wird an diesem Tag eine Diät gehalten. Nur Milch oder nur Obst, — etwas, womit man das Gewicht reguliert und die Haut klarbekommt. Dann soll man an diesem Tag keine überflüssigen Menschen sehen, keine Besuche machen oder bekommen, so wenig reden wie möglich, sich ganz bestimmt jeden Aerger fernhalten. Und dann fängt es morgens an mit sehr viel Öl auf die Kopfhaut und sehr viel Fett fürs Gesicht. Während ich das wirken lasse, mache ich die kleinen Dinge, die auch zur Schönheit gehören: Strümpfe, Wäsche, Hand-



Ein typische „Ziegfeld-Girl“-Schönheit.  
Mary Lange. Fot. A. G. Johnson.

schuhe nachsehen, Bändchen einziehen, Knöpfe annähen. Dann Gymnastik und Massage, Manikur und Pedikur. Wenn man Geld genug hat, läßt man's machen, wenn nichts — man kann's selber sehr gut. Wissen Sie, ich habe einmal in einem Buch gelesen: „ihre Fußnägel glätten kleinen, rosigen Südeemuscheln“. Das hat mir Eindruck gemacht. Sie glauben nicht, wie gut gelaunt und selbstbewußt man wird, wenn man so hübschen roten Lack auf den Fußnägeln hat. Niemand sieht es, und man fühlt sich all right; man geht über die Straße, das Wetter ist miserabel — aber man hat heimlicherweise „rosige Südeemuscheln“ in den Schuhen — na, also ich erzähle Unsinn. Pedikur jedenfalls ist eine sehr empfehlens-

werte, ernste Spielerei. Dann alles rund um die Augen. Fett, Fett und wieder Fett. Ein Augenbad — man bekommt da bestimmte Öle oder Lotions zu kaufen. Wimpern fetten und bürsten. Brauen zupfen — um Gottes willen nicht rasieren. Und selber zupfen — niemand anders kann die Linie, die das Gesicht braucht, so gut heraustifteln. So — nun kommt das Kopfwaschen; ohne Hetzjagd, ohne Nervosität. Man hat sein Rendezvous mit dem Friseur festgelegt und nimmt sich viel Zeit. Die Stunden beim Friseur sind heilig, nur um Gottes willen da nicht in Eile sein. Bleichen, Färben, Wellen oder

was eben nötig ist. Vorher natürlich eine große ausführliche Gesichtsmassage, eine Behandlung mit allem, was die Haut braucht, bei einem wirklich guten Spezialisten. Teuer? Aber mein Gott — man ist doch an diesem Tag nichts, man braucht keinen Cent sonst auszugeben, — nein, aber soviel Geld muß jedes Mädel aufbringen, um einmal in der Woche zum Friseur zu kommen. Ich — nein, ich bin noch sehr arm, aber ich werde später einmal eine Menge Geld haben, das verspreche ich Ihnen — ich, zum Beispiel, wasche mir jedes Stückchen Wäsche allein, zu Hause — da spare ich an Wäscherei so viel, wie meine Pflege kostet. Und dann kein make up den ganzen Tag. Damit die Haut Ruhe hat. Wir Girls natürlich müssen abends ja doch auf die Bühne mit einer Wagenladung Schminke im Gesicht — aber, die Damen, die nichts zu tun haben, die können wirklich vierundzwanzig Stunden an ihre Schönheit hängen — — Wie meinen Sie? Was Frauen tun sollen, die den ganzen Tag

Figure 1.42. Die Dame, First April issue 1932, issue 14.



# SCHÖNHEITS- IDEALE

in

## Zentimetern



In Grosberryjamtown bei Millstonefire im Staate Massachusetts wurde die diesjährige Schönheitskönigin unter großer Beteiligung des gesamten Bade- publikums nach heftigem Kampfe gewählt. Miß Putsy Chilly ist 23½ Jahre alt, hat dunkles Haar und kobaltblaue Augen. Sie ißt nur Porridge zum Frühstück und hat noch niemals einen Tropfen Alkohol ge- trunken. Ihr Lieblingsfilm ist „Die Rose des sterbenden Banditen“. Im Beisein zahl- reicher Sachverständiger wurden die ge- nauen Maße der mustergültigen Figur Miß Putsys festgestellt:

Höhe .....	1,68 Meter
Gewicht .....	114 Pfund
Hals .....	32 Zentimeter
Arm .....	25 „
Büste .....	85 „
Taille .....	68 „
Hüften .....	95 „
Schenkel .....	55 „
Knöchel .....	24 „

Wenn eine derartige Mitteilung in die Welt gesetzt wird, ist der Widerhall ungeheuer.

Hunderttausende von Frauen stürzen ins Ankleidezimmer und messen nach. Messen fieberhaft nach. Je näher das Resultat dem preisgekrönten Ideal kommt, desto höher steigt die Stimmungskurve. Im entgegen- gesetzten Falle stellt eiserner Wille einen Feldzugsplan für die Zukunft auf: Jeder

Zoll ein König — jeder Zentimeter eine Schönheitskönigin.

Man mißt sich selbst mit größter Ge- nauigkeit, man mißt die Freundin (mit etwas gelockertem Zentimetermaß), man mißt die Großmutter, man mißt das Baby. Und für alle sind auf längere Zeit hinaus die Schön- heitsproportionen der Miß Putsy Chilly aus Grosberryjamtown im Staate Massachusetts maßgebend.

Diese Meßwut gehört zu den zeitlosen Leidenschaften. Es liegt nahe, dem Ge- heimnis der Schönheit in ihren jeweilig anerkannten Offenbarungen sachlich auf den Grund zu gehen. Die Mode stellt dauernd neue Gesetze auf, und die Frauen machen die wellenartigen Strömungen schwim- mend mit.

Immer wieder wird ein Teil des weib- lichen Körpers ganz besonders ins Auge gefaßt und daraufhin ein mathematisches Ideal aufgestellt.

Bei unseren Müttern war es die Taille, deren Umfang auf ein Minimum reduziert wurde, wobei man jeden Millimeter weniger mit Hilfe unbarmherzigen Schnürens er- kämpfte. Kaiserin Elisabeth von Oester- reich war auf ihre 48 Zentimeter Taillen- weite stolzer als auf die Habsburgische Krone.

Gleichzeitig spielte die Länge des Haares eine beträchtliche Rolle, und wenn Anna Czillag sich mit ihrem „1,85 Meter langen Riesen-Loreleyhaar“ photographieren ließ,

wurde im stillen Kämmerlein so mancher Zopf nachgemessen.

Dann kam die hüftenlose Zeit, und man schob wieder alles in die Taille hinauf, um nur unten herum jünglingsmäßig zu er- scheinen. Schmalheit der Hüften wurde höchste Bestrebung.

Bis vor kurzem wurde alles fast aus- schließlich auf die Beine gestellt und eine Frau ohne weiteres rehabilitiert, wenn sie gute Beine hatte. Was sich sonst noch an ihr befand, war mehr oder weniger Neben- sache.

In dieser jüngsten Zeit erreichte die Meßwut ihre Höhe. Denn hier gab es gleich mehrere Punkte von höchster Wichtigkeit: die Geradheit, die Schlankheit, die Rundung der Wade, die Zartheit der Knöchel.

Es sieht so aus, als hätte man die Beine jetzt etwas über. Die zum großen Teil — bei Abendkleidern — realisierten Bestre- bungen, den Rock zu verlängern, heißen einen ziemlich deutlichen Beweis dafür. Noch ist es unentschieden, auf welchen Punkt sich das allerneueste Schönheitsideal kristallisiert wird.

Es ist nicht ausgeschlossen, daß man am Widerspruchsgeist dem Gesicht plötzlich Wichtigkeit zuerkennt.

Dann wird es wohl bald wieder ein- eifriges Messen geben, denn keine will hier um eine Nasenlänge voraus sein...

Antea

Figure 1.43. Die Dame, First May issue 1928, issue 16.

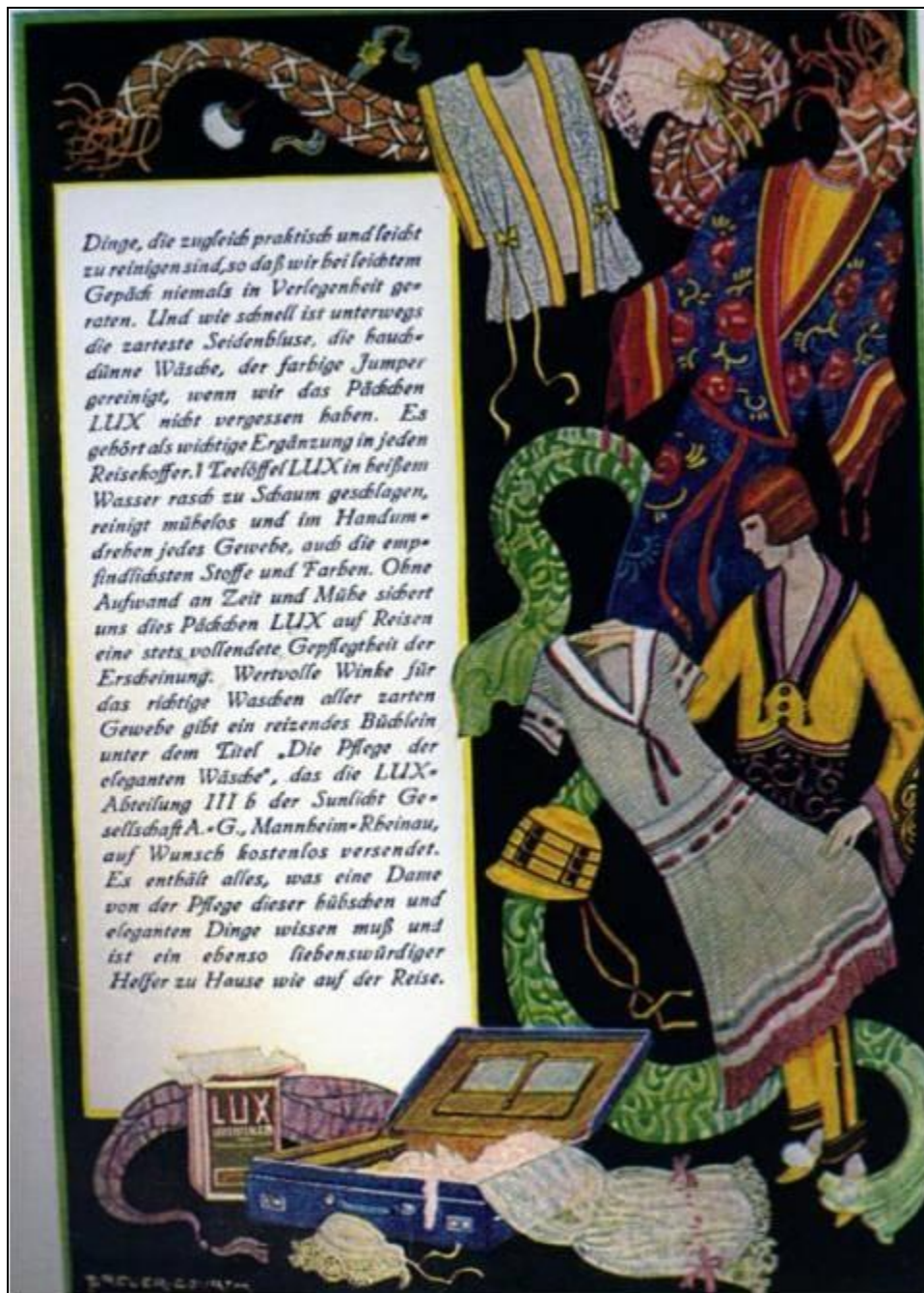


Figure 2.1. Bubikopf und Gretchenzopf, exhibition catalog, 1995.





Figure 2.2. Uhu, April 1925, issue 7.



Dinge, die zugleich praktisch und leicht zu reinigen sind, so daß wir bei leichtem Gepäck niemals in Verlegenheit geraten. Und wie schnell ist unterwegs die zarteste Seidenbluse, die hauchdünne Wäsche, der farbige Jumper gereinigt, wenn wir das Päckchen LUX nicht vergessen haben. Es gehört als wichtige Ergänzung in jeden Reisekoffer. 1 Teelöffel LUX in heißem Wasser rasch zu Schaum geschlagen, reinigt mühelos und im Handumdrehen jedes Gewebe, auch die empfindlichsten Stoffe und Farben. Ohne Aufwand an Zeit und Mühe sichert uns dies Päckchen LUX auf Reisen eine stets vollendete Gepflegtheit der Erscheinung. Wertvolle Winke für das richtige Waschen aller zarten Gewebe gibt ein reizendes Büchlein unter dem Titel „Die Pflege der eleganten Wäsche“, das die LUX-Abteilung III b der Sunlicht Gesellschaft A.-G., Mannheim-Rheinau, auf Wunsch kostenlos versendet. Es enthält alles, was eine Dame von der Pflege dieser hübschen und eleganten Dinge wissen muß und ist ein ebenso lebenswürdiger Helfer zu Hause wie auf der Reise.

Figure 2.3. Uhu, April 1925, issue 7.

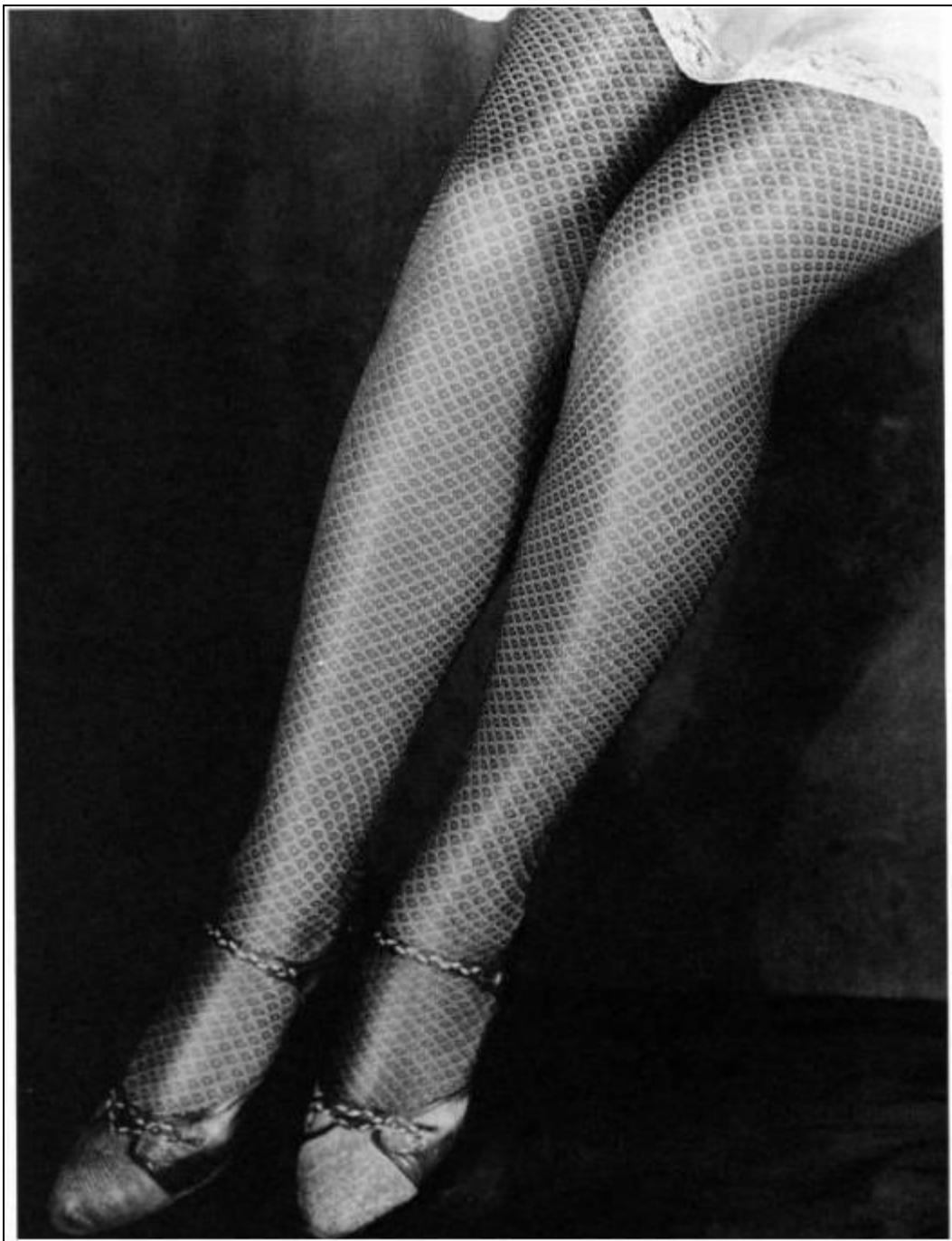


Figure 2.4. circa 1932, vintage print Kunstbibliothek SMB, Lipperheidesche Kostuembibliothek;  
Yva: Photographies. p.135.





Figure 2.5. <http://www.glanzbilder-traum.de/index.php?go=history> (accessed 03-17-2010).



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